

Post-engagement Session Summary: Disability Alliance of BC

Session date:	February 21, 2023
Attendees:	Participants: 9
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to poverty in your community today? What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic income was noted as a necessity • Lack of housing remains a critical issue and barrier for many <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note that BC housing should have more spaces, and housing benefits should cover full BC housing amount required to pay for rent ○ Issues with landlords that are not accepting of people with disabilities • There is persistent social stigma associated with accessing and receiving supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Specific stigma associated with accessing disability benefits at certain service providers, and the inability to be autonomous with benefits (i.e., the dentist has to check the benefits of a person coming to them) ○ Specific stigma associated with mental health disabilities ○ Specific stigma associated with being Deaf and not able to access the same services and benefits as others with disabilities, as sometimes being Deaf is not considered a disability • Cost of medical care (medication, vision and dental) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disability benefit rates haven't kept up with provider rates or overall inflation • Lack of food security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comments that subsidized food stores always have moldy food ○ Comments that subsidized food stores are not always accessible for people with mental health disabilities (need low lighting, quiet, limited people, etc.) • Aging out of the system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern about aging out of the support system after 65, as well as concern with retirement supports ○ There is a lack of understanding of what assistance and support is available after age 65 ○ Challenges and frustration with provincial vs federal supports when turning 65 	

Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty

- Basic income:
 - During COVID, CERB brought child poverty down and reduced inequities – proof that basic income does indeed work to reduce poverty
 - Note that CERB was also more money than any disability supports offer
- Initiatives that have proven helpful:
 - Legal support organizations that provide free legal advice, welfare support and help with taxes
 - Leisure sports card from City of Vancouver discounted for those over 50
 - Social support advisors that are longitudinal and follow cases long term are more impactful
 - Advocates from DABC have been helpful

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Gaps preventing improved poverty reduction policies:

- Desire to automatically be approved for federal benefits when approved for Provincial Disability benefits
- Lack of support to transition from assistance back to working – especially challenges when people are motivated and capable of working
- Disability benefit rates haven't kept up with provider rates and overall inflation
- Desire to simplify the system of supports
 - Help guide people to access programs and supports (peer navigators/family support workers)
 - Simplify application processes – e.g., needing to copy pages and forms for multiple program applications causes additional barriers and frustration
- Desire to see supports that bolster Quality of Life and the ability for people with disabilities to live enriching lives and contribute to society – viewing poverty through the lens of Quality of Life rather than purely income.
 - This includes better opportunities for working on flexible schedules and volunteering - *“WorkBC is not effective in bridging me with employment service that I am able to do.”*
 - Funding for sports programs that support people with disabilities like Deaf sports leagues

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Desire for longer-term funding supports
- Desire to move towards a human-centered approach to care

- Desire for universal basic income

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

- Comment that PWD is not sufficient especially for people with children or who are married
- Disability benefit rates haven't kept up with provider rates or overall inflation
- Desire to automatically be approved for federal benefits when approved for Provincial Disability benefits
- Lack of support to transition from assistance back to working

Post-engagement Session Summary: Poverty Reduction Coalition

Session date:	February 23, 2023
Attendees:	9
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to poverty in your community today? What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic income was noted as a necessity. • Lack of housing remains a critical issue and barrier for many. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One participant shared that rent is 79% of income. ○ There is a loss of autonomy because the places that are affordable to rent are places with roommates or substandard housing, and most don't accept pets that are supportive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal story about needing to share one room with three kids since they can only afford a room in a house and not an apartment. ○ Lack of BC housing available, lack of low-income houses available, concern with quality of BC housing and low-income housing (cockroaches, leaking pipes, located in unsafe neighborhoods). • Climate change. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comments on the overlap between climate change and subpar housing (increase in hydro bills from climate change, no access to AC - only given mediocre supports for heat dome issues like fans) available to those on PWD or in poverty. • Lack of food security. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comments about choosing between food and housing due to the rising cost of both. ○ Comments on expired food at foodbanks compounding sickness. • Childcare. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inability to work if someone needs to provide their own childcare. • Transportation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern with needing to pay for own transportation as well as transportation for children. ○ Concern with transportation not reaching other support services (foodbanks) easily. <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for basic income: During COVID, CERB brought poverty down and reduced inequities. • Note that financial assistance provided by Ceridian Cares is useful. 	

- Note that BC Hydro has a customer crisis fund but often people don't find out until after they've been disconnected from their energy, which puts people in risky situations especially those with medical electrical equipment.

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Gaps preventing improved poverty reduction policies:

- CERB had the biggest impact on reducing issues related to poverty.
- Desire to automatically be approved for federal benefits when approved for Provincial Disability benefits.
- Desire for My Self-Serve to be more user friendly - used to be able to get a booklet of programs you were eligible for which was useful.
 - “There were options for transport for a surgery I had but I didn't know until after.”
- Desire for the government to work better together to support the needs of people in poverty.
- Concern that there is still a noticeable stigma for those who access income assistance.
- Concern that credit cards are used as a last case scenario.
- Concern that being involved in these systems adds to anxiety and depression, and there are no/not enough supports for psychologists.
- Concern that a lot of subsidies are not available to those on PWD or income assistance. For example, once you're in BC Housing you can't get a lawyer to fight any rules about tenancy so people go into cycles of tenancy abuse because they can't afford to move out of BC Housing.
- Concern that supports are intertwined and not easy to use – to get a psychologist you need a doctor referral, but it's less likely to have a doctor if you're in poverty, as well as take the time off work or get to the appointment etc.

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Desire for essential needs to be covered, including needs that are not technically essential but in practice are essential (menstrual products, phones).
- Desire for food vouchers that can be used anywhere not just at foodbanks.
- Desire that rent allowance also allows for purchasing other items, such as clothing.
- Desire for accessible lawyers and legal advice.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- Desire to reduce/stop clawbacks.
 - “We are forced to pay into EI even though I can't collect because it would claw back my benefits from PWD.”

