



The City of Cranbrook and RDEK Poverty Reduction Plan

September, 2021



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Acknowledgements

The Community Social Planning Society of Cranbrook and Area acknowledges the homelands of the Indigenous Peoples of this place we call the East Kootenay, and honours the many territorial keepers of the Lands on which we work.

Poverty Reduction Plan Advisory Committee

Elaina Englesby
Director of Administration
NEXUS Community Support Society

Alison Facey
Community Literacy Outreach Coordinator
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy

Donna Fields
Regional Coordinator, Cranbrook Office
United Way British Columbia | Southern Interior

Arlene Henry
Community Member

Deanna Kemperman
Coordinator
Cranbrook Food Bank

Chisiki (Siki) Nandazi
Community Member

Erin Pan
Homeless Outreach & Prevention Coordinator
Community Connections Society of Southeast BC

Austin Parisien
Executive Director
Kootenay Métis Housing Society

Ron Popoff
Councillor
City of Cranbrook

Tracy Pound
Homeless Prevention Coordinator
Community Connections Society of Southeast BC

Rita Romeo
Program Coordinator
East Kootenay Child Care Resource & Referral

Kerri Wall
Healthy Communities Facilitator
Interior Health

In addition to the guidance of the Advisory Committee and delivered through the Cranbrook Social Planning Society, the Poverty Reduction Plan includes the collective participation of the Cranbrook City Council, Regional District of East Kootenay Planning & Development Services Committee, various non-profits, agencies and staff throughout the East Kootenay, Cranbrook business community, elected officials, members of the public, and open conversations with many individuals facing poverty challenges.

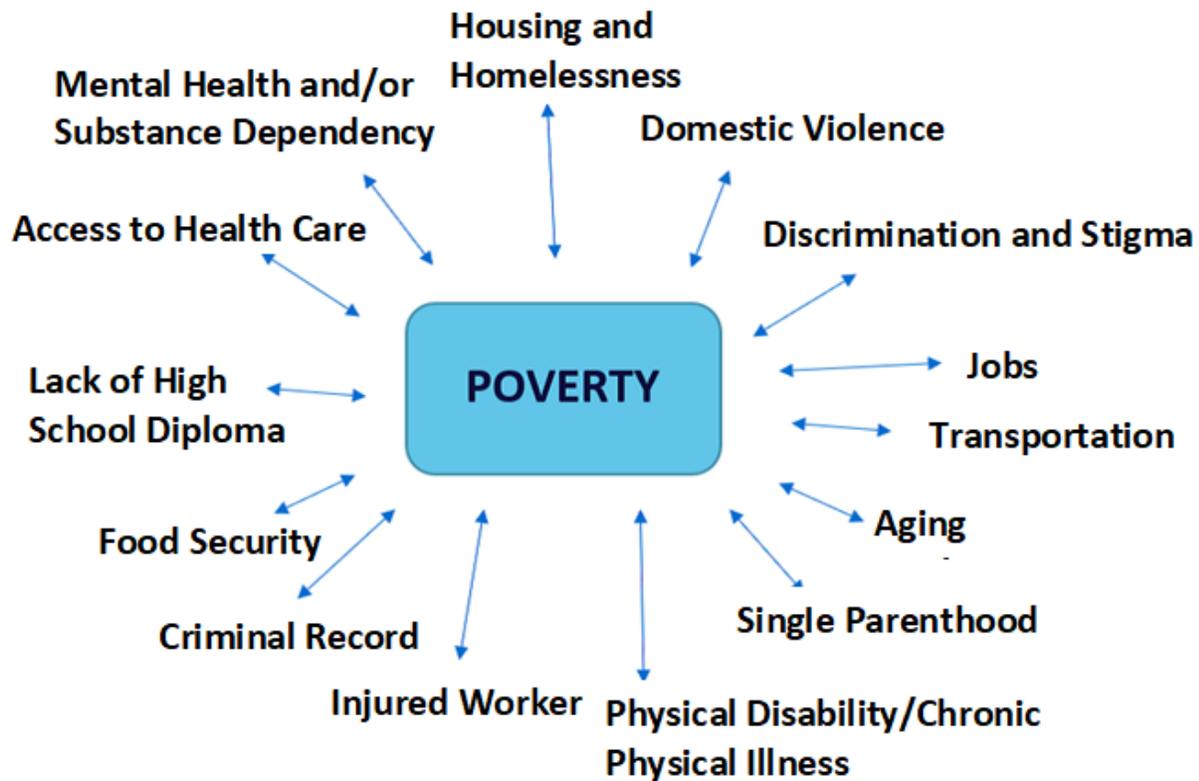
Introduction

Poverty is generally viewed as not having the resources to meet basic needs including food, clothing and shelter. However, poverty is more, much more than just not having enough money.

The World Bank Organization¹ describes poverty in this way:

“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time.”

There is no one cause of poverty. Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, has been described in many ways, and the resources for support are different in every case.



Poverty varies considerably depending on the situation. In the East Kootenay feeling poor in a regional hub like Cranbrook is different from living in poverty in one of the region’s smaller, rural or remote communities. The differences between rich and poor within the borders of a community can also be great. After nearly two years of COVID-19 poverty has been redefined throughout the region for those who lost their employment, are working low-wage jobs, or rely on government support.

One of the better definitions explains, “Poverty is about not being able to participate in the lifestyle of the community.” This includes an inability to participate in recreation, sports, arts, or cultural activities; not being able to send children on a day trip with their schoolmates or to a birthday party; not being able to pay for medications for an illness; not having a healthy food choice on the table, and much more. These are all related to the costs of being poor. People who are barely able to pay for food and shelter simply

can't consider these other expenses. When people are excluded within a society, are not well educated and often have a higher incidence of illness, there are negative consequences for society. We all pay the



price for poverty. The increased cost on the health system, the justice system and other systems that provide supports to those living in poverty has an impact on our economy. Numerous studies have shown an investment in poverty reduction is an overall cost benefit by reducing the need for health and social support². However, the demand for revenue required to support the latter continues to grow.

Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape. So, poverty is a **call to action**, for the poor and the wealthy alike; a call to change our communities so more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities. In order to reduce poverty our communities must look within themselves to fully understand the challenges that are unique to their city, their community, their region. This must include an understanding of the support available through various agencies and volunteers and, most important, an awareness of any gaps or deficiencies in the help available for those who need it. People must have quick and easy access to resources available.

It must also be stated that true economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 cannot happen without addressing social support gaps that were present prior to the pandemic. The intent of this Poverty Reduction Plan is to increase the awareness of the current situation, which includes the impact of the pandemic, and provide a foothold for increased social support and recovery.

Accurately measuring poverty is a challenging exercise. Many people and families struggling with poverty issues do so in silence and anonymity. They are not seeking help from any of the agencies providing support and may not even reach out to family or friends for help. They likely have a roof over their heads, live with an uncertainty about the immediate future and hope they can find a way out of their situation. We can't measure what we can't – or don't – see. And we can't change what we don't measure.

Collecting accurate data about people living in poverty can be a challenge and not necessarily a true indicator of the community story. For example, a point-in-time (PIT) homeless count in Cranbrook on February 16, 2021 had a count of 63 individuals. The previous count in 2018 was 29. However, this is not necessarily an increase of twice the homeless people in the community (34) because the earlier count did not include couch surfers. Regardless of the numbers, the fact remains there are homeless people in the community.

For the purpose of the count an individual was defined as experiencing homelessness if they did not have a place of their own where they paid rent and could expect to stay for at least 30 days. This included people who stayed overnight on the night of the count in homeless shelters, including transition houses for women fleeing violence, youth safe houses, people with no fixed address (NFA) staying temporarily in hospitals, jails or detox facilities (defined as “sheltered”); and, stayed outside in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles or were staying temporarily at someone else’s place (couch surfing) and/or using homelessness services (defined as “unsheltered”).

To design and optimize projects for poverty reduction, we need to be supportive of a flexible measure for their impact on poverty. A new project or an increase in community services could influence the data. For example, in 2021 Cranbrook Council supported a bylaw change to permit a vacant facility to become a

temporary shelter. Would a PIT count in 2023 indicate a reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness, or will the count increase because more homeless are using the new service? A more accurate and flexible indicator than PIT would consider the number of people using the facility and the number of those who were able to move into a more permanent residence because they had the temporary shelter for a short period of time. This would indicate a revolving door of successful support for the project.

Canada's approach to poverty reduction

On August 21, 2018, the Government of Canada released the report: Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy³. The strategy introduced poverty reduction targets (relative to 2015 levels):

a 20% reduction in poverty by 2020

a 50% reduction in poverty by 2030

The Poverty Reduction Strategy provided investments that build on existing programs, such as:

- Canada Child Benefit: a tax-free monthly payment that helps low- to middle-income families with the cost of raising children
- Canada Workers Benefit: a refundable tax credit that helps supplement the earnings of low-income workers
- Increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement top-up benefit: it is helping to improve the financial security of close to 900,000 vulnerable seniors
- Canada's first National Housing Strategy: a 10-year plan to give more Canadians a place to call home.

British Columbia's approach to poverty reduction

Using the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as their measurement instrument, the B.C. provincial government created TogetherBC: British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2019)⁴ to reduce overall poverty in B.C. by 25% and child poverty by 50% by 2024. Built on the principles of Affordability, Opportunity, Reconciliation, and Social Inclusion, TogetherBC focuses on six priority action areas:

- More affordable housing for more people
- Supporting families, children and youth
- Expanding access to education and training
- More opportunities, more jobs
- Improving income supports
- Investing in social inclusion

Project Background and Methodology

a. Project Background

In 2018, Statistics Canada introduced a new methodology, the Market Basket Measure (MBM) for measuring poverty. Previously poverty was calculated using the Low-Income Measures (LIMs). This method allows for individual economic well-being to be analyzed in comparison to previous calculations that considered the entire household as a single unit. The MBM costs out a basket of necessary goods and services, such as rent and nutritious food, associated with a modest level of consumption as a means of measuring the poverty line.

Having a means to determine the poverty line in any region is an effective tool for government to measure the impact of programs delivered to combat poverty. Using MBM as their model the B.C. provincial government learned the poverty rate in B.C. and specifically Vancouver was higher than the Canadian average. As a result, B.C. set legislative targets for its overall poverty rate and child poverty rate. With investments from across Government, TogetherBC was created to reflect government’s commitment to reduce poverty and make life more affordable for British Columbians. It includes policy initiatives and investments designed to lift people up, break the cycle of poverty and build a better B.C. for everyone.

B.C.’s first ever poverty reduction strategy, **TogetherBC**, was released in March 2019. The strategy set targets to reduce the overall poverty rate in British Columbia by at least 25%, and the child poverty rate by at least 50%, by 2024. Municipalities all around the province are being financially supported to develop and implement plans and projects that could reduce poverty at the local level and align with the provincial strategy.

Some data represented in this report uses the new methodology, and for that reason, should not be compared with previous data compilations such as the State of the Basin analyses of Low-Income Measure, nor with statistics from the previous census in 2016 without an understanding how the two sets of data are determined and compared. However, both sets of statistics indicate a measurable need exists and must be addressed.

b. Funding and Partners

Early in 2020 the City of Cranbrook was successful in its application for funding, in partnership with the Regional District of East Kootenay, to develop a poverty reduction plan focusing on Cranbrook as the service hub for the region. The Province of British Columbia’s Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction announced funding for local government projects and the Community Social Planning Society of Cranbrook and Area led the grant application process.

The Poverty Reduction Plan project is coordinated through the Community Social Planning Society of Cranbrook and Area with the funding received through the Union of British



Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). The Community Social Planning Society of Cranbrook and Area has been working on issues related to poverty for years, and were well positioned to coordinate a project focused on creating a poverty reduction plan.

c. Scope of Work

The project will address 4 questions:

1. What is happening throughout the region right now?
2. What is the lived experience of poverty in Cranbrook and the RDEK?
3. What is the change we want to see?
4. What can we do together?

