

WILLIAMS LAKE
THRIVE POVERTY REDUCTION PROJECT



IMPACT REPORT

2019



OUR DEFINITION OF POVERTY

People experience poverty when they lack the resources, means, choices and opportunities to maintain self sufficiency and a quality of life that supports meaningful participation in the community.

PRIMARY GOAL

To develop a comprehensive, community based, poverty reduction strategy that provides a roadmap for reducing poverty, engages cross-sector stakeholders in action, and is endorsed by key leaders and organizations.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Increase community awareness of poverty and poverty reduction activities
- Engage community stakeholders in developing a poverty reduction strategy
- Increase capacity for community-based systems change initiatives
- Initiate projects that will have a direct impact on individuals and households living in poverty



POVERTY AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Through the work of the Project Lead, along with members of our Stewardship Working Group, awareness about the project and the impact of poverty on our community has reached a wide audience. Information has been shared through Social Planning Council, Communities That Care, Early Child Development Network, Community Safety and Wellbeing, Situation Table, and other community networks. Our social media reach has expanded to 175 followers, and posts have reached up to 4285 people.

We also engaged with the business community to share information about the project and about the impact of poverty. Business at its Best, What Works, and the HR

Networking event reached 106 people overall. One result of this work is a new project: The City of Williams Lake Hiring Initiative. The focus of this project is to develop resources to support employers with employment challenges. Creating strong employment is a critical component of moving people out of poverty.

The Poverty Simulation event on October 30 involved 60 people and generated an hour of discussion during the debrief, that included many comments about what people had learned as participants of the simulation event. This event also included a take-away handout with information about the realities of poverty and ways participants could contribute directly.



Social Media

175 PAGE FOLLOWERS

AVERAGE OF 60 PEOPLE SEE A POST

HIGHEST POST REACH 4,285 #CHILDCARE

"It took one small crisis to tip us from 'managing' to 'sinking'. People don't realize how easy it is to slip over that line"

POVERTY SIMULATION

60 PEOPLE



"I had no idea about the frustration!

Not enough time for family because I was too focused on getting all the day to day stuff done.

Poverty Simulation Participant

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT



Three key events, with multiple community partners, were the focus of our business engagement this year. We launched this process by thinking about the links between poverty and the challenges businesses are facing with the labour shortage. We wanted to affirm that having a good job is a great pathway out of poverty, and to recognize the important role of business and employers in providing that. Twenty-six employers received nominations from their employees for being great employers, and were celebrated during a recognition breakfast.

We also recognized that even with a labour shortage, there are folks who are seeking employment who may not have the skills that match up with available jobs. To grapple with how to bridge this gap in the community, we partnered with the Regional Education Council to host What Works: A Community Summit on Employment Solutions. This event brought together a diverse group of 50 people to identify challenges and explore possible solutions.



HR NETWORKING EVENT

One of the key things we learned from What Works was the challenges employers have in accessing information about human resource practices. We also learned that employers, including businesses, want opportunities to talk to and learn from each other. In response, we partnered to host an event that would launch a series of follow-up events designed to do just that - network and learn from each other.



PARTNERSHIPS

All our work in this project is done in partnership with others because changing the odds for people in poverty requires an 'all hands on deck' approach. Our business engagement work would not have been possible without our partners.

Cariboo Chilcotin Partners
for Literacy
Regional Education Council
Community Futures
Downtown Williams Lake
WorkBC - Horton Ventures
Thompson Rivers University
School District 27
WL Chamber of Commerce
City of Williams Lake

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT



CHILD CARE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In early 2019, we partnered with the City of Williams Lake to access funding to complete a Child Care Needs Assessment and draft a Child Care Plan for Williams Lake. The project is well underway, and will provide a foundation for responding with long term solutions to the current child care crisis. Over 200 parents and over 30 child care providers have responded so far to an online survey about needs and challenges.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Social enterprise is a business model that has the potential to provide a framework that supports employment of people who have a variety of difficulties that make 'typical' employment difficult. This includes people with disabilities, health issues, mental health challenges, low literacy, and other challenges. It can also provide opportunities for non-profits to operate businesses that both create employment for their 'clients' and also generate revenue for their organization. We partnered with Community Futures to offer a series of workshops to introduce this business model to the community. Subsequently, we received funding from Innoweave to hire a coach to help us develop a social enterprise that will provide temporary and short-term employment for people who have employment barriers.