- “I would've gotten a \$2k inheritance, but I didn't because I wouldn't have gotten my benefits.”
- Desire to remove cap on income when using PWD.
 - “If they wanted to help us get off disability, they would move the cap up to \$32k.”
- Desire to remove rental income subsidy from total income affecting the PWD cap (like how child support income was removed).
- Desire for PWD amounts to rise to meet inflation.
- Desire for income assistance to have a bus pass included, and a bus pass for children.
- Concern with aging out of care.
 - “I'm also scared when I get to 65, I understand the BC PWD stops and the OAS and other income starts but these don't equal the PWD income - frightening.”
- Concerning that a lot of subsidies are not available to those on PWD or income assistance. For example, additional rent subsidies.
- Concern that there is still a noticeable stigma for those who use welfare (e.g., bus card that is a different colour).

Post-engagement Session Summary: First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society

Session date:	February 8, 2023
Attendees:	29
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Breakout room Facilitators	[names removed]
Notetakers	[names removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of housing remains a critical issue and barrier for many <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families need a specific kind of housing, but are unable to access it ○ Illegal evictions ○ Newcomers or low-income families are vulnerable to unscrupulous landlords because of the risk of being evicted ○ Continuum of housing from shelter to modular housing to transition housing ○ More support needed for B.C. Rent Bank • There is persistent social stigma associated with accessing and receiving supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Medical/mental/stress impacts of poverty • Cost of living - I.e., housing, transportation and food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All of which have increased due to inflation • Predatory financial service companies (e.g., Money Mart, Easy Financial) trap people in a cycle of loans • Lack of support for families who have a child with disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., child development programs, nursing care services, FASD Respite Grant • Cost of medical care (medication, vision and dental) • Lack of food security <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The \$10/day childcare has been helpful in addressing the affordability of childcare for working families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern: lack of supply of childcare spots – exacerbated by low retention and recruitment of early childhood educators 	

- Concern: Some daycare charge ‘administration’ fees for people to sit on a waitlist
- Concern: childcare needs to be inclusive of some children’s support needs
- [Pacific Leader program](#)
- Residential Tenancy Branch – helpful for information

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Gaps preventing improved poverty reduction policies:

- Gaps in access to healthcare
 - For refugees who are newcomers to B.C., there is a 90-day gap between their federal healthcare being transferred to B.C.’s MSP
 - Need for more mobile health units
 - Lack of medical staff across B.C.
- More supports for youth aging out of care
- Acknowledge role of kinship care
 - Kin relationships (e.g.) grandparents aren’t considered parents by the Federal government and therefore can’t get the Canada Child Benefit
- Rent controls

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Simplify the system of supports
 - Provide assistance (peer navigators/family support workers) to guide people to access programs and supports
 - Literacy, both digital and linguistic, contributes to someone accessing supports
 - Provide information to people about what programs and supports they are eligible for
 - Accurately target programs to people who stand to benefit from them
 - Need for inter-ministry and intergovernmental collaboration
 - e.g. Receiving funds through the Canada Child Tax Credit can be slow
 - Simplify application processes – people shouldn’t have to ‘prove that they are poor’
 - Lack of plain language
 - Programs with the Ministry of Children and Family Development are complex
- Longer-term funding supports are needed
 - e.g. providing links from education programs to employment opportunities
 - e.g. youth experiencing homelessness need long-term supports, not short-term coverage

- Moving beyond one-time contributions to programs and investments that reduce the cost of living
- Offer education on financial literacy as part of support system
- Including children with disabilities in the future Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Universal food programs in all schools
- Collect data on households who receive income assistance to understand the rising costs experienced by families
- Provide universal basic income
- Co-op model for housing

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- Increase rates
 - Income assistance rates should be tied to inflation
 - Costs of basic needs have gone up (food and housing), but assistance rates haven't
 - Acknowledge the feminization of poverty
- Reduce/stop clawbacks
- Concern: people who live with disabilities but who don't qualify for PWD

Post-engagement Session Summary: Employment – CMHA

Session date:	April 26, 2023, 1:00pm
Attendees:	10
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Notetakers	[name removed]
Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today? What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?	
Factors contributing to poverty: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding program structures don't consider the increasing cost of living and inflation.• Multi-generational poverty.• Mental health challenges. Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHMA was mentioned several times as a valuable mental support resource.• WorkBC was also discussed several times as a support with mostly positive feedback about the programing (i.e., Encouraging, helpful resources). However, a participant expressed a lack of follow-up and focus on long-term employment opportunities. Additional themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of a 'train to employment' opportunities (i.e., Difficult finding training that results in employment).	
Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services? From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?	
Challenges in accessing supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current funding doesn't adequately meet the basic needs of its recipients (e.g., PWD does not meet inflation and cost of living increase). What more can be done to reduce poverty? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased staffing of social support programs would be beneficial to help more people and relieve worker burn out (i.e., social workers, counselors).	

- Suggestion to adjust the current assistance payment structure to give recipients autonomy and flexibility around their financial management decisions, while at the same time, providing key learning opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge (i.e., TFDSA - tax free on disability savings account, investing).
- Enhanced focus on providing training and education opportunities that create 'meaningful' long-term employment. (i.e., access to variety employment opportunities – looking beyond the need to 'fill a slot' or meet a program requirement).

Additional theme:

- It was mentioned a few times that landlord/tenant relationships can be challenging, and that legislation should be put in place to improve tenant safety and landlord accountability.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- General need to increase income assistance rates to consider inflation and cost of living. Current funding doesn't adequately meet the basic needs of its recipients (e.g., PWD does not meet inflation and cost of living increase).
- Overall, recipients expressed the need for program processes to be more easily navigated and user-friendly to consider individual needs.
- Suggestion to adjust the current assistance payment structure to give recipients autonomy and flexibility around their financial management decisions, while at the same time, providing key learning opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge (i.e., TFDSA - tax free on disability savings account, investing).