Under the guidance of an Advisory Committee consisting of a diverse group of members from the area of the study, work is centered on reviewing relevant statistics and related data from previous community projects, accomplishments and engagements with organizations and individuals throughout the region. Through the term of the project (August 2020 to August 2021), the Project Coordinator engaged with individuals, organizations, businesses and local governments to identify the current situation and issues related to poverty. The project's engagement and consultation included:

- BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Churches providing meals and hampers
- College of the Rockies
- Communications with over 10 individuals in BC and 30 Canadians working on poverty related projects
- Community food banks
- Cranbrook business community
- Cranbrook City Council and Chief Administrative Officer Doug Clovechuk, MLA for Columbia River-Revelstoke, Kootenay Employment Services
- Mayors, elected officials, and administrators in Radium Hot Springs, Invermere, Fernie, Sparwood, Elkford
- More than 16 non-profits, agencies and staff throughout the East Kootenay
- Over 280 individuals in the East Kootenay consulted through face-to-face interviews, telephone calls and Zoom meetings
- Over 70 people with lived experience in the East Kootenay
- Poverty Reduction staff in communities throughout British Columbia
- Regional District of East Kootenay Planning & Development Services Committee
- TogetherBC
- Tom Shypitka, MLA for Kootenay East, Union of British Columbia Municipalities, and Various members of the public



Virtual engagement sessions in RDEK involved over 140 participants and included a Business Survey in Cranbrook, a Public Survey for RDEK, Discussions Through Invitations from posters, a Poverty Reduction email address, and Questionnaires distributed through various agencies to hear the voices of lived and living experience individuals.

d. Communities Researched

The Poverty Reduction Plan focused on Cranbrook, as the hub of services, and communities of the Elk Valley and Columbia Valley.

e. Expected Results

With this information City Council and the RDEK will have an informative basis to support governance structures that move forward, prioritize actions, and have recommendations for different community sectors and action teams.

f. Changes Because of COVID

The pandemic has forced the Poverty Reduction Plan project to deviate from the initial strategy as outlined in the proposal. Specifically, the public engagement sessions planned for Cranbrook, Elk Valley and Columbia Valley could not take place because of the COVID-19 restrictions for public gatherings. These sessions were designed to obtain perspectives from service providers, people with lived and living experience, the business community, elected officials, and the general public.

To obtain these viewpoints electronic surveys were used for the Cranbrook business community and the public in the region. A poverty reduction email address was established. A business survey was distributed through a membership email list provided by the Cranbrook Chamber of Commerce. Public surveys were distributed electronically through e-Know, an online newspaper, and various community Facebook groups in the region. Posters inviting people to share their views on poverty were posted on bulletin boards throughout the region. To obtain information from people with lived experience various organizations were invited to share a questionnaire with a cross section of people coming to them for help. In turn, the agencies provided information about the services they provide, the challenges, and the support they feel needs improvement.

Statistical data about the impact of COVID-19 to the people of the East Kootenay is not available. The project has, when possible, considered the COVID-19 influence through a qualitative perspective gathered through communications with people working in service agencies, government, community volunteers, and people experiencing the impact in order to help address the 4 questions addressed by the project.

The Government of Canada recently released national data about the impact of COVID-19. Although national in scope the comparative impact to people in the East Kootenay can be implied. The single working mothers in Cranbrook and Toronto face similar day-care closings and home-schooling challenges. For this reason, a section “Understanding the Impact of COVID-19” has been added to the original four questions in the project report.

g. Timeline of Cranbrook’s approach to poverty reduction

2012: Cranbrook was identified as one of seven communities in BC to pilot a community poverty reduction project. A contracted Family Consultant worked with community agencies and families to initiate discussion on family poverty in Cranbrook. In June 2014 the Cranbrook Poverty Reduction Committee (CPRC) was formed to focus on a collaborative approach to address the needs of families living in poverty. CPRC is a sub-committee of the Cranbrook Social Planning Society.

2020: The City of Cranbrook was successful in its application for funding, in partnership with the Regional District of East Kootenay, to develop a Poverty Reduction Plan focusing on Cranbrook as the service hub for the region.

2021: The City of Cranbrook passed a rezoning bylaw to permit renovating a former fitness studio into an emergency shelter scheduled for completion December, 2021.

What is Happening in the Region Right Now?

Prior to understanding what is happening in the region there must be an understanding of how poverty needs to be examined and understood. As will be seen in this report some poverty statistics for the East Kootenay region are below provincial and national levels. Such measurements should not be received as an indication that the status quo is acceptable.

The Challenge of Measuring Poverty

Relying on statistical evidence of poverty is challenging. Firstly, measuring poverty based on income can be judged inaccurate or controversial because other factors come into play. For example, post-secondary students may not make enough to get by, but may have good family support that prevent them from being vulnerable to stress, hunger, and poor health. On the other hand, single parents making more than the Low Income Cut Off may still struggle to provide for themselves and their children.

Secondly, there is the challenge of consensus around a definition of poverty. One view takes into consideration the people whose physical existence is endangered (homelessness, food insecurity), another regards those whose income is associated with poor quality of life (including health concerns, mental health, stress, and crime), and another defines those whose income prevents them from participating in society, including social, civic and democratic life.

Prior to analyzing data related to poverty there must be an understanding of the different measurements used, what factors are considered, and what degree of deprivation makes the cut. Measures and definitions are often quite controversial precisely because they are so subjective. DeGroot⁵ explains, “Choosing a poverty line depends on how high or how low we set our sights for the well-being of the materially disadvantaged in our society”.

In Canada there is no official poverty line. Instead, several different measures are used that provide slightly different information about those living on low-income, most notably the Low-Income Measure (LIM), the Market Basket Measure (MBM), and the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO). The measures have different uses, advantages and disadvantages, but Statistics Canada considers using them cumulatively provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of low income as a whole. When compared side-by-side over time, however, they provide similar trends, thereby bolstering each other’s reliability as measures of low-income⁶.

The income level represented by the **Low-Income Measure (LIM)** is an internationally comparable measure of low income. The LIM threshold is 50% of the national adjusted after-tax income in a given geographical area where “adjusted” indicates the household size and needs are taken into account. The median is the value at which the amount for half of all individuals will be above it and half below. A person is considered to be in low income when their after-tax income is below the threshold. Its major drawback is that it does not provide an indication of a family’s purchasing power and inferred quality of life at that income. Plus, a household’s needs increase as the number of members increases.

The **Market Basket Measure (MBM)** defines “low-income” precisely by purchasing power⁷. It establishes the cost of a basket of goods which is determined by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and varies depending the geographical area. The cost of the basket of goods is then compared to disposable income to determine low-income figure. The benefit of this measure is that it is geographically sensitive; however, the validity of the goods included in the basket has been criticized. While Statistics

Canada and Human Resources and Skill Development Canada (HRSDC) state that the MBM represents a standard of living in British Columbia and Canada that is a compromise between subsistence and social inclusion, many experts studying poverty challenge this. Shillington and Stapleton⁸ note, for example, that the MBM includes “five pairs of underwear, but no computer access”.

The **Low-Income Cut-Off** is the oldest and most established measure of low-income, dating back to 1967. It represents a threshold below which families devote a larger share of income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family would⁹. The benefit of LICO is its historical data and that it is more up-to-date than the other two measures, using annually released Consumer Price Index data while the MBM and LIM are typically available 16-18 months after the end of the reference year. LICO has been criticized, however, for its lack of geographic sensitivity and assumptions around spending patterns.

All three provide a measurement for identifying individuals and families living below a determined value. When examined collectively or individually they help support a search into how many individuals in any given region are facing challenges to their being able to share in the lifestyle of their community and are deserving of support from their community.

Population Overview

Cranbrook’s population has remained relatively consistent with a population rate change of 9.7% from 2006 – 2016¹⁰. At the time of the census Cranbrook’s population was 19,420 with a total population count for the RDEK at 60,439.

The population in Cranbrook has grown to 21,502¹¹ in 2020, with a population estimate for the REDK at 65,782¹²

The **2020 Cranbrook Community Profile Report**¹³ provides a pre-COVID-19 snapshot of the local poverty challenges:

- 15% of all children in the RDEK live in poverty (35% of Cranbrook Food Bank clients are children)
- 50% of children living in single-parent households live in poverty
- 13.7% of people in Cranbrook are classified as low income
- 12.6% of people in RDEK are classified as low income
- Cranbrook average household income is \$82,859 (BC average household income is \$90,354)
- Cranbrook unemployment rate is 7.8% (BC unemployment rate is 6.7%)
- 42.4% of renters in Cranbrook (43.3% of renters in BC) spend more than 30% of their income on shelter

LOW INCOME STATUS

There are:

1,170 children age 0 – 5,
3,735 Children age 0 – 17, and
3,655 adults age 18 – 64
are considered to be living in
low-income status

Low-income status is an indication of a level when people may become vulnerable to the challenges of poverty. In the RDEK approximately 2500 people, or 4% of the population, are on some sort of financial support¹⁴ and may be considered as low-income status. Nearly one third

of those (34.2%) are low-income, single parent homes. A little more than half of the people receiving income support reside in Cranbrook (approximately 1200).

In BC, over 206,000 people received income assistance or about 4% of the provincial population with a Canadian average of 5%.

Almost 14% of our children (0 – 17) come from low-income families. This is lower than BC’s child poverty rate of 18.5%, and national child poverty rate of 18.2%.

3.9% of the region’s population are low-income seniors (65+), compared to 8.8 % for B.C. and the Canadian average of 6.6 %.

	RDEK	BC	Canada
Receiving Financial Support	4%	4%	5%
Children From Low-income Families	14%	18.5%	18.2%
Low-income Seniors (65+)	3.9%	8.8%	6.6%

Household Income Overview

When analyzing data related to household income it must be understood there are a variety of ways of measuring income, some more suitable than others, depending on the use to be made of the data. When looking at economic well-being, household or family income may be more suitable than individual income. For example, one partner in a couple may primarily stay home looking after children and may have a low income, while the other partner could be in the labour force and making significant income. The former person is not necessarily poor.

Median and average household data are frequently presented and although both give an indication of a “mid-point” value, the numerical statistic of each value differs. Local comparisons to provincial and national statistics must be made using comparable methods.

Median Household Income: Median household income refers to the income level earned by a given household where half of the households in the geographic area of interest earn more and half earn less. The median household income is calculated by rank ordering all households by ascending income and then identifying the income of the most middle household, i.e., the household that has an equal number of households above and below it. Median household income is the income cut-off where half of the households earn more, and half earn less.

Average Household Income: Average (or mean) household income on the other hand is calculated by dividing the total household income in the target geography by the number of households. Average household income is the income that all households would have if the total income of all households combined was equally distributed among all households.

The median income for Cranbrook, is \$67,942, the East Kootenay is \$78,387 compared to \$69,995 for BC and \$70,336 for Canada. The average household income in Cranbrook is \$82,859 (2016 Canada Census) compared to \$86,444 for the RDEK and the BC average of \$90,354.

Income Measurement Used	Cranbrook	RDEK	BC
Median Household Income	\$ 67,942	\$ 78,387	\$ 69,995
Average Household Income	\$ 82,859	\$ 86,444	\$ 90,354

The following sections examine the impact of specific poverty-related challenges. This provides a clearer understanding of the current condition in the region.

Food Insecurity

Hunger-Relief Organizations in East Kootenay include:

Cranbrook and Kimberley

The Cranbrook Free Food calendar shows the current collaborative hunger-relief effort between nine organizations in Cranbrook (and in Kimberley, the Food Bank and Food Recovery Programs). All are providing free food to those in need, varying in type i.e., providing groceries, meals, bulk food shares or food recovery. Salvation Army Cranbrook is also providing school lunches to students in need. Cranbrook and Kimberley Food Recovery help is supported with rescued food from retailers that also enables donating to other smaller programs and schools.



Feeding the temporary Homeless Shelter clients is done through a collaborative effort by four different programs.

Adapting to COVID-related issues and wild fluctuations in need, while incredibly challenging, has been offset somewhat by tremendous community financial and volunteer support. COVID has also highlighted the need for more consistent funding support in order to function efficiently.