SCHOOL FOOD SECURITY

One of the priorities identified at the Poverty Game Changers event in December 2018 was food security and food equity in schools. Children's learning is greatly improved when their nutritional needs are met. Schools often struggle to address this, and many have support from community organizations and donors. Our goal is to identify ways to ensure ALL students in all schools have equitable access to nutritious food. We know that addressing the issue of food security will contribute significantly to student success. We've been exploring how we might achieve this over the past few months and are working on first completing a scan to determine what current food programs are available in our schools.

PARTNERS AT WORK



Tackling poverty is everybody's business. The Thrive project is focused on supporting, leveraging, and facilitating ways for as many community partners as possible to be working on reducing the number of people living in poverty in our community. When we gather people at our events, our goal is to spark ideas, generate new approaches, and inspire others to try something fresh, or to collaborate with others. We also celebrate the steps and successes their work does to contribute to making change. Below are some examples that we've heard about that are making a difference. We know there are many more.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Cariboo Chilcotin Partners for Literacy, with funding from Red Cross, has increased their financial literacy coaching and workshops services to the community.

ADULTING 101

Denisiqi Family Services Society Offers an Adulting 101 program for young adults to help them transition to independence with stronger life skills.

FUTURE FORWARD

Cariboo Chilcotin Child Development Centre Started a new customized youth employment transition program to link youth struggling to find employment with skills, training, and work placements.

WL HIRING INITIATIVE

City of Williams Lake is working with employers to identify their challenges around employment, connect them with local services, and develop a toolkit of resources that helps them recruit and retain staff.

AHA MOMENT!

"As a result of participating in the What Works event, I asked myself what it would take to become a 'preferred employer' based on what we heard about what employees want, need, & value: flexibility, work/life balance, and being treated well. We've made substantial changes to our organization, and have been able to recruit staff to grow our organization"

"I don't ask for help. I'm humiliated to be living in poverty"

"I lost my home because the owner sold it after the fires"

"Not being able to set aside money for the future ie. RRSP, RESP, Emergency or even basic savings"

"Maxing out credit cards just to eat"

Voices of those with lived experience

COMMUNITIES REDUCING POVERTY NETWORK TAMARACK INSTITUTE

The Thrive project is a member of the Cities Reducing Poverty network. This gives us a connection to the many other communities across the country that are working to reduce poverty in their communities. It's a great professional network that allows us to share our work and learn from others. This year we participated in the BC Community of Practice, and the Western Canada

Community of Practice. We also supported development of a new Rural Community of Practice. We attended the national gathering of Communities Reducing Poverty in Kitchener, Ontario. Anne Burrill, our Project Lead, was invited to co-emcee this event. She also presented in workshops on business engagement and rural innovations.

STEWARDSHIP WORKING GROUP

The work of Thrive and the Project Lead is guided and supported by a group of incredible people who spend several hours each month thinking carefully about community engagement, decision making, they strategically plan each event and step of the project. They are committed to developing a poverty reduction plan that brings the community together to make a difference. They do so much of the hard thinking and heavy lifting in this project.

The Thrive Project is hosted by the Social Planning Council, in partnership with Cariboo Chilcotin Partners for Literacy. These two organizations provide the administration and oversight to the project.

*Barb Jones - Communities That Care
Beth Veenkamp - City of Williams Lake
Beulah Munsen - School District 27*

*Carla Bullinger - Cariboo Chilcotin Partners for Literacy
Chantal Desruisseaux - Community Volunteer
Rosanna McGregor - Cariboo Friendship Society
Diane Wright - Community Volunteer
Jordan Davis - Downtown Williams Lake
Marnie Brenner - City Council
Shannon Thom - WorkBC*

**115+
HOURS**



FUNDING PARTNERS

van^{co}uver
foundation

www.wlspc.ca/thrive

“ For a community to be great, it has to be great for everyone. ”



**Canadian
Red Cross**



Canada



The Employment Program of British Columbia is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.