Post-engagement Session Summary: TRRUST

Session date:	April 17, 2023
Attendees:	9
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Notetakers	[name removed]
Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today? What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?	
Factors contributing to poverty: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of access to mental health and addiction care.• Generational poverty – those who grow up in poverty tends to stay in poverty.• Affordable housing support – most income goes towards rent leaving very little to no money left after rent is paid.• No long-term housing solutions that include people with disabilities, including those who are connected to Child and Family Services or who ages out of the system.• Ethnicity – Indigenous youth are represented higher in poverty stats.• Government resources, subsidies and benefits are only short term and don't help those who need them for longer enough.• "Tax on being in poverty" such as late fees or fare evasion tickets – keeps people in a cycle of poverty.• Intergenerational trauma especially for Indigenous peoples (e.g., by causing children to take care of themselves instead of furthering their education).	
Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need for helpful government supports such as long-term rental subsidy, provincial tuition waver, long term counseling, long term food subsidy.	
Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services? From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?	
Challenges in accessing supports <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barriers with government policies for assistance – you need to be approved for assistance and that's not always easy.	

- Systemic racism is factor that prevents people from accessing support especially for Indigenous peoples.

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Make it easier to access support, programs, assistance and services.
- Reduce/remove taxes – ‘we have to pay taxes but have no money to pay them’.
- Increase housing geared towards lower income.
- More mental health and addiction support with no wait times.
- Increased earning exemptions, livable monthly funding, and funding for counseling and trauma counseling.

Additional theme: Culturally safe health care for Indigenous peoples

- Stigma of addictions against indigenous people means that they don't access health care in hospitals, there needs to be culturally informed and sensitive care in hospitals.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- Need for helpful government supports such as long-term rental subsidy, provincial tuition waver, long term counseling, long term food subsidy.
- Desire for increased earning exemptions.
- Desire to get rid of the spousal cap – can lose benefits because of living with your spouse or common-law partner.
- PWD is not enough to meet any standard of living.
- A feeling that policies are dehumanizing. For example, to receive PWD, you have to prove every month that you need certain funding.
- Desire for accessing supports, programs, assistance and services to be easier and more accessible.
- No long-term housing solutions that include people with disabilities, who are connected to Child and Family Services or who ages out of the system.

Post-engagement Session Summary: EMBERS-Eastside Works

Session date:	April 12, 2023, 4:30-6:30pm
Attendees:	21
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing costs of living, notably housing anywhere in the Lower Mainland. Many participants prefer to live in an area where they have family, friends, and peers (e.g., Central Vancouver areas) and can no longer afford to even rent a room in those areas. High cost of medical care (medication, dental care, etc.). Many participants experience or have experienced more than one medical condition and can not always access the essential healthcare and medications they need. Lack of access to nutritious and healthy food. This was especially a problem for individuals with health conditions (e.g., diabetes, food allergies) who require specific foods that are often more expensive than products they can afford at the grocery store. <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is incredible strength in community spaces and peer networks: several people spoke to the critical role spaces like EMBERS play in providing supports and alleviating the isolation that comes with living in poverty. Often people initially come to EMBERS for employment support and end up being able to access other supports, with a sense of camaraderie from peers and staff. Places like EMBERS are places of belonging: people know they are safe and welcomed, no matter what they are experiencing in a given moment. There is a sense of understanding and care even when people are coming from different situations. It may take time to build trust, but all participants spoke to the sense of belonging and safety they feel at EMBERS. Ultimately, spaces like these save lives. <p>Additional theme (experiences of poverty): Stigma and social isolation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of participants described experiencing stigma tied to their housing conditions, employment situation, and/or appearance. This stigma came both from people not experiencing poverty and those experiencing poverty. 	

- Stigma can be an acute and long-term experience and its effects are felt so intensely that feelings can be hard to express. Over the course of this meeting, a few participants were able to open up after hearing from peers about those deeply felt experience of stigma.
- Participants also described the physical, mental, and emotional impacts of isolation, tying into the importance of community networks, whether they are friends, family, or neighbours.
- Community networks based on shared understanding and looking out for one another is irreplaceable. Some participants connected this desire for networks and peer support to what is happening with street-involved residents being evicted en masse from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. Some felt that having one's possessions and shelter removed is made even worse by the dissolution of community and peer networks in the neighbourhood.

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Challenges in accessing supports

- A major theme was the compounding effect of accessing more than one type of support, e.g., income assistance and PWD. A few participants expressed frustration with having to reapply every year to access IA when their health and/or living conditions have not changed. They would like to see the barriers of reapplying year after year for the same support removed.
- The impacts of clawbacks (when accessing one type of income assistance results in having one's existing income assistance reduced) were also described in this meeting — when combined with the impacts of inflation and associated increases in cost of living, clawbacks can result in people having to choose between spending their money of daily necessities, for example having to choose medication over food, or veterinary care over personal care.
- Another theme was the inadequacy of income supplements, e.g., the housing supplement, with inflation and associated cost of living increases.

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Simplify the system of supports, particularly for annual amounts; people should not have to prove they are still experiencing a medical condition.
 - Streamline application processes and reduce the amount of paperwork people must complete to access supports on an annual basis.

Additional theme: Value of having spaces to gather

- In addition to the themes described above, participants expressed gratitude for being at this meeting and for having the space to have these important conversations.
- It was clear there is a great amount of respect and care among this group, and that other community spaces like this have similar supportive social networks.

- A resounding theme is that spaces like EMBERS not only provide essential programs and services but also act as a support network, include for those who do not have family or chosen family in their lives.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- General need to increase income assistance rates.
 - The costs of basic needs have gone up (particularly housing in the Lower Mainland), but assistance rates have not increased accordingly.
- It is difficult to access basic amounts to live, e.g., going to welfare and asking for a Crisis Supplement is overly complicated and requires going to multiple staff people. The process should be much smoother.
- A major theme was the compounding effect of accessing more than one type of support, e.g., income assistance and PWD. A few participants expressed frustration with having to reapply every year to access IA when their health and/or living conditions have not changed. They would like to see the barriers of reapplying year after year for the same support removed.
- The impacts of clawbacks (when accessing one type of income assistance results in having one's existing income assistance reduced) were also described in this meeting — when combined with the impacts of inflation and associated increases in cost of living, clawbacks can result in people having to choose between spending their money of daily necessities, for example having to choose medication over food, or veterinary care over personal care.
- Simplify the system of supports, particularly for annual amounts; people should not have to prove they are still experiencing a medical condition.
 - Streamline application processes and reduce the amount of paperwork people must complete to access supports on an annual basis.