CRANBROOK FREE FOOD

UPDATED Aug 20, 2021



FOOD BANK: 1624 Industrial Road 2 426-7664 **STREET ANGELS:** 46 17th Ave S 420-2756 **ANKORS:** 46 17 Ave S 426-3383
SALVATION ARMY: 533 Slater Rd 426-3612 **St. Aidan Orthodox:** 201 7th Ave S 420-1582 **St. Mary's Church:** 39 10th Ave S 426-4266
Ekklesia Millenium Society: 217 Industrial Rd F 778- 517-5800 Delivery/Shuttle

FOOD BANK OR SALVATION ARMY: Deliveries and Emerg/Mini Hampers available by phone. SENIORS 65 and older: Sally Ann Home Meals Delivery M, W, F. And Dial 2-1-1 or fill in an online form www.bc211.ca to request free help with grocery shopping, meal prep, prescription pick-up or a friendly check-in call during COVID-19 pandemic. (HOMELESS SHELTER MEALS & BULK FOOD by CCSSEBC, Food Bank, St. Aidan, Dominos

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
BEVERAGES, SNACKS @Ankors – 10am – 2pm @Street Angels 9am-5pm BREAKFAST @ St Aidan 7:30-9:30am @Ekklesia 9:30-10:30am (Call before 4pm for next day) @St Mary's Church 8-10am (small food hamper, 3 rd Monday every month)	BEVERAGES, SNACKS @Ankors 10am – 2pm @Street Angels 9-5pm BREAKFAST @Ekklesia 9:30-10:30am (Call before 4pm for next day)	BEVERAGES, SNACKS @Ankors – 10am – 2pm @Street Angels 9am-5pm BREAKFAST @St Aidan 7:30-9:30am (1 st & 2 nd Wed every month) @Ekklesia 9:30-10:30am (Call before 4pm for next day)	BEVERAGES, SNACKS @Ankors 10am – 2pm @Street Angels 9-5pm BREAKFAST @Ekklesia 9:30-10:30am (Call before 4pm for next day)	BEVERAGES, SNACKS @ Ankors – 10am – 2pm (Phone first) @Street Angels 9am-5pm BREAKFAST @ Ankors 8-10am (Eat in or Take Out) @Ekklesia 9:30-10:30am (Call before 4pm for next day)	BREAKFAST (Sat) @Ekklesia 9:30-10:30am (Call before 4pm for next day) BRUNCH (Sun) @Ekklesia 11am – 12pm (Call 3-7pm Sat)
FOOD BANK -Bread Shed 24/7 & sweets -HAMPER Fresh Veg/Frt, Dairy, Eggs, Meat/Fish/Poultry, bread, non-perishables, toiletries, diapers. Every 2 wks if needed. Phone 9:30am-12:30pm to book afternoon pickup time.	FRESH FOOD GIVEAWAY @ Salvation Army 10:30-12:30pm (bring own bag)	FOOD BANK -Bread Shed 24/7 & sweets -HAMPER Fresh Veg/Frt, Dairy, Eggs, Meat/Fish/Poultry, bread, non-perishables, toiletries, diapers. Every 2 wks if needed. Phone 9:30am-12:30pm to book afternoon pickup time.	FRESH FOOD GIVEAWAY @ Salvation Army 10:30-12:30pm (bring own bag)	FOOD BANK -Bread Shed 24/7 & sweets -HAMPER Fresh Veg/Frt, Dairy, Eggs, Meat/Fish/Poultry, bread, non-perishables, toiletries, diapers. Every 2 wks if needed. Phone 9:30am-12:30pm to book afternoon pickup time.	ANKORS BBQ twice / month (Schedule on Community Connections front food cupboard)
LUNCH @Salvation Army 11:30-12:30pm @Ekklesia 12-1pm (Call 10-11pm to order or for shuttle)	LUNCH @Salvation Army 11:30-12:30pm @Ekklesia 12-1pm (Call 10-11pm)	LUNCH @ Ekklesia 12-1pm (Call 10-11am)	LUNCH @Salvation Army 11:30-12:30pm @Ekklesia 12-1pm (Call 10-11pm)	LUNCH @Salvation Army 11:30-12:30pm @Ekklesia 12-1pm (Call 10-11pm)	
SUPPER @Street Angels 4-5pm @Ekklesia 6-7pm (Call 12-4pm)	SUPPER @Street Angels 4-5pm @Ekklesia 6-7pm (Call 12-4pm)	SUPPER @Salvation Army 4pm (Take Out) @Ekklesia 6-7pm (Call 12-4pm)	SUPPER @Street Angels 4-5pm @Ekklesia 6-7pm (Call 12-4pm)	SUPPER @Street Angels 4-5pm @Ekklesia 6-7pm (Call 12-4pm)	SUPPER @Ekklesia 7-8pm (Sat)

PG 1 of 2

Food Pantries (Maintained by Healthy Caring Meals and the Public)

Locations in Cranbrook:



1. 701 King St (#4 on Matchett Ave)
2. 111 8th Ave S. (across from old Food Bank)
3. 209A 16th Ave N
4. 126 17th Ave S. (back lane 17A Ave S)
5. 1962 Kokanee Cresc.
6. 2220 2nd St S inside fence to right
7. 33 724 Innes Ave
8. 421 Briar Ave NW

Elk Valley

- Presently providing food for 10 families.
- Change in available facility resulted in no longer taking food donations. Public now provides cash donations and Food Bank staff goes with the individual or family to the grocery store and purchases groceries.

Invermere

- Columbia Valley Food Bank – Feeds approximately 25 people per day, two days per week. Clients are able to access as needed but average once monthly.

Food for Learning

A collaborative effort between the schools and the Columbia Valley Food Bank designed to feed and fuel any students who are looking for a snack or hot/cold lunches. Hot lunches are provided by Invermere David Thompson Secondary School culinary program. Lunches are sent out frozen to participating schools, who reheat and serve onsite. Serving 40-100 students weekly.

School Cooking Program

A school cooking program at J.A. Laird Elementary School is a program designed to get the students into the kitchen preparing food, cooking the food, enjoying the food, and in some cases, sharing the food with their entire class.

Open Doors Work Experience Program.

This collaborative project aims to get youth involved in the food bank operations, build their community service awareness, skill and experience. Sixteen youth, grades 10-12 participate in the program. Collectively they have completed 100 volunteer hours for the Food Bank and are able to claim them towards their work/volunteer experience hours of which they need 100 to graduate from high school.

Various Communities

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program (FMNCP)

Community partner organizations provide coupons to lower-income families, pregnant people and seniors participating in their food literacy programs. Coupons can be spent at any BC Association of Farmer's Markets to purchase vegetables, fruits, nuts, eggs, dairy, cut herbs, meat and fish.

- Each household enrolled in the program is eligible to receive a minimum of \$21/week in coupons. The program runs throughout the summer months when produce is most abundant across the province. Coupons can be used at any participating BC Farmers' Market from June 12th – December 11th
- The FMNCP is funded by the BC Ministry of Health and locally supported by the Columbia Basin Trust

Housing and Homelessness

Because homelessness is such a stigmatized public example of the impact of poverty, the need for housing is probably one of the more common messages heard in community. To help understand and identify housing issues and solutions a **Housing Needs Assessment** or comprehensive study such as a **Point in Time** (PiT) count is used as a basis for future housing needs and policy decisions.

A **Housing Needs Assessment** describes current and anticipated housing needs in a community by collecting data, analyzing trends and speaking with community members. It is also a relatively recent requirement under the Local Government Statutes (Housing Needs Reports) Amendment Act, 2018¹⁵ which requires Local Governments to develop a Housing Needs Report every five years to better inform and understand the kind of housing most needed in their communities by identifying existing and projected gaps in housing supply.

All housing needs reports are required to contain the following, based on an analysis of the information collected:

- Statements about key areas of local need, including: affordable housing, rental housing, special needs housing, seniors housing, family housing, and shelters and housing for people at risk of homelessness
- The number of housing units required to meet current and anticipated housing needs for at least the next five years, by housing type. Housing ‘type’ is defined as dwelling size (number of bedrooms)
- The number and percentage of households in core housing need and extreme core housing need.

The **Point-in-Time** (PiT) counts are a community-level measure of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness and provides a picture of the community’s homelessness situation. For the purpose of the count an individual was defined as experiencing homelessness if they did not have a place of their own where they paid rent and could expect to stay for at least 30 days. This included people who stayed overnight on the night of the count in homeless shelters, including transition houses for women fleeing violence, youth safe houses, people with no fixed address (NFA) staying temporarily in hospitals, jails or detox facilities (defined as “sheltered”); and, stayed outside in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles or were staying temporarily at someone else’s place (couch surfing) and/or using homelessness services (defined as “unsheltered”)¹⁶. This method is an undercount as not everyone who is experiencing homelessness can be found/identified during a 24-hour period, and not everyone experiencing homelessness gives consent to be counted.

BC Housing conducted point in time (PiT) homeless counts for Cranbrook in 2018 and 2020.

WOMEN AND HOMELESSNESS

A study led by the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network (June 2020), shows women experiencing homelessness in Canada are largely invisible and falling through major gaps in support systems -- and into dangerous situations. The scope is dramatically underestimated because women are more likely to rely on precarious and sometimes dangerous support, such as by sleeping on couches or trading sex for housing. Studies of homelessness also largely fail to count women fleeing gender-based violence and women trapped in situations of sex trafficking.

Homelessness Typology

To better understand homelessness numerous organizations, such as the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness,¹⁷ have developed typology to describe the range of accommodations that people without appropriate, stable, and permanent housing may experience. Those without acceptable housing experience a range of different types of homelessness, from being unsheltered to having housing that is insecure or inappropriate. As homelessness is not one single event or state of being, it is important to recognize that at different points in time people may find themselves experiencing different types of homelessness.

1) Unsheltered, includes people who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, except during extreme weather conditions. In most cases, people are staying in places that are not designed for or fit for human habitation.

2) Emergency Sheltered, refers to people who, because they cannot secure permanent housing, are accessing emergency shelter and system supports, generally provided at no cost or minimal cost to the user. Such accommodation represents a stop-gap institutional response to homelessness provided by government, non-profit, faith-based organizations and/or volunteers.

3) Provisionally Accommodated, situations in which people, who are technically homeless and without permanent shelter, access accommodation that offers no prospect of permanence. Those who are provisionally accommodated may be accessing temporary housing provided by government or the non-profit sector, or may have independently made arrangements for short-term accommodation.

4) At Risk of Homelessness, although not technically homeless, this includes individuals or families whose current housing situations are dangerously lacking security or stability, and so are considered to be at risk of homelessness. They are living in housing that is intended for permanent human habitation, and could potentially be permanent (as opposed to those who are provisionally accommodated). However, as a result of external hardship, poverty, personal crisis, discrimination, a lack of other available and affordable housing, insecurity of tenure and / or the inappropriateness of their current housing (which may be overcrowded or does not meet public health and safety standards) residents may be “at risk” of homelessness.

EXTREME WEATHER SHELTERS

Across BC, Extreme Weather Shelters are a BCHousing response to extreme weather conditions that activate the need for an emergency shelter. In Cranbrook it was decided the weather is consistently unfavorable November 1st to March 31st, resulting in a temporary nightly shelter being available for the last several years.