Post-engagement Session Summary: Prince Rupert Unemployed Action Centre

Session date:	April 19, 2023, 9:00-4:00pm
Attendees:	30
Lead facilitator:	[names removed]
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When COVID started it was scary to work in the public realm. • Rental increases, renovations and high cost of living. • Lack of space in shelters. • Lack of employment opportunities. • Many people in poverty have confounding medical issues. • Lack of affordable childcare leaves single parents unable to work. • Mental health. • Cost of food. • Getting a doctor is difficult, making all subsidy applications difficult. • Addictions. <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelters and street/outreach teams provide the most support as they know what resources are available and will support those living on the streets. However, these resources are unfunded. • Local Indigenous charities offer a lot of support. • Childcare supports such as Friendship centers offering daycare. • Transition housing has been very useful. <p>Additional theme (experiences of poverty): Stigma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma when accessing services. Additional issues when there is any anger or sadness shown because service providers already have beliefs about people in poverty (i.e., being mistreated after an 'outburst', getting kicked out of shelters and not allowed to return for many months, etc.). 	

- Additional stigma against those who are Indigenous and in poverty, resulting unfair treatment (e.g., persistent child abuse claims without any proof of child abuse ever coming forward).

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Challenges in accessing supports

- Finding out about support is difficult. Find out about supports from friends primarily.
- Doing paperwork / filling forms / accessing technology is confusing and difficult. Filling out necessary forms would be completely inaccessible without help from local service providers. Printing forms is also a barrier.
- The reminder mailouts (related to owing the government money) are stress inducing.
- Not many supports for those over 30.
- Living on a reservation causes issues with accessing supports because you often need to go to a bigger city to submit stubs, which is not always accessible. Often folks rely on friends to transport their stubs.
- Confusion about supports such as when and how to go on Old Age Security.

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Need for simplifying paperwork and processes to access supports.
- Need more service providers to also have emergency skills like First Aid.
- Desire to see WorkBC's policies updated.
- Desire to see funding/support to get drivers licensing. Many jobs need a driver's license which is often inaccessible.
- Suggestion to have one-day programs that are useful for those currently living in poverty, not just moving out of poverty. For example, financial literacy, budgeting while on welfare, home management, SEO marketing.
- A need for training programs to liaise with potential job placements. There is a need for practical experience not just resume support.
- Would like to see more transportation subsidies.
- Additional low-income housing.
- Increase pension checks.
- Clothing vouchers – can't buy any clothes with current subsidies.

Additional comments:

- Lack of traditional food options, and healthy foods, in foodbanks.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- Note that there is no incentive to work with a low annual income allowance while on welfare.
- Concern with Income Assistance, getting taxed, and being stuck in a borrow/pay back loop. Suggestion that deductions are not instant, but 3 months later to save something.
- Need for more welfare insurance / benefits / medical access with welfare. People on welfare often have more physical and mental health needs, and 10 visits a year is insufficient to treat any of them, making it difficult to move out of poverty or be healthy enough to get a job.
- Desire for budgeting assistance on IA.

Post-engagement Session Summary: Nanaimo Brain Injury Society

Session date:	April 26, 2023
Attendees:	5
Lead facilitator:	Andrea Manchon
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of food. • Expensive health and mental health services – for example physical health and mental health specialists are not covered by MSP. • Taxes. • Gentrification is eliminating affordable/subsidized housing. • It's hard to find employment for those living with acquired brain injury. • Landlords vet tenants to know where their money is coming from which is unfair. <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TELUS' 'internet for good' (\$20/month) is an invaluable service. • Food banks help but not enough. • Subsidized housing. • Group counselling classes are good but there are not enough funds to make it permanent. • Services such as Citizen's Advocate in Victoria is useful. 	
<p>Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?</p> <p>From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?</p>	
<p>Challenges in accessing supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of support and services. • Challenges accessing legal help. • Long wait times to access mental health support and other health care services. • Public transportation can be a barrier especially for those with brain injuries as they are more sensitive to light and noise. 	

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Need for more affordable access to health care and mental health services.
- Taxes:
 - Change/even out the tax structure to pay for services that are needed.
 - Reduce/remove taxes – we have to pay taxes but have no money to pay them.
 - Suggestion to have a flat tax rate in BC so everyone pays their share of taxes.
- Increase housing geared towards lower income.
- More mental health and addiction support with no wait times.
- Increased earning exemptions.
- Livable monthly funding.
- More funding for counseling and trauma counseling.
- Suggestion to implement rent control to control the high price of housing.
- Schools should have an apprenticeship program where students can lead group counselling to give additional access to mental health support.
- Need for more programs for people who want to move towards employment.
- Housing programs for individuals who are not homeless (I.e., because current housing market is unaffordable).
- Need for more accessible education for those who are at risk of falling into poverty, on the resources available.

Additional theme:

Government

- 4-year election cycles allow the problem to be patched, then pushed along to the next election cycle without long term solutions.
- BC Housing should provide more support for those who are not able to live with roommates due to their brain injury which causes sensitivity to light, sound and movement.
- Implement an electronic pass or something similar to easily identify those receiving PWD or a pension.
- Income threshold and recreation pass
 - People who need it are not qualified for it because they are just over the income threshold.
 - Access to non-ministry resources should be changed to match the current inflation rate and cost of living.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- PWD is not enough to pay for food, gas and rent.
- Increase housing subsidies for those on PWD.

Post-engagement Session Summary: Nelson Rural Empowered Drug Users Network

Session date:	April 26, 2023
Attendees:	9
Lead facilitator:	[name removed]
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to safe housing, long-term or short-term (i.e., shelters are full, long-term housing is full or inaccessible due to barriers working with local organizations / BC housing). • Regional disparity for support programs in smaller communities. (i.e., small communities like Nelson have limited access to food banks). • Lack of funding for people with disabilities to work and live. • Lack of access to transportation. (i.e., busses don't run at night). <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing and shelters. • Affordable food and food bank accessibility. <p>Additional theme (experiences of poverty):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding caps prevent people from 'getting ahead'. 	
<p>Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?</p> <p>From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?</p>	
<p>Challenges in accessing supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social stigma associated with poverty. • Compounding program application barriers. • Complex application process with multiple stipulations. • Concerns with local services being provided through one organization monopoly in Nelson (remote area) and blacklisting many individuals from their services. 	