Number of Persons Experiencing Homelessness, City of Cranbrook

Source: Report on Homeless Count in B.C., 2018 & 2020

Sheltered and Unsheltered	2018 Total		2020 Total		Change from 2018-2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Sheltered	6	21%	28	44%	22	367%
Unsheltered	23	79%	35*	56%	12	52%
Total	29	100%	63	100%	34	117%

*Includes 17 individuals who indicated they stayed at someone else’s place or were couch surfing on the night of the count

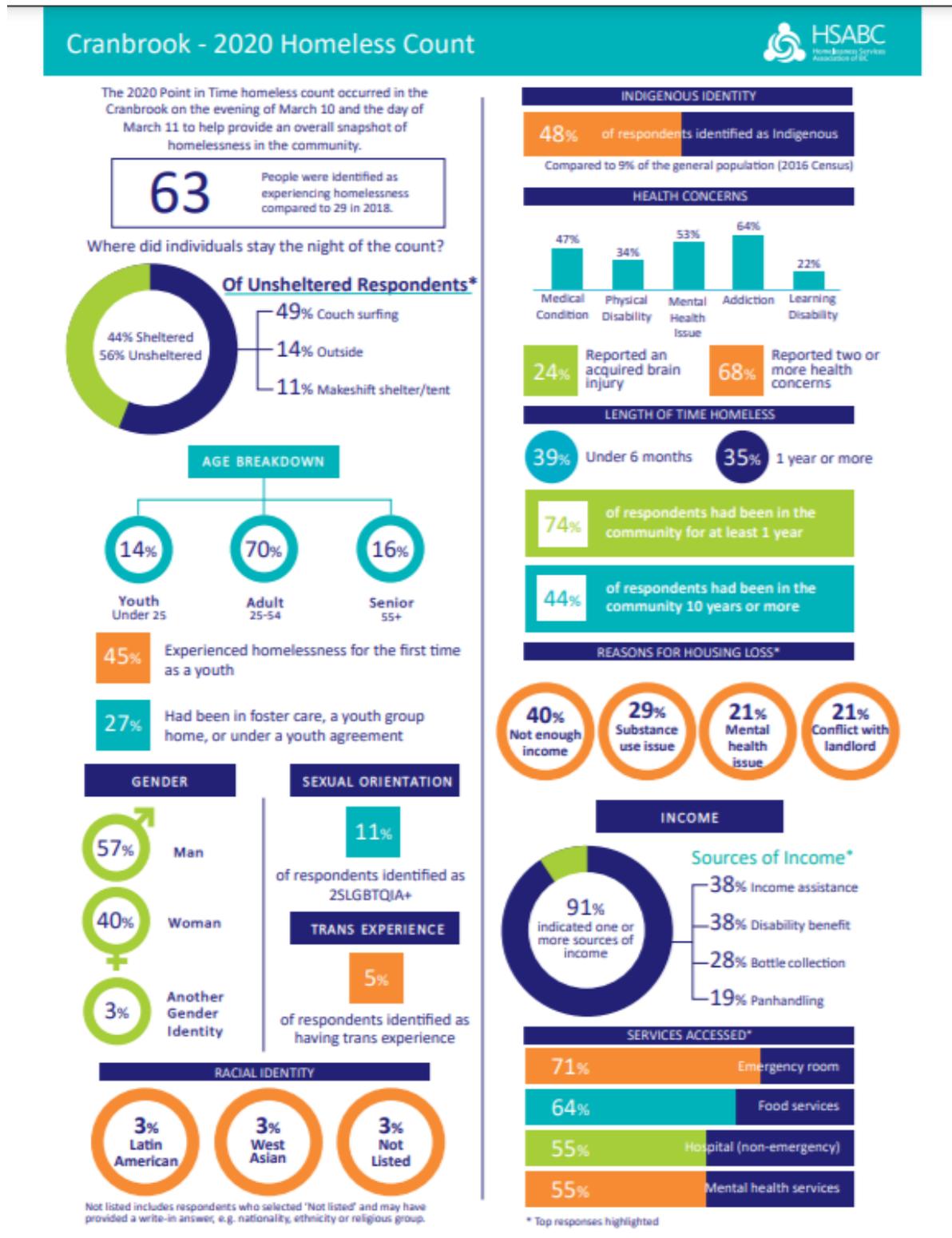
East Kootenay Emergency Shelter

Until recently there was no emergency shelter in the East Kootenay operating throughout the year. The only emergency shelter available during the winter months was in Cranbrook.

The Cranbrook Housing Needs Report states, “Temporary emergency shelters became a high priority for the Provincial government during the COVID-19 public health emergency, in order to provide persons experiencing homelessness a place they could safely distance themselves from others to avoid the virus” (Page 30). In response to COVID-19 a temporary emergency shelter was provided in a Cranbrook motel. It will remain open until December, 2021 when a recently approved year-round shelter, approved through a by-law change by City Council, becomes available.

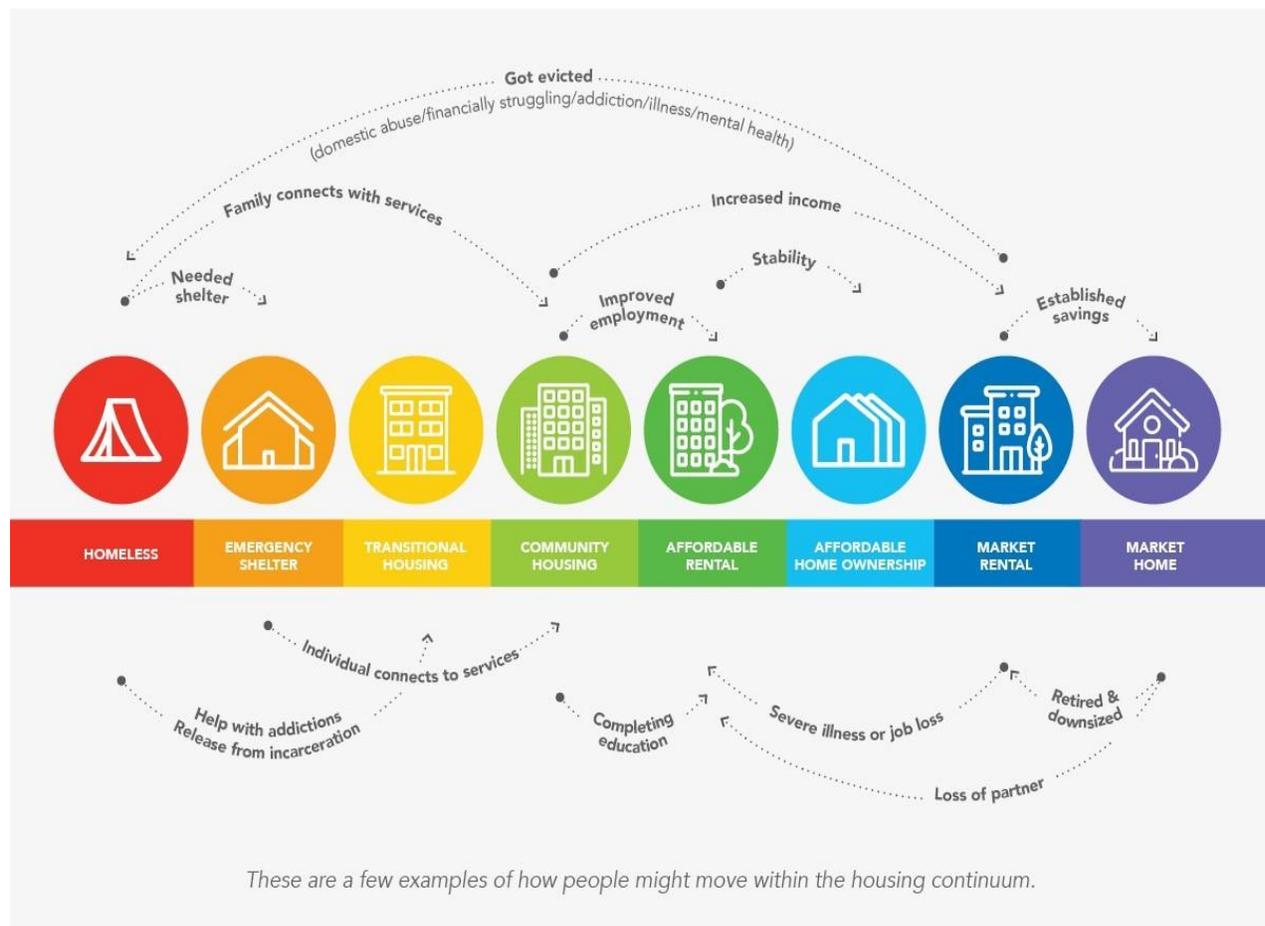
Other communities in East Kootenay also have temporary housing available for women and children experiencing violence.

Cranbrook Homeless Count 2020



Housing Continuum

A Housing Continuum model is a linear progression representing the range of housing types available in a community — from emergency shelters on one end, all the way to homeownership on the other. In between lies an assortment of housing options and types, each critically important for different people at different times¹⁸. A Housing Continuum is often used to show how the sources of housing supply are interrelated, with the constraints of any one type of supply impacting others. For example, residents with low incomes are challenged to find affordable market value housing. This contributes to an increase in the need for social housing options as well as increases the requirement for support through rent supplements. Used around the world, the Housing Continuum is an approach to visually depict different segments of housing, one that can be customized to local housing needs and promoting greater equity, diversity and inclusivity.



The Housing Wheelhouse

The Housing Wheelhouse is a representation of how people may move across, not just along, categories of housing throughout their lives. Developed as part of the Kelowna Healthy Housing Strategy¹⁹, the Wheelhouse promotes equity and inclusivity, recognizing that home ownership is not the end goal for all people. Diverse housing options are required to meet the socioeconomic and demographic needs of all community members.



Regional Housing Assessment

East Kootenay

Regional District of East Kootenay

The RDEK Housing Needs Report survey deadline was July 23, 2021. Initial findings are not surprising, and include there aren't many renters in the electoral areas, but renter households are much more likely to be in core housing need than owner households. Also, even when adjusted for inflation, housing prices are up across all electoral areas except electoral area F (around Canal Flats/Fairmont Hot Springs/Windermere). Lastly, lone parents have the highest rates of housing need. Usually they have only one income, have additional housing burden (i.e., need more than one bedroom), and have the additional

expense of childcare. Lone parents should be a priority population for intervention and poverty-reduction efforts

Cranbrook

A City of Cranbrook Housing Needs Report²⁰ was completed in November 2020 to better understand the current and future housing needs within the community.

Cranbrook's Housing Situation

A key observation of the report indicates Cranbrook does not have a shortage of units, but rather a mismatch between the types of housing units that are available and the current and emerging housing needs of the community. Specific examples include:

- Aging seniors living in single-detached dwellings have limited options for downsizing, leaving them over housed with high maintenance homes that could otherwise be available for entry-level homeowners and young families.
- The rental housing stock has a disproportionate number of large units (e.g., 3 and 4-bedroom units) and few one-bedroom units. The large units are 'too big' for singles and couples looking to rent a small, affordable place to live. This situation is somewhat unique to the Cranbrook context, as many comparable communities tend to have the opposite problem.
- The availability of the larger units does not meet the demand of families seeking rental units.

The secondary rental market study reports older and aging rental buildings are deteriorating and reaching the end of their economic life. Rental units falling into disrepair and often are not suitable as households for people with special requirements such as accessibility needs, disabilities or mobility challenges.

Engagement with the community revealed that certain groups in Cranbrook are challenged to afford the average rental price. Single parents, students, young couples, minimum wage earners, and low-income households of all demographics (including seniors and families) are experiencing difficulty with covering the cost of rent. Many young people and families are reluctantly considering leaving Cranbrook to find more affordable communities to live, with the sacrifice of disconnecting from their families and friends.



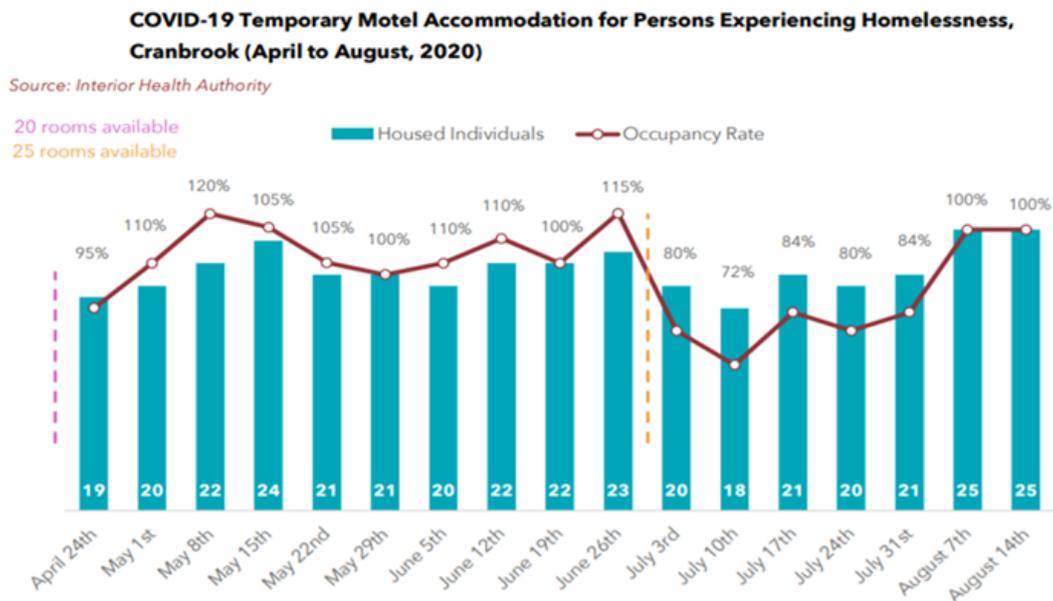
Workers who are relocating from other communities are also challenged to find housing in Cranbrook that meets their needs, raising concerns over the ability to attract and recruit a skilled workforce for Cranbrook.

Due to the social distancing rules; the Salvation Army, who ran the Extreme Weather response for multiple years, could not accommodate the continued response of such a facility in their building. BCHousing assisted by working with the community to repurpose a motel for COVID purposes; later extending the initiative to provide an emergency shelter at the motel until the newly approved Emergency Shelter facility will be ready.

The Emergency Shelter facility will provide core services that include:

- a) essential services such as temporary overnight shelter accommodation, food and other services to meet the basic nutritional and hygiene needs of people who are homeless, and
- b) gateway services in the form of stable housing and key support services.

The Emergency Shelter is contracted through BCH as per their standard operational agreement process



The count as of July 2021 reports 14,000 nights of safe shelter was provided at the motel serving 209 individuals through an average of 45 beds available for daily emergency shelter.

Emergency Shelter

Cranbrook City Council approved a Bylaw change to permit a vacant commercial property become an emergency shelter providing 24/7/365 shelter and services²¹, the first of its kind in the region. Historically, Cranbrook has had the only Extreme Weather Nightly Shelter in the region. The closest Permanent or Extreme Weather Nightly Shelters being in Nelson or Lethbridge.



Cranbrook Homeless Outreach Program

The Homeless Outreach Statistical Summary for the period January 1st, 2020 to December 31st, 2020 includes:

- Meeting with an average of 15 new people every month (this reflects individual numbers not the total family unit)
- Monthly telephone meetings with over 100 clients and service providers
- 2020 had an 18% increase over 2019 number of clients who were homeless
- 4,000 calls were responded to in 2020, an increase of nearly 1,100 calls

Employment

Current employment and unemployment data specific to the Regional District of East Kootenay or any of the communities in the region is not available until the 2021 census is released. Much of the provincial data refers to the Kootenays as one region, thus generalizations from those sources includes the East Kootenay, Kootenay Boundary and West Kootenay.

Data from the 2016 census has been upgraded by various agencies however the Impact of COVID-19 on regional employment has not been assessed. Census data updated in 2019 by Environics Analytics²² indicate:

- Only a small proportion of B.C.'s population lives in East Kootenay
- East Kootenay has the highest median age of all the economic regions
- Unemployment in this region has consistently been higher than in the provincial unemployment rate.
- Around a tenth of all East Kootenay jobs were in the Other Primary Sector (forestry, mining, oil and gas, fishing, hunting and trapping).
- East Kootenay has a high number of jobs in goods-producing sector industries, the second highest proportion of any of the regions.

Key Findings

- The median household income in Cranbrook is 6% higher than the national average
- The unemployment rate in Cranbrook is 13% lower than the national average
- In Cranbrook 6.2% of people earn \$20,000 or less
- In Cranbrook 11.2% of people earn between \$80,000 and \$100,000
- In Cranbrook 2.3% of people earn \$300,000 or more

Employment challenges can vary according to circumstance. Newly graduated youth can't always find jobs post-college; the impact of COVID, the nature of essential work/workers; child care; lack of affordability for post-secondary options; limited local options for post-secondary education; wages eaten up by cost of housing; low-end gig economy; racism; disability status; and the incentive to stay on social assistance rather than work part-time because of loss of benefits, can all become barriers to employment.

Homeless individuals experience challenge in finding employment which may include:

- The lack of time to direct efforts towards finding employment because the struggle to survive every day consumes most of their time and energy
- No address to put on a resume or application, no phone number for call backs, or no safe place to prepare for job interviews
- Lack of trust between the homeless and the working community because many employers feel hiring a homeless person comes with an amount of risk
- Low education attainment, lack of vocational training, or low levels of computer literacy
- Limited access to transportation to get to interviews or places of work
- Lack of experience in field of interest
- Substance dependency or release from rehabilitation facility/program

What is the Lived Experience?

There is no measure that can ever capture the unquantifiable experience of actually living in poverty, which is a drain on dignity, potential, and hope. From the 59-year-old man who lives alone and can't work due to a job-related traumatic brain injury to the 27-year-old mother escaping an abusive spouse, poverty is a prison that no one chooses.

Throughout the area of the Regional District of East Kootenay key stakeholders are recognizing an increasing level of demand for housing, health supports, and resources for clients with complex needs²³ which can include mental health, alcohol and substance dependency, developmental and physical disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries.

Indigenous people face more poverty across their populations and deeper poverty than non-indigenous people.

People experiencing complex needs in our communities will often have a multitude of complex and intersecting support needs which often crosses multiple programs and services. While the root causes of housing insecurity, mental illness and substance use disorder are complex and intersecting, there is significant evidence to suggest the provision of housing with appropriate supports is one very effective and necessary intervention to support individuals experiencing homelessness and complex needs²⁴.

Substance Dependency

Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths

The illicit drug toxicity category includes the following:

- Street drugs (Controlled and illegal drugs: heroin, cocaine, MDMA, methamphetamine, illicit fentanyl etc.).
- Medications not prescribed to the decedent but obtained/purchased on the street, from unknown means or where origin of drug not known.
- Combinations of the above with prescribed medications.

Background BC stats:

- In April 2021, there were 176 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths. This is the largest number of suspected deaths ever recorded in the month of April.
- The 176 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths represent a 43% increase over the number of deaths occurring in April 2020 (123) and a 10% increase over the number of deaths occurring in March 2021 (160).
- The number of illicit drug toxicity deaths in April 2021 equates to about 5.9 deaths per day. In 2021, 70% of those dying were aged 30 to 59. Males accounted for 79% of deaths in 2021.
- In 2021, 85% of illicit drug toxicity deaths occurred inside (56% in private residences and 29% in other residences including social and supportive housing, SROs, shelters, and hotels and other

COMPLEX NEEDS

The language of Complex Needs is a terminology used to describe the subset of the homeless population whose support fails to fit neatly into the silos into which support services are often recognized. The broad and diverse group of individuals who experience complex needs will often have a multitude of complex and intersecting challenges related to substance use, mental illness, developmental disabilities, FASD, and acquired brain injury, as well as other complex chronic health challenges.

indoor locations) and 14% occurred outside in vehicles, sidewalks, streets, parks, etc. No deaths have been reported at supervised consumption or drug overdose prevention sites.

East Kootenays

BC Coroners Service data for the East Kootenay Health Services Delivery Area²⁵ support provincial statistics about the increased occurrences.

Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA), 2011-2021											
HSDA	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
East Kootenay	1	2	4	4	2	13	7	6	1	18	5

Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by Health Authority, 2011-2021											
HA	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
East Kootenay	38	31	54	47	64	168	246	234	140	284	106

BC Coroners Service

Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths in BC
January 1, 2011 to April 30, 2021

Mental Health / Mental Illness

Mental health and mental illness are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same thing²⁶. “Mental health” is a concept similar to “physical health”: it refers to a state of well-being. Mental health includes our emotions, feelings of connection to others, our thoughts and feelings, and being able to manage life’s highs and lows.

The presence or absence of a mental illness is not a predictor of mental health; someone without a mental illness could have poor mental health, just as a person with a mental illness could have excellent mental health.

Problematic substance use is sometimes linked to poor mental health or mental illness; it can be a coping strategy for untreated trauma, pain, challenging thoughts or emotions, or other health symptoms.

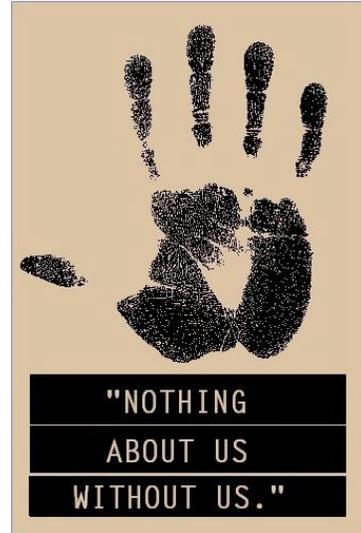
Canadian Mental Health Association Kootenays Branch

The Kootenays Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association located in Cranbrook reports an increase in crisis line calls and the intensity of issues since COVID started. Over an 11-week period starting mid-March 2020:

- 61% increase in calls
- Approx. 1/5 of calls were related to COVID
- 40% increase in mental health related calls (spike of close to 50% in April)
- Acute Mental Health calls doubling (104.1% increase over previous year)
- Psychosis related calls 247% increase
- Suicide in progress calls have increased by 1/3
- Suicide related calls spiked 140% in a 2-week period in March
- 43% increase in sexual abuse/assault calls

The Voices

Throughout the Poverty Reduction Plan project interviews, discussions and questionnaires were conducted with people facing poverty challenges. Their views must be recognized when developing strategy for poverty prevention and reduction. The disability rights community is known for pushing the importance of “nothing without us”, and that sentiment is relevant here. The truths about living in poverty and the intimate understandings of the specific barriers faced and solutions that are needed can only come from those with lived and living experience.



Responses to the question, “What does poverty mean to you?”

Lack of being able to afford to live properly. - Colin

Can't afford necessities. - Shamus

Money under amount needed to live. – Chantelle

Should never be in this country. A travesty the gap between rich and poor. Corruption. – Dennis

No food in the house, no money for bills or clothes. Growing up – not a good start. – Jim

Not enough housing, can't get organized if no where safe to live. – Caroline

Not being able to help your family or others. – John and Kelly

Loneliness. – Dennis

Comments from those who wished to remain anonymous:

Being homeless, not having bills, not having a shipping address.

Getting robbed of my belongings 6 times.

Lack of basic needs.

Lack of necessity (sic).

Being without anything.

Not having enough to do what you need to do to survive.

It means to me all my money goes to rent and I can't afford to have fun.

A weapon of the state utilized against dissidents et al.

Hopeless and Homeless.

Less than one needs to live well.

Someone once told me I was poor I didn't believe them, poverty is a state of mind.

Without, poor.

Below the poverty line. Work full time but most of it goes to rent.

Struggle to buy food and necessities.

Not being able to meet your basic needs (food, water, shelter, medical care, transportation) or your family's basic needs due to lack of income.

Having to survive with no money.

Being broke.

Ill wealth, ill health.

Less than.

Lack of things.

Not enough.

Not enough money.

On the streets.

Lack of foster care homes.

We need a hand up not a hand down.

Emails received (names not shown)

I desperately need a money management course. Am so behind on many of my regular bills I do not know what to do. My story is simple to some. It started as inconsistent child support payments. (16 years of the battle) I turned to payday loans to assist with bill payments and the snowball effect continues. I had a live-in boyfriend who assisted for awhile but he moved out because of unresolvable issues. (doesn't like kids who aren't his). I have recently applied with FMEP [Family Maintenance Enforcement Program] but it is a process in it's self because my ex lives out of province. I am also seeing a legal advocate in November as I can prove my ex is making way more money than he admits. I recently applied for a second job, I worked 2 jobs until my boyfriend moved in and at his insistence and because of my daughter's mental health issues I had to resign. Now I am in a place where I have to do something and that is work. I recently have started to panic. Gas bill overdue, phone bill overdue and cable bill etc. Shit rolls down hill so to speak.

Hi there! I am just a person who likes to help others. I was born in Cranbrook 53 years ago and I am wanting to help others know about all the different kinds of resources that are available to our residents. I have friends from all walks of life...homeless to professionals and I keep seeing a need for these resources to be known they exist for our community. I am a huge advocate for the proposed shelter project and feel that this could be of a huge benefit in the fight against poverty in our city. Thank you for reaching out to me... I've had a lot of organizations reach out with their own info and I find it sad that many of our community members don't take advantage of the

resources in place. I have three half siblings of aboriginal decent who are all addicts and living below the poverty line, so I am happy to hear there is research being done to help reduce the poverty that my siblings and many others face here in Cranbrook and the surrounding areas. Good luck with your research!

Replies to the question, “What would help your situation?”

More money to help with housing.

Proper housing I can afford. Health care for pain.

Better training. House I can afford.

Somewhere to find where to go for help.

Security.

Have more group meetings.