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Increase in program services and funding.
- Less restrictions around shelter accessibility.
- Build stronger trusting relationships between service providers and program recipients. (i.e., integrate people with lived experiences into the process of helping others).
- Increase community support around social/affordable housing.
- More 'personalized' services to meet individual needs.
- Increase interventions, resources, programs and guidance to reduce recurring homelessness

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- Lack of funding for people with disabilities to work and live.

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Post-engagement Session Summary: Employment – Foundry (youth) Combined

Session date:	April 27, 2023, 2:00-3:30pm (in-person at Vancouver-Granville Foundry) April 28, 2023 1:00-2:30 pm (Virtual)
Attendees:	26 total
Lead facilitator:	[names removed]
Notetakers	[name removed]
Discussion 1: Understanding Challenges	
<p>What are the main factors contributing to poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing costs of living, notably housing anywhere in the Lower Mainland. Many participants cited affordability and availability of housing as their greatest barrier. For participants on IA and PWD, a majority of their support is allocated to rent. • Related to increasing costs of living, many participants stated that current wages are not keeping up with inflation and the average person cannot live in the Lower Mainland on minimum wage. • High cost of medical care (medication, dental care, etc.). Many participants experience or have experienced more than one medical condition and could not always access the essential healthcare and medications they needed. • Lack of access to nutritious and healthy food. This was especially a problem for individuals with health conditions (e.g., diabetes, food allergies) who require specific foods that are often more expensive than products they can afford at the grocery store. • Difficulty with transportation. A few participants shared that it is difficult for them to pay for transportation, either via public transit or personal vehicle. • Access to mental health support. A few participants expressed that mental health impacts their ability to get a job and that they cannot access or afford support. <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundry has helped people access numerous supports including rent supplements, income subsidies, drop-in counselling and mental health support, employment support, and general housing support. 	

- Access to free employment training and practical experience would reduce barriers to finding employment.

Additional theme (experiences of poverty): Stigma and Discrimination

- Several participants described experiencing discrimination tied to their disabilities and stated that this contributed to difficulty gaining employment.

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Challenges in accessing supports

- A major theme was addictions and mental health support. Participants outlined that addiction and mental health issues are interrelated and feel that there is a gap in addressing the root of these issues.
- Aging out of the system at 25 is another challenge in accessing supports. Participants stated that they faced difficulty once they lost the Foundry supports they depended on when they turned 25.
- The impacts of clawbacks (when accessing one type of income assistance results in having one’s existing income assistance reduced) were also described in this meeting — when combined with the impacts of inflation and associated increases in cost of living, clawbacks can result in people having to choose between spending their money of daily necessities, for example having to choose medication over food, or veterinary care over personal care.
- Another theme was the inadequacy of income supplements (e.g., the housing supplement) with inflation and associated cost of living increases.

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- WorkBC was referenced as a program that works well to support young people in gaining employment. People stated that WorkBC is solid and credible, and helps people get practical training which greatly increases their chances of getting hired.
 - Would like to see more free learning opportunities and certifications.
- Would like to better communication of supports and services that are available to people.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- General need to increase income assistance rates.
 - The costs of basic needs have gone up (particularly housing in the Lower Mainland), but assistance rates have not increased accordingly.

- Increasing costs of living, notably housing anywhere in the Lower Mainland. Many participants cited affordability and availability of housing as their greatest barrier. For participants on IA and PWD, a majority of their support is allocated to rent.
- It is difficult to access basic amounts to live, e.g., going to welfare and asking for a Crisis Supplement is overly complicated and requires going to multiple staff people. The process should be much smoother.
- The impacts of clawbacks (when accessing one type of income assistance results in having one's existing income assistance reduced) were also described in this meeting — when combined with the impacts of inflation and associated increases in cost of living, clawbacks can result in people having to choose between spending their money of daily necessities, for example having to choose medication over food, or veterinary care over personal care.

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Post-engagement Session Summary: Options

Session date:	April 28, 2023 11:00-12:30
Attendees:	16
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Notetakers	[name removed]
Discussion 1: Understanding Challenges What barriers do you experience gaining employment? What would help? How familiar are you with WorkBC and its services? What has your experience been with WorkBC? What worked well? What could improve? What's missing from WorkBC services and supports?	
Factors contributing to poverty: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing costs of living, notably housing anywhere in the Lower Mainland. Many participants cited affordability and availability of housing as their greatest barrier. For participants on IA and PWD, a majority of their support is allocated to rent.• Newcomers and lack of Canadian experience:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ There were many people who are highly trained and certified in their home countries and face difficulty gaining employment when they immigrate to Canada.○ Participants discussed the difficulty in building a network and spoke about the lack of Canadian experience on their resumes as a barrier to finding work. Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to free employment training (for new immigrants with no attachment to EI or IA) and practical experience would reduce barriers to finding employment. Additional theme (experiences of poverty): Stigma and Discrimination <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A number of participants described experiencing discrimination tied to their disabilities and stated that this contributed to difficulty gaining employment.• Participants stated that even after completing training and certifications, they are not getting hired. While it is not the stated reason, participants feel that it is related to factors like their age and disability.	
Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services? From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?	

Challenges in accessing supports

- A major theme was difficulty accessing supports as a newcomer. People were unaware of the supports that are available to them to help with housing, employment, mental health services, etc.
- Another theme was that while people had good connections with their WorkBC case workers, their case loads are too high to be able to focus their attention on supporting all of their clients.