Emergency housing for men.

Housing for people who are experiencing serious mental health or addiction issues.

Respite for parents/caregivers who need a break.

More of foster care homes.

Shorter waits for criminal /child care protection and family law courts.

More shared or supported living arrangements for adults with developmental disabilities.

Detox. The one open only has two beds and hospital are only places to detox.

Homeless shelter. Family, sober facility.

Place to help me find where I can get help.

Access to proper long-term living with care.

Charter/civil rights, opportunity.

Housing.

The ones who really need help are not getting it.

Affordable food.

Job training. Pay homeless people to pick up garbage instead of city workers.

Someone who we can go to that knows where we find help.

More low-income housing.

Cheaper housing. Healthy people should be running the programs. Better place to live. Better choice of friends. Own up to my own mistakes.

Need a doctor. My conditions too complicated to be passed from doctor to doctor.

More youth programs to keep them out of trouble.

People to take a chance on me for work. Have my class 1 drivers but they all want experience.

Money help for college so I can better myself.

Suitable housing.

That mental health does not end on Friday. We need mental health to be open on weekends.

Affordable housing.

Information about services we can easily find.

Housing I can pay for.

Affordable housing. More mental health services.

Help with technology.

Better mental health support.

What is the Change We Want to See?

The complexity of poverty cannot be managed by any singular solution. Each community in the RDEK has different needs and available services which change over a period of time and from external influences. The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark example. Cranbrook, as the regional hub, has more supportive agencies than do the other communities. Some of the other communities, in turn, have developed creative support networks to overcome challenges accessing the hub.

Challenges related to poverty can be interlocking and overlapping. For example, a family with young children may struggle to make ends meet because they bought a house when they moved into the community in response to the lack of available rentals, and their monthly payment is more than 30% of their income. To pay the mortgage both parents must work, but if they cannot find child care, a common occurrence throughout the East Kootenay, the family needs to survive on one income. They may cut corners and decide only one vehicle will suit their needs but that could further hamper employment opportunities for the second parent, especially in communities with limited public transit. A sudden unexpected expense such as dental work for a child, further impacts this family.

What is the change this family wants to see? Affordable child care? More rental housing? Perhaps they need emergency food to hold them over to the end of the month?

Young adults have been hit particularly hard by the timing of the pandemic. Just at a time when they are ready to launch into independence, possibilities for post-secondary learning have been limited and service industry jobs are not available. Young people ageing out of foster care, who already face significant obstacles, likely experience tougher challenges to making it on their own.

Some people have grown up in poverty. They might be living with a family legacy of unemployment, incarceration, lack of education, or lack of treatment for a mental health or substance dependency disorder. Many have a history of trauma and/or abuse. Children cannot be blamed for the home they are born into or the survival choices they make in difficult circumstances. These young people may grow into adults who require extra services and supports to provide them with resources they never obtained. Consequently, these grown-ups are also never to blame for their struggles.

Indigenous people deserve a special mention because poverty rates among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people are higher than rates among the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous people experience higher levels of poverty, unemployment and chronic diseases as well as lower levels of education and shorter life spans.

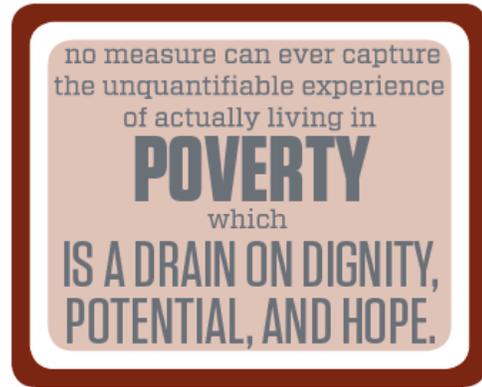
These kinds of examples indicate that poverty is most often related to six factors:

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Employment
4. Income
5. Child care
6. Physical and mental health

Policy and program changes to address poverty will necessarily touch in these key areas.

As demonstrated, people facing poverty challenges are not a homogeneous group. To identify what we want to see, it is valuable to differentiate those in need through the end result of support they hope to receive:

1. Individuals who are unable to work or earn an income and need to be supported by various agencies. Those in this category may include people with small children, those caretaking elders or others, people experiencing or being treated for mental health disorders, people with cognitive, intellectual, developmental, and/or physical disability, people substance dependency, people with illnesses and injury, and newcomers.



Whether the inability to work or earn an income is temporary or long term, everyone is fully deserving of a safe place to live and nutritious food to eat. Some may need subsidized housing for a period of time, while others may need it for the rest of their lives. Support must meet the need.

Full time employment may be a goal for many, but there are individual circumstances where this is not feasible.

What we want to see:

Some people cannot work and need to be looked after through Employment Insurance, social assistance, physical and mental health care, and supportive housing. Whether the individuals in this category can function well in an organized facility, temporary housing or affordable rental unit, or prefer to remain on their own, they should have access to housing that keeps them safe and provides basic necessities.

Agencies providing support to this group, many functioning at capacity, often compete for available resources. Better collaboration between organizations and communities to identify creative solutions would prove valuable.

People seeking affordable rentals or mental health and substance dependency services face long waiting lists. Having more options would reduce the impact for various agencies attempting to support this need.

2. Individuals in the cycle of poverty who seek a temporary relief, such as housing, food, an escape from domestic violence, and/or support to enter the work force and enable them to become self-reliant.

What we want to see:

Support for an individual to plan a strategy and implement action to exit the poverty cycle. This includes a safe place to call home while they prepare themselves to become employable and may include additional assistance with job skill development and training, child care, mentoring, legal aid, nutritional food choices, or other areas that reinforce their ability to progress.

3. Individuals facing barriers to employment such as finding child care, having disabilities, lack of education or job-specific training.

What we want to see:

Provide accessible and affordable child care. Create jobs that fit for people with health and disability status. Eliminate anti-racial hiring and employment practices. Develop work skills through literacy, education and training,

4. Individuals attempting to leave the cycle of poverty and preparing to enter the work force after rehabilitation for substance dependency, treatment for mental health issues, or incarceration.

What we want to see:

Available programs and mentors for job skills training that include work experience and entry level, perhaps part-time, employment opportunities that establish a positive work history.

5. Employed individuals facing poverty challenges looking for support to “lift” them into a better job.

What we want to see:

Available training for learning new skills and support for requirements such as tuition, child care, transportation, internet, computers, or materials.

6. Individuals, especially youth, connected to adults/family facing poverty challenges.

What we want to see:

Easily accessible programs to support the many challenges youth may face including self-worth, healthy meals, positive social activities, support for extra-curricular options, tutoring, sex education, drug awareness, career options, work skill training, and healthy food preparation.

7. Seniors and veterans facing poverty challenges who are employed in low paying jobs or are no longer in the work force.

What we want to see:

In addition to pension increases programs to support food production (community garden), pharmaceutical plans, opportunities for part-time jobs and volunteer positions.

8. Employed people who do not make an adequate income.

What we want to see:

Workers earning a living wage and experiencing living hours (working enough hours to earn an adequate income).

It is not possible for our communities to locally address things like employment insurance social assistance; etc. however an understanding of these programs makes it easier to see a fuller picture of poverty reduction and figure out ways we can contribute to solutions.

What Can We Do Together?

Tackling poverty can seem like an overwhelming task. Efforts may not yield immediate results and it might take years for any improvements to become apparent. Poverty reduction work has been underway for years and we have many achievements to celebrate. However, growing evidence tells us we must renew our efforts and evolve our strategies and do better by investing in comprehensive poverty prevention and reduction strategies. In the East Kootenay our poverty rates are lower than provincially, and we want to keep them low. In order to build on an already relatively favorable situation we need to focus on poverty prevention along with poverty reduction.

Government Commitments

The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have made commitments towards reducing poverty, including minimizing the rate of child poverty. This will be accomplished through mandates, targets and funding flowing downward to the municipal level. In British Columbia this can be a challenge for municipalities because we are unlike Alberta, for example, which has a family and community services inclusion under their unique Family and Social Services Act.²⁷ It states:

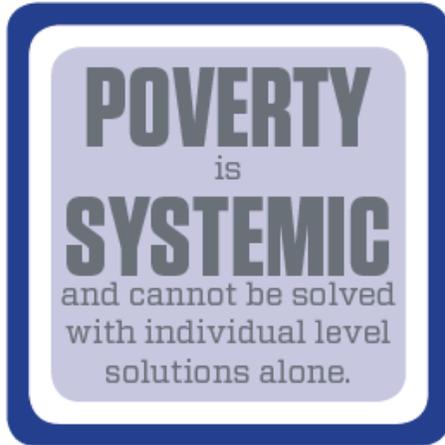
The Family and Community Support Services Act²⁸ is the legal basis for a municipal/provincial funding partnership through which municipalities may design and develop preventive social services, provided at the earliest opportunity, to promote and enhance well-being among individuals, families and communities.

Neither the British Columbia Local Government Act²⁹ nor the British Columbia Child Family and Community Services Act³⁰ have a similar provision for municipalities to provide these types of support services. The Child Family and Community Services Act does indicate:

3. (e) the community should be involved, wherever possible and appropriate, in the planning and delivery of services, including preventive and support services to families and children.

Unfortunately, the definition of community is not included the list of Definitions and Interpretations of the Act, making it unclear if the municipal governing body is part of the community providing support services to families or if it is a community of organizations such as non-profits. Clarification of the role by local Council is important in order to determine the scope of responsibility for the 'people factor' in their jurisdiction. Does local governance add support for community social health to the mandate of roads and sidewalks?

Fully understanding the social and cultural fabric of a community is vital for making decisions about how to proceed with required support possibilities. Federal and provincial data related to poverty reduction, especially prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, are used to indicate the expenditures are making improvements. They use various statistical outcomes to support this perception. Conversely, close analysis into communities do not reflect a similar reduction in poverty challenges. Local service agencies in all the East Kootenay region are overwhelmed with people coming to them for help. They see an increase in the number of people seeking shelter, increased numbers attending soup kitchens and food banks, and worse, desperate calls to crisis lines because people are at the end of their rope.



The most important fact uncovered in the research for the Poverty Reduction Plan and substantiated by every service provider, every lived experience person interviewed, every person providing social support for people fleeing domestic violence, school teachers stepping up to arrange winter clothing for students, every service agency providing school meals, every religious organization opening their doors to the needy, and every government administrator and elected official concerned with community wellbeing is that **THIS PROBLEM IS GETTING WORSE.**

Everyone across Canada has the fundamental human right to live in dignity and participate fully in society, and it is the duty of all levels of government to respect, protect, and fulfill these rights.
Maytree Foundation³¹

Collective Effort is Required

There are immensely caring people and dedicated organizations working to help those faced with poverty, but many are in a losing battle because the need is growing and resources are limited. In order to implement poverty prevention and poverty reduction there must be a collective alliance between all three levels of government, the non-profit sector and the for-profit sector.

Non-profit Sector

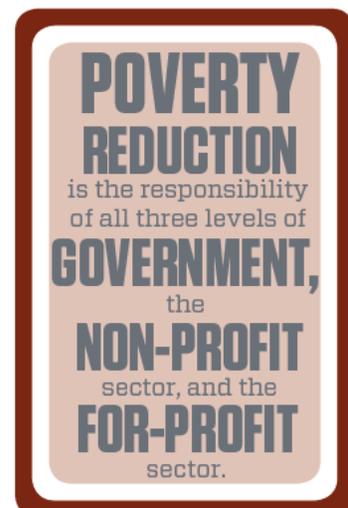
The non-profit sector in the East Kootenay is particularly well positioned to carry out the implementation of policy around poverty because it has the flexibility and sensitivity required to respond appropriately to local contexts and individual circumstance³². As such, non-profits are also often known for being more innovative than government bureaucracies and for piloting programs that are eventually taken up by municipal and provincial governments.

Government

To affect long-term change, however, non-profit service agencies must be complimented by top-down preventive poverty strategies³³. Income supplementation programs provided by the province, for example, and low-income transit passes, provided by municipal governments, can ensure that people have the basic resources to support themselves as they work to get on their feet, rather than fall right back into poverty. Non-profit agencies also need to operate within a context that provides the policies, legislation and funding allowing them to do their work most effectively, which often comes down to provincial, and sometimes municipal, support.