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Streamlining training was suggested as a way to get people to work quicker. There was a suggestion for WorkBC to have better connections with employers who are hiring.
 - For example, directing people to specific training in areas that are guaranteed to lead to a job opportunity.
- Better communication of supports and services that are available to people. Newcomers are unaware of supports and services available and are missing out on accessing them.
- Meeting people where they are. There is a desire for community outreach workers to help guide people through the system and raise awareness about what programs, services, and supports exist in the province.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- General need to increase income assistance rates.
 - The costs of basic needs have gone up (particularly housing in the Lower Mainland), but assistance rates have not increased accordingly. For participants on IA and PWD, a majority of their support is allocated to rent.

Post-engagement Session Summary: Immigrant Link Centre Society

Session date:	May 5, 2023 12:30-1:30pm
Attendees:	15
Lead facilitator:	Landon Hoyt
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1:</p> <p>What are some of the biggest challenges you and your family are experiencing in terms of covering your day-to-day expenses or moving out of poverty?</p> <p>What is working well in your community to address poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing costs of housing. Many participants discussed issues with housing costs, noting that this leads to them accessing food banks. Increased food insecurity due to high cost of living. All of the participants had lived experience accessing food banks. <p>Newcomers facing difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International credentials are not recognized in Canada for working professionals. A conversation was sparked about the doctor shortage in Canada while there are many qualified professionals who are working outside of their field because their credentials are not valid in Canada. Newcomers find it difficult to find jobs due to lack of Canadian experience. <p>What is working well in your community to address poverty and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every participant in the room had direct experiences with accessing food banks, specifically the one provided by Immigrant Link Centre Society. They felt supported and appreciated the help that they received when accessing this resource. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of people said that beyond providing food, the program helped foster a community and allowed for social networking opportunities. Many people said they found out information about housing, job seeking and navigating the healthcare system by talking to other clients when they visited the food program. Specific mention of LINK English Program. There was discussion about how English classes were helpful for people to integrate in Canadian culture and society. 	
<p>Discussion 2: What is not working, or where do you see change most needed?</p>	

Systems Navigation

- Simplify the system of supports. Streamline application processes and reduce the amount of paperwork people must complete to access supports.
- Newcomers have difficulty in navigating the different systems in Canada, including healthcare, housing, education and general information. Multiple people expressed having a one stop shop would be helpful to access all of the information they might need instead of endlessly clicking through different links.

Food Bank Operations

- Since many participants were directly affiliated with this food program, a majority of comments focused on how to improve service. This included issues like dietary and cultural differences (e.g vegetarian diets, halal products), expiry dates on products, and how items are distributed to clients.

Employment Supports

- WorkBC is not functioning in a way that is helpful for everyone. One participant shared she wanted more out of WorkBC in terms of connections and setting her up with companies that are actively hiring rather than completing training courses.
- Free training and certifications would be a helpful resource for immigrants.

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

Themes:

- General need to increase income assistance rates.
 - The costs of basic needs have gone up but assistance rates have not increased accordingly.

Post-engagement Session Summary: Period Promise

Session date:	May 12
Attendees:	10
Lead facilitator:	Andrea Manchon
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are some of the biggest challenges you, your community members and/or clients are experiencing in terms of covering day-to-day expenses or moving out of poverty, and specifically related to period poverty?</p> <p>What is working well in your community to address period poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those in poverty often must decide between getting hygiene products and eating a few meals. • Many period products aren't considered food so can't be distributed through greater Vancouver foodbanks. • Not having access to menstrual health care from informed healthcare providers keeps menstruators in poverty (e.g., doctors who do not know to deal with nuances of trans people, racialized folks, etc.). • Unfamiliarity with reusable menstrual products keeps people in a cycle of poverty, with the inability to think beyond disposable solutions. <p>What is working well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Point in time' counts throughout the province (giving a data point of those who are in shelters or unhoused - done with BC housing) is an important piece of data to see how many women are in shelters in order to connect to groups on the ground distributing period products. • Local organizations are building a google map where all free period products are available. Periods don't wait until it's convenient to locate products. • When period products can be distributed through food hubs they are always all taken. • Educating people on the different types of products available supports people with disabilities, newcomers, Indigenous peoples, or anyone that may not be aware of different options. 	
<p>Discussion 2 - What is not working, or where do you see change most needed to close the gap on period poverty?</p>	
<p>Gaps preventing improved poverty reduction policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most period poverty solutions are framed as an 'emergency' solution, rather than seeking a permanent, universal solution. • Would like the government to fund some 24hr access points that would hold period products. • Many people who are living in cars or vans and are using the showers in shelters. Funding more shower programs and short-term weather shelters would be helpful (heat dome and heat related shelters). • Reusable products and disposable products are both important. Choice directly contributes to dignity and respect. 	

- Period poverty is not siloed - housing, water, privacy, laundry, education, hygiene - it's all connected. (e.g., In Indigenous communities there is often not access to clean water, further putting them into period poverty).

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Need for universal basic income.
- Need for 24/7 period pantries.
- Need user centered distribution (i.e., distributing electronic gift cards so users can order from their own home, this also helps get people the exact period products that work for them as one size does not fit all, especially people with disabilities often need specific products).

Comments on income and disability assistance legislation

- Increase the amount offered from PWD and IA.
- Desire to see those on PWD and those in poverty get gift cards for periods so they can buy the products that are the most usable for them.

Post-engagement Session Summary: PHABC North Central Food Security

Session date:	March 30, 2023 - 9am - 11:30am – Virtual (Zoom)
Attendees:	15
Lead facilitator:	[name removed]
Notetakers	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty (focus on food security):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cost of living. • Lack of affordable and accessible transportation. Lack of transportation infrastructure to access resources in larger cities. • Shortage of workers and volunteers. • Lack of affordable housing. • Short growing season coupled with expensive food storage equipment (i.e., canners, dehydrators). • General lack of ‘food knowledge’ (i.e., raspberries – knowing how much food you can grow in a small space for a short growing season, storage, understanding the need for volunteers and how food programs work). There is a general lack of knowledge around food production and long-term storage coupled with several retiring farmers and key knowledge holders. • Rigid rules around home gardens and other food sources (number of chickens allowed per household). <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community centered approach to food security is foundational for small remote communities that lack access to critical resources. (i.e., farmers market, community garden, partnerships, harvest celebration, local ‘champions’). <p>Additional theme (experiences of poverty):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge and skills of aging farmers are not being transferred to the next generation of farmers. • Community celebrations are key to promoting awareness around food programs (i.e., harvest celebration provides food, fellowship and information, Farm to school gardens). 	

- Shifting mindset away from relying on grocery stores for food and becoming more self-sufficient with home gardens and food preservation.
- Consider the unique needs of rural and remote northern communities (i.e., traditional food production, transportation, accessibility to services).

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Challenges in accessing supports:

- Marginalized and unhoused people are most impacted by accessibility challenges.
- Lack of continuous access to food support programs (i.e., the food bank is only open once a month, farmers market runs one day a week from June-Sept).
- Lack of knowledge and understanding about key funding opportunities and their related systems and procedures (i.e., value of tracking donations for tax exceptions, food preservation skills).
- Equipment for food preservation (dehydrator, canner) is expensive.
- Lack of staff and volunteers to provide ongoing support to food programs.

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Promote and provide food security and agricultural education. (i.e., how to preserve goods in case grocery stores don't have food, education credits for teachers).
- Improve policy to support the unique circumstances (food security) of small remote communities and the related impacts. (i.e., flexibility around what and how food can be grown, permitting farmers to butcher on their property, legislation and insurance for small producers).
- Increase overall accessibility (touch points) to food including the associated support staff (there is a lack of volunteers to staff food programs).
- Government policy to support and enforce local agriculture. Protect local agriculture over industrial agriculture.
- Increased promotion around farming careers and training/educational opportunities (i.e., Farmers Institute, digitize data recovered from retiring farmers into a shared, searchable archive, online regional agriculture directory).
- Streamline processes to allow farmers to get their food to the community faster (i.e., increase number of butchers).
- Improve data collection to better track food donations to support grant writing and tax benefits.
- Reduce the social stigma associated with accessing support services.

- Further 'connection' and coordination between existing food banks to provide accessible food for everyone in the community. (i.e., scheduling, location).

Additional theme:

- Social media channels (along with print materials and community presentations) are an effective communication channel to create awareness about food support programs and share 'food' knowledge and learning opportunities.
- Marginalized community members (i.e., seniors, people suffering addition, immigrants, students, people under disability) are more vulnerable to experience food insecurity and poverty.
- Libraries provide a space for community to gather, access information and share resources.

Post-engagement Session Summary: Northeast Food Security

Session date:	May 11, 2023
Attendees:	6
Lead facilitator:	[name removed]
Notetaker:	[name removed]
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today?</p> <p>What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive cost of living in the North. • High cost of produce and meats. • Labour shortages - remote locations, lack of 'people' resources ('boots on the ground') and community organizations can't compete with wages offered by industry. • Increasing pressure on current programs to provide additional services outside of their designated scope (i.e., social support coming from the food bank). • Food insecurity - lack of 'dependable' access to 'consistent' food resources. (i.e., seasonal shortages/growing seasons, transportation barriers). • Social and mental health impacts from covid. (i.e., breakdown of connections, isolation, lack of access to food, increased demand for food supports, loss of employment). • Lack of accessible and/or affordable transportation. <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local food support organizations/programs and community events (i.e., Nourish, Friendship Centre, hot meal program, meal deliveries, elders luncheons, holiday feasts. Peace Region Food Action Hub, farmers markets). • Community approach to food education. (i.e., farm tours, pure pastures, Nourish, information sharing). • Print collateral, word of mouth and in person conversations help create community awareness about programs and services. (i.e., posters in senior housing area). • Schools and grocery discounts often provide access to food. Other key areas of support include churches, local RCP, pride groups, arts society. A lack of Indigenous specific supports was noted by several participants. <p>Additional themes:</p>	

- Covid created a loss of human connection, further exacerbating a cycle of social and mental health challenges often linked to poverty (I.e., lack of access to shelter, food, support services).
- Covid funding support was helpful and may need to be reinstated.
- Wage disparity between community organizations and industry (I.e., Industry (oil and gas) offer higher wages).
- Lack of funding to meet the increasing number of people accessing support services.
- Lack of coordination between community support organizations.

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Challenges in accessing supports:

- Remote locations experience unique weather challenges (i.e., winter can exemplify food accessibility issues, smaller communities have less access to services).
- Lower income levels cannot afford to buy and/or access healthy food (i.e., fresh produce).
- Newcomers to Canada can experience additional challenges in connecting to community and finding support services.
- Lack of affordable, accessible transportation.
- Lack of access to cooking equipment and/or food preparation tools (I.e., stove, kitchen).

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Capital funding to support community 'food infrastructure' (I.e., food kitchens, mobile meat processing unit, building renovation costs to ensure support programs continue).
- Food education to increase understanding and knowledge around food growing/production (i.e., food waste, showing how food grows, canning, meal creation, nutrition).
- Coordinated collaboration and knowledge sharing among communities, food organizations, local farmers and government to increase access to support services.
- Reduce stigma associated with accessing support services.
- Increase use of food growing technologies (I.e., hydroponic growing systems)
- Increased focus on local food systems to meet specific community needs. (i.e., access to mobile food meat processing).
- Increased support outreach to smaller communities – meet people where they are at approach.
- Government funding to support wages for community organizations.

Additional themes:

- Covid related worker burn out and turnover (I.e., covid increased the need for food meal delivery and the time required to prepare food).

- Local language translators to help newcomers better understand what supports are available in the community. (I.e., language apps have been helpful).
- Increase in focus around the social connection and community building that surrounds food production and consumption.
- Some funding programs require a lot of reporting adding administration hours for staff.
- Seniors, youth and international newcomers are particularly vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity and poverty.
- Social connections and community partnerships (building resiliency) are critical to food security in the North.
- Community organizations are successfully accessing government funding programs but note that grants often require detailed reporting, adding strain to administration.
- Communities would benefit from better coordination and collaboration among local organizations (i.e., timing of food markets, awareness campaigns).
- Addressing the root cause of food insecurity and poverty is necessary to build long-term solutions, community-based solutions.
- There is a lack of interest and/or desire from people and/or communities to learn food knowledge.