For-profit Sector

The for-profit sector is a major contributor to the quality of life in our communities with its great power to impact economic conditions through initiatives like work training, investment, wages, and corporate giving and citizenship activities by which corporations and employees contribute money, time and expertise toward poverty reduction efforts.



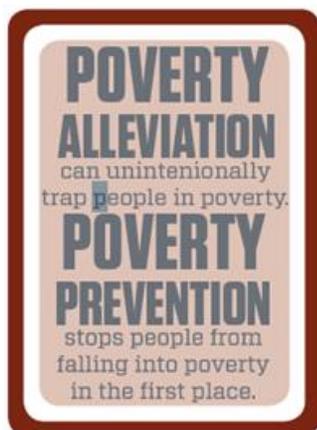
Municipal Role

In the East Kootenay there are many examples of municipal participation in poverty reduction/prevention, although these efforts are often framed as community economic development and the link to poverty is not always clear. Examples include:

- The District of Elkford and RDEK gave funding and support to the Elkford Housing Society to build affordable rental homes for seniors and people with disabilities in that community. The land for the homes was donated by Teck Resources Limited and Parastone Developments Ltd. assisted with the developmental proposal.
- The District of Sparwood provides a facility lease to a daycare and amended zoning requirements to allow daycares to exist in spaces available in the community.
- The City of Fernie updated their Affordable Housing Strategy in 2017.
- The City of Cranbrook includes a free low-income bus pass in their Leisure Access Program.
- The City of Kimberley partnered with Healthy Kimberley in funding and administrating a provincial poverty reduction grant to provide meals to seniors and other vulnerable people in the community.

This complexity of human and financial resources contributes to the fact that Poverty-related statistics for the communities of the East Kootenay region are **lower than provincial and national statistics**. However, as is evident by the increased workload of our service providers, the ability to remain below provincial averages may be in jeopardy.

The next phase of the City of Cranbrook and RDEK Poverty Reduction Plan needs to center on a **preventative approach** to reducing poverty in order to keep the regional statistics below provincial numbers. Maintaining the status quo of support towards agencies providing service will not sustain lowered results for this region because the agencies providing support are seeing an increase in need. COVID is one contributing factor adding to the financial and psychological strain, especially for people already in a vulnerable condition.



The pandemic has created an environment for change. Rather than simply returning to the pre-pandemic status quo, we can instead develop a more equal, healthy, purposeful, and resilient society. This would involve building more resilient systems that include targeted policies for at-risk populations and are at a level that is sufficient to keep people out of poverty³⁴.

- National Advisory Council on Poverty

With the exception of a few service providers working in more than one community, most organizations in the region function independently within their own locality. The first step in actioning a Poverty Reduction Plan from a regional perspective is to determine whether collaborative opportunities exist to enable better support for people seeking help. A regional workshop would:

- Identify methods for enhancing community synergy
- Provide opportunity to develop regional initiatives

In Cranbrook, strategic steps should include an in-depth understanding of the current needs and support within the community obtained through a workshop setting inclusive of all applicable service agencies. The City of Cranbrook and the RDEK should consider the City's role in the collaborative strategy, as it is

the municipality in the RDEK with the highest number of agencies providing support. A strategic planning workshop would help determine:

- How support could be increased through strengthening existing organizations and sourcing creative funding initiatives
- Collaborative options with the communities of the East Kootenay to provide better access to Cranbrook's support network
- The necessary scope for a media campaign to address public perception and stigma about community members facing poverty challenges

The provincial and federal governments have more legislative power to directly impact the essential poverty reduction levers in housing, employment, and income but that doesn't mean the municipal or regional district role isn't important. It is understood that the local government mandates and capacities are limited in this regard, and our report is not meant to trivialize or disregard this consideration.

Defining Poverty and Measuring Progress

In order to collaboratively address poverty, decisions must be made together based on a shared understanding of the problem and a shared definition of what success looks like. Poverty is not a tangible; it is not an absolute thing we can feel, see or touch. Poverty is defined by the culture of the society defining it. Poverty in Cranbrook is defined differently than poverty in Vancouver even though both examples represent people who do not have enough. Characterizations of poverty are time sensitive. The definition we may use in the East Kootenay today is different than it was two or three generations ago or during the gold rush era.

British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy is targeted to reduce overall poverty in B.C. by 25% and child poverty by 50% by 2024. When we make such a commitment to lowering poverty by a certain year, we need to use a measure related to an individual's or family's ability to pay for the cost of living. The Market Basket Measure, as discussed in the introduction, is such an indicator. Rather than simply counting the people accessing programs like the food bank, for example, targets set for reducing hunger should focus on solutions that enable people to afford healthy food purchases.

Likewise, there must be a method to coordinate the 30+ organizations in the region who are independent, have different or varying priorities, and also are trying to understand how they are making progress in attacking poverty. Working in concert will bring a stronger focus to poverty reduction efforts and increase efficiencies.

1. The process starts by having a definition of what poverty is for Cranbrook and the surrounding area. An example of a definition identified through the course of this project states:

Poverty means not having enough to participate in the life-style of the community.

This kind of definition supports the work of the organizations providing services regardless of the situation faced by the people coming for assistance. Those experiencing job instability, unemployment or seasonal work, as well as those struggling through low-income jobs or pension limitations may all face a barrier to enjoying a lifestyle common to the place they live. This could range from finding shelter, buying food, paying for dental work or medicines, to children being able to participate in

extra-curricular activities. For those facing homelessness, substance dependency, mental health illness, or trying to escape from abusive situations, the ability to participate in the community life-style is even more distant.

2. Poverty reduction strategy must take into account poverty is not linear. The progress from any starting point is not a straight line. For example, many organizations and individuals were incredibly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Three years ago, any agency providing support was able to clearly record the impact of their work to determine short- and long-term projections. Forecasts for the following years and strategic plans could be determined from previous activity. COVID changed all that. Suddenly previous years' numbers could not predict the impact. Furthermore, we do not know the future imprint the pandemic will have. How long will rising food costs in the grocery stores keep people from healthy food choices? Will people who lost their employment be able to return to the workforce? Can seniors, people with disabilities, and families on social assistance meet the cost of living?

Forecasts and strategy must consider all possible outcomes to build on the positive and minimize negative after-effects.

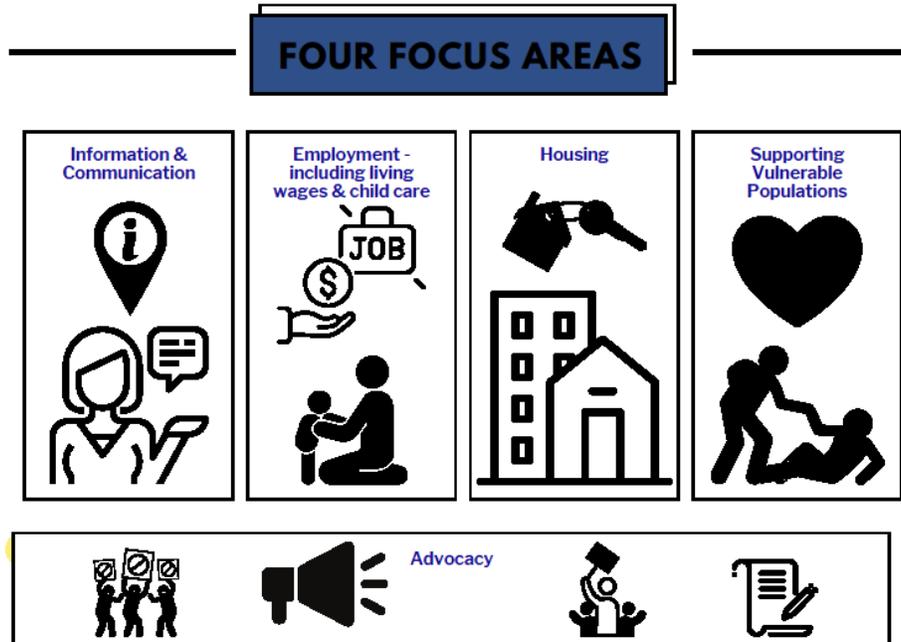
3. Examination and acceptance of beliefs in the community present the greatest opportunity for change. A community must be aware that it has members facing some degree of poverty and the citizens must want to make an effort to reduce that influence. Band-aid solutions that target the symptoms will not create change. Poverty reduction happens through examinations at a larger perspective to determine how people got into the poverty cycle in the first place.

If you want to achieve something different, you have to do something different. - Brian Tracy

POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions have been made by service providers and non-profits, people with lived and living experience, and members of the general public. They have been grouped into focus areas:

- i) Information and Communication
- ii) Employment
- iii) Housing
- iv) Supporting Vulnerable Populations
- v) Advocacy



1. Information and Communication

A. The need for better information

One of the most frequent comments heard through this project is, “People seeking help have difficulty finding the appropriate place to go.” Some turn to a known source like the crisis line where staff can direct them to the proper agency. However, this is highly dependent on the staff member’s awareness of the other agencies. Unfortunately, this is typical of most support agencies. They work within a network of similar providers and are often unaware of other, better suited support options outside their scope of service or possibly outside their community. Many patrons turn to someone they know who may be in a similar situation or to an agency name they heard somewhere with hopes of a referral to the proper place. Again, relying on the awareness of the individual or staff member to guide them.

The problem is compounded in the communities outside of Cranbrook where awareness of support options available in Cranbrook are mostly unknown.

Simply put, there is no one source of information available for people to find where to get help. In 2014 the Cranbrook Social Planning Society created a detailed community service directory called **Cranbrook Social and Community Resources** available as an online version **Cranbrook Clicks**, which was transferred to bc211 in 2018. Unfortunately, this listing has not been updated by all services. Community Connections Society recently published a **Cranbrook Resource Pocket Guide**, which is a fold out guide and map informing people where support can be found for local resources. Although not a complete listing, the resource guide does help steer people to supporting agencies if they know where to obtain the guide.

Regionally some organizations such as Family Dynamix, Fernie Women’s Resource Centre, Columbia Basin Family Resource Society and more have a strong web presence available for those with access to the internet. However, there remain challenges for recommending regional options not available locally.

Suggested Action

People seeking help need to know where they can easily find the resources they need. Although this information may be located through the internet and social media, it must also be available for the people who do not have access to the web or own the technology to use it. A central location/source of information should be commonly known and easily accessible.

There must be a central point of coordination and communication as determined during the strategic workshop recommended earlier, that includes input from organizations providing support and people with lived and living experience. This resource needs to be kept current and its information available throughout the region. A Community Navigator for Cranbrook, and ideally a Navigator for the East Kootenay would keep information about resources up to date and be a point of contact for anyone seeking poverty support information. This person would be easily found by individuals seeking help, as well as providing assistance to organizations making referrals. This should be a paid position for a person networking with support providers, people with disabilities, people with substance dependencies, youth, families, and seniors. The Community Navigator would keep current information on a website, social media platform, printed directories, and maps. This person would be a visible part of the community.

B. The need for a collective understanding of services

Throughout the region there are many organizations, and individuals, providing needed help. Some work well together, others compete for grants, resources, territory, and numbers of people served. Some agencies provide support in more than one targeted arm of poverty, others focus on just one aspect, food for example. A number of organizations are well known, others, such as Rising Wolf, a recently started men's resource circle, are less known and have limited resources to promote themselves.

Numerous organizations have been delegates at city council meetings, presenting the scope of their work. Other support providers have not done so, meaning elected officials may not have a clear understanding of the actual needs and support available in the community or the region. There has not been a recent complete representation of resources, what is covered, and what may be missing. It is also important to recognize that some organizations provide support to other communities while others are focused within their own neighborhood. There are so many pieces with no full and complete way to link them together for a complete picture of support available in the region or the collaboration that could exist.

COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR

The Community Navigator Project was piloted in 2008, by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development in partnership with CMHA BC with the objective of making it easier for people with mental illness to access government services and supports.