Post-engagement Session Summary: NW Roundtable

Session date:	April 27, 2023
Attendees:	20
Lead facilitator:	Multiple
Notetakers	Multiple
<p>Discussion 1: What are the main factors contributing to child, youth and family poverty in your community today? What government supports, and programs are having the biggest impact in addressing poverty and why?</p>	
<p>Factors contributing to poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise in cost of living. • High cost of food, lack of access to food. • Lack of affordable housing and accommodations. • Socioeconomic factors (i.e., poor housing conditions, unemployment, legacies of colonization, labour market). • Lack of affordable, accessible transportation (i.e., bus systems). • Smaller remote communities face additional barriers (i.e., burn out rate for service workers and volunteers is high due to lack of people and resources). • Lack of funding for nonprofits (i.e., funding does not cover operation costs like utilities). • Rigid food legislation that does not consider Indigenous traditional approaches or broader community needs. • Impact of global warming on traditional food sources (i.e., access to fishing stocks). • Big industry (forestry) taking over community land and agriculture (i.e., fruit farms). <p>Supports that have the biggest impact in addressing poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food programs and service (i.e., food banks, community school food organization, the Garage food hub, Green Farmers, Skein of La Farmers market, or Nutrition coupon program that runs through the learning shop storyteller’s foundation that provides access to fresh healthy food). • Partnerships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnering with government organizations (i.e., Northern Health). ○ Partnering with Industry (i.e., LNG Canada). ○ Agriculture/food partnerships (i.e., local farmers/growers, community gardens, grocery stores – Safeway). ○ Community organizations (i.e., PCSS, on campus perishable food banks Terrance Wounds Resource Centre, Friendship Center). ○ Volunteers (to deliver meals, obtain food coupons for the market, create ‘connections’, etc). • A sustainable community centered approach to food accessibility is foundational for small remote communities that lack access to critical resources (i.e., partnerships, local organizations). • Federal funding for community organizations. • ‘Unlicensed’ community food processing and distribution (i.e., practicing safe traditional food processing for school hot lunch programs) – these programs are very beneficial to the community but face licensing and funding issues. • Covid recovery funding helped manage some food expenses (i.e., buying fresh produce). 	

- Free options to access food (i.e., Free food boxes outside of buildings).

Additional theme (experiences of poverty):

- Seniors and those with accessibility barriers are especially vulnerable to experiencing poverty.
- Communities are developing ‘hands on’ opportunities for school kids to learn about and experience growing their own food.
- Community Facebook groups are key communication resources to create awareness about food support opportunities (i.e., Eagle room promotes food availability for the Pantry food program).

Discussion 2 - What gaps still exist in improving poverty reduction policies and services?

From your experience, what more could be done to reduce poverty in your community and the province? What opportunities are missed?

Challenges in accessing supports:

- Lack of people resources – it’s difficult to recruit and retain workers in remote communities (i.e., support program staff, small farmer producers).
- Lack of transportation infrastructure to deliver food to remote areas.
- Shortage of local farmers (i.e., poor wages, competing with big industry for workers, lack of people resources for succession planning).
- Climate change is increasing the strain on an already ‘fragile’ transportation infrastructure (i.e., flooding, forest fires).
- Industry presence and demands overshadow local community needs (i.e., industry drives up the cost of food and housing, increases the strain on food accessibility, operational impact (forestry) on overall food system/environment).
- Overall awareness regarding available support programs. Not all organizations are aware of available funding or how to access it.
- Social stigma associated with accessing support services.
- Some food support organizations may trigger past trauma (i.e., churches providing food may be triggering for residential school survivors).
- Food supports are often not available 24/7 – it was noted that many are not open in the evening or at the weekend.
- Rigid food legislation that does not consider the unique needs of the community. E.g., ‘Unlicensed’ community food processing and distribution (i.e., practicing safe traditional food processing for school hot lunch programs) cannot function easily.
- Regional disparities (i.e., industry camps often buy up food supplies leaving little or no food for individuals to buy, small communities are not eligible for the same funding as larger communities).

What more can be done to reduce poverty?

- Increasing support for sustainable farming (i.e., increase food education/training at all levels including youth).
- Taking a more wholistic approach to food supply and production.
- Increased coordination and collaboration between community organizations, partners and geographical regions (i.e., FoodShare). Support partnerships and collaboration between community organizations (i.e., Food Security Network, Karis Food Association, Coast

Mountain School District is building on existing programs to provide students with food daily).

- Access to affordable transportation for seniors (and other vulnerable populations) to access support services.
- Increase flexibility around food legislation around production and distribution (i.e., less restrictions around cultural/tradition foods).
- Increased focus on preventative approaches to poverty and food security.
- Leaning into community focused (collective) solutions to increase food availability and accessibility (i.e., Hubs, community and individual gardens, community kitchens with 24-hour access, Thursday Pantry, Gordon Foods.)
- Reduce the social stigma around poverty and accessing food support programs.
- Modernizing food legislation around production and distribution to meet the current needs of communities. Improve policy to support the unique circumstances (food security) of small remote communities and the related impacts (i.e., flexibility around what and how food can be grown, allowing culturally appropriate food).
- Include Indigenous elders and traditional knowledge keepers in policy development and food education campaigns.
- Developing a 'processing' food hub to help stimulate the local economy.
- Improve communication tactics that support sharing information about support programs across the community.
- Provide learning opportunities for people to gain food growing skills.
- Integrate Indigenous knowledge and traditional approaches to consider food production, distribution and storage.
- Increase in the availability of fresh produce and healthier food options – it was noted that many food banks are left with high sugar, empty calorie foods.
- Provide flexibility around funding structures (i.e., grants).
- Increase support for existing service workers and volunteers (i.e., Community Foundation gas voucher program to help volunteers afford to deliver food).
- Long-term planning around food availability in remote communities, especially during weather emergencies.
- Create paid regional coordinator positions to help coordinate and leverage community partnerships and services across several communities.