Suggested Action

In order for local government to make informed decisions in relation to reducing poverty, it must have a full understanding of what is available and what gaps exist in the community and the region as a whole. The various agencies of support in the region should be participants in developing a regional strategy for Poverty Reduction. Through recognizing and comparing the support they provide and identifying where

gaps or additional resources may be required, a solid first step will evaluate a regional perspective and improve the network of support available within each community. However, identifying the work of all support providers and correlating their work into an interconnected plan is not the purpose of this project. The best way for this discovery is through a collective impact identification and planning process workshop with open discussion among the organizations, government/municipal representatives, and individuals. The process would enable each to present the work they do, the demographic they support and the resources they use or need to do this work. Collectively, the session will identify where overlaps may occur, why they are present and if they are needed. This knowledge will create an inclusive and accessible support network for the region.

2. Employment

A. Child Care

Accessible, affordable, and inclusive high quality child care is essential to the healthy development of children, the well-being of families, and the economic security of families with young children because without child care they cannot access the paid labour force. The pandemic has confirmed how essential child care is for families in the workforce and the local economy. Child care is also crucial for businesses looking to hire and retain employees because people can't work if they have children at home.



Community economic development is a priority for the City of Cranbrook, just like it is for most local governments. In January 2020 the City of Cranbrook Child Care Action Plan³⁵ was completed, and it reported a severe lack of licensed early childhood educators and available child care spaces, as well as recommendations to address the situation.

The report went on to explain that Cranbrook has just 73 qualified educators, which includes all child care managers and responsible adults which only have a minimum of 20 hours of training. With 19 licensed child care facilities, and four licensed family or multi-home child care programs Cranbrook has only 413 total child care spaces. According to the report, this leaves about 1,595 children without access to care; 687 children from birth to age four and 908 children between the ages of five and nine don't have the option of care. Of the 413 licensed spaces that exist in Cranbrook, 288 meet the needs of 975 children between birth and four years old, while the other 125 spaces meet the needs of 1,105 children aged five to nine. Many parents are choosing to go unlicensed because they don't have a choice.

Qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) are required to operate various licensed group child care facilities. Without these educators, child care facilities have to shut down or operate below their licensed numbers to meet licensing standards. The Cranbrook Child Care Action Plan found the main issue in the community is retaining Early Childhood Educators in the field. The primary reason that people do not pursue careers in early childhood education is because of the low pay. Poverty, or the threat of poverty, has both parents and ECEs in a chokehold. Any parent who needs to work will tell you that it is an essential service, yet market forces keep it out of reach.

The shortage of licensed child care is evident throughout the region. The Village of Canal Flats also completed their child care needs assessment in 2020 and they subsequently worked with local and provincial partners to fund the creation of a community facility³⁶. The municipality has committed to operating the soon-to-be-built child care center in Canal Flats for at least 15 years. A Columbia Valley Child Care Need and Demand Assessment³⁷ was completed in 2017, and an Elk Valley Child Care Barriers and Opportunities Survey³⁸ happened in 2015. The East Kootenay child care scene is rounded out by the City of Kimberley and their 2019 Child Care Action Plan³⁹.

These important planning documents demonstrate a similar crisis across our region: lack of availability and options for child care, wait lists, inconvenient times and locations, difficulties recruiting and retaining ECEs, and low pay for child care staff. They also show us that solutions are local; parents need child care near where they work and live, and the employment situation is unique in every community. Some families work shifts, some need before and after school care, and some need multiple spaces in the same child care centre.

“Municipal governments, the provincial government, local employers, child care providers, families, and other community organizations are responsible for working together in order to develop solutions to the child care issues.” - Elk Valley Child Care Barriers and Opportunities Survey

A recent child-care funding agreement between the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia may provide a framework for building a universal public system of early learning and child care programs and services. This could be a game-changer. The Roadmap for \$10aDAY Child Care in BC⁴⁰ program anticipates B.C. families will in good time have access to high quality affordable services delivered by equitably compensated qualified early childhood educators. For families in need, it can't come soon enough.

Suggested Action

The child care plans referenced above all contain recommendations for action, and form a strong foundation for communities to build on. Once child care is worked out, employment – and thus income – is attainable for a large section of the working population, thereby helping families create health and prosperity. Key suggestions include:

- Everyone with interests in employment and economic development needs to recognize they are significant stakeholders in this issue, and partner with child care providers and families in the community to work on collaborative solutions. Child care should be included in all community vibrancy initiatives, like Choose Cranbrook⁴¹, for example.
- Bring together cross-sectoral community teams (or continue to meet where teams already exist) to review and implement local recommendations from the above studies. Recommendations run the gamut from promoting on-site child care by large employers to supporting business planning

BENEFITS



Research has shown that societies that invest in early childhood and family enjoy the highest health levels and lowest health inequality measures in the world.

for new facilities to re-zoning municipal land. There are actions big and small that different stakeholders can take on and see through to completion.

- Look to East Kootenay Child Care Resource & Referral (<http://ccrr.ccs Cranbrook.ca/>) for information. They are connected to many parts of the child care conversation and are up-to-date on activity at a provincial level.
- Municipal councils should call for further action and funding from the provincial and federal governments to begin solving this far-reaching issue. Ensure higher levels of government keep their child care promises, including \$10 a Day Child Care. Advocacy is essential.
- Partner with College of the Rockies, School District 5, and School District 6 to respond to the need for more ECEs in the region.

B. The opportunity for employment

Many people experience a lack of money as their number one poverty challenge. They want to find work, or better paying work, but systemic barriers exist such as lack of access to education/training, lack of access to affordable child-care, lack of access to adequate housing, as well as discrimination, racism and stigma.

Suggested Action

Although federal and provincial employment agencies provide support for people seeking work, some communities have provided opportunities for day work. People who haven't had a steady job for a while can build an employment record by doing work on days that they are available. Funding for wages either comes through a community budget (Parks for example) or from a third party. Grants may be available through higher levels of government.

Summer job openings that usually attract students could also provide opportunity for individuals needing the work experience and/or work training.

Options that do not use community tax payer dollars may include incentives for the business community to give someone an opportunity; paying a living wage, offering full-time rather than part-time employment, job shadowing, on the job training, and collaborative programs with the college and high schools for evening or weekend work skill training.

Housing and child care are vital for employment and need to be available and affordable, especially for entry level workers.

Prior to a community developing and committing to any employment or employment enhancement plan, there must be an evaluation of how many people would take advantage of the opportunity. One example is the LINK Program offered by Kootenay Employment Services. LINK is a 12-week program to help bridge

RACISM & STIGMA

“We heard from individuals with lived expertise of poverty that discrimination, racism, anti-Black racism and stigma are among the main causes of poverty. Persons with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, ethno-cultural and racialized groups, LGBTQ2S individuals, and many others remain at high risk of living in poverty compared to the general population.”

- National Advisory Council on Poverty Reduction

the gap between unstable housing and employment readiness. Participants spend three mornings a week attending virtual workshops (as per COVID -19 protocols), two mornings a week in a “Peer Employment” placement and have the option to access personal counselling group sessions. The workshops focus on various topics including personality assessments, Indigenous culture, addictions, violence and abuse, employment skills, time management, networking, transferrable skills and resume and cover letter writing. The first intake in Cranbrook included individuals temporarily housed at a local motel. No individuals dropped out of the program during the first intake, and the second was quickly filled.

C. The need to earn a living wage

A Living Wage refers to a theoretical income level that allows individuals or families to afford adequate shelter, food, and other necessities. The goal of a living wage is to allow employees to earn enough income for a satisfactory standard of living and prevent them from falling into poverty.

A Minimum Wage is the lowest remuneration that employers can legally pay their employees. Minimum wages across Canada are dictated by provincial legislation. In B.C. it is part of the Employment Standards Act. The minimum wage is a tool provincial government can use to reduce poverty, however it is not a complete solution because the cost-of-living changes around B.C, depending on where a person lives.

The Living Wage calculation is based on the needs of a household consisting of two wage-earning adults and two children (aged four and seven). The needs taken into account include the costs of shelter, food, clothing and footwear, transportation, child care, education for the parents, and other costs, such as telecommunications and health related costs. To the degree possible, it reflects costs specific to the community.

The Community Social Planning Society of Cranbrook and Area most recently calculated the living wage for Cranbrook in 2019. The calculation was certified by Living Wages for Families Campaign⁴², and it stated that two hypothetical parents would each have to earn \$14.38 per hour, each working a 35-hour week, to afford the basics in Cranbrook in 2019. That same year the living wage for the Columbia Valley was calculated at \$15.92.

LIVING WAGE

The first step is calculating the living wage for any particular community, and committing to regularly update the calculation as the cost-of-living changes. The cost of housing constantly rises; however, the living wage depends on a number of expenses. When the provincial government invested in child care that portion of the calculation went down. Hopefully recent promises towards a \$10.00-a-day child care will make life more affordable for families with small children.



We are not aware of any living wage calculations for other communities in the East Kootenay to date.

Suggested Action

Each community in the region can organize a living wage calculation. Ideally these take place every year or two, and a small team can complete it in about a week. The living wage is an excellent opportunity for local discussions about the cost of living, and offers an immediate understanding of how wages and jobs are related to poverty reduction. For example, some of our East Kootenay communities are resort municipalities, and their economies rely on low-paid workers to operate ski resorts, hot springs, and golf courses. If the workers required to keep the economic engine running cannot afford housing or child care, there is a problem.

The opportunity exists for any organization, including the City of Cranbrook or on a wider scale the Regional District of East Kootenay, to become official Living Wage Employers through the Living Wage for Families process. This bold action can publicly demonstrate that an employer, including local/regional governments if they so move, supports poverty reduction efforts and does not contribute to the problem. BC Communities that have become Living Wage Employers include:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. City of Burnaby | 6. City of Quesnel |
| 2. District of Central Saanich | 7. City of Vancouver |
| 3. City of New Westminster | 8. City of Victoria |
| 4. City of Pitt Meadows | 9. Village of Fruitvale |
| 5. City of Port Coquitlam | |

It is important to share information about the living wage through a media campaign or other mechanisms because a common misconception is that the only thing between poverty and being able to pay the bills is having a job. Many people recall a time when one income earner could support a family, and may not realize this is no longer possible.

Established in October 2017, the Fair Wages Commission worked independently to advise government on how to raise minimum wages with increases that are regular, measured and predictable. The first stage of the Commission’s consultations included the timing of increases for the following:

- General minimum wage
- The minimum wages for farm workers that is in the Labor Standards
- Minimum wage for liquor servers effective June 1, 2021
- Minimum wage for live-in home support workers
- Minimum wages for resident caretakers

The minimum wage in B.C. is currently \$15.20 per hour (as of June 1, 2021), opening the door for collaborative discussion with the business community on using the concept of a living wage to promote community wellness.

3. Housing

It is nearly impossible for an individual to participate in the life-style of the community if they do not have a home to live in. Social housing refers to housing that is subsidized by a level of government to provide support for emergency shelters, temporary housing, transitional housing, safe housing, supportive and assisted living, and rent assistance for the private market. Waiting lists for affordable and subsidized housing are long. Homelessness is a visible part of poverty and the need for low-cost housing is a common cry in most communities.

Suggested Action

The City of Cranbrook Housing Needs Report (2020) made five suggestions to improve housing in Cranbrook:

- i) increase low- income housing;
- ii) increase rental options;
- iii) increase all forms of housing options;
- iv) increase residential development close to the downtown area; and,
- v) increase the number of smaller homes.

The solutions identified in the recently completed and soon-to-be-completed housing needs reports must be actioned. All communities are now required by legislation to complete housing needs reports every five years. Cranbrook, Fernie, Invermere, Canal Flats, and Kimberley have completed their reports. The RDEK is working on their East Kootenay Housing Needs Assessment as are Radium Hot Springs, Elkford, and Sparwood. This important data will help demonstrate the gaps that need to be filled for housing for all. Cross-sectoral community teams could be brought together (or continue to meet where teams exist) to review and implement local recommendations from completed housing needs reports.

The timeline for the East Kootenay Housing Needs Assessment:

Phase 1 - Data Collection and Analysis

- Collect and Refine Existing Data – May 2021
- Project Populations, Household Demand, and Housing Gaps – June 2021
- Consolidate and Submit Preliminary Findings Report – July 2021

Phase 2 – Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- Community Survey Open – June and July 2021
- Hospitality and Tourism Housing Needs Survey Open – June and July 2021
- Key Informant Interviews - June and July 2021
- Community Stakeholder Focus Groups – June and July 2021

Phase 3 – Synthesis and Reporting

- Synthesis of Housing Needs Reports – September and October 2021
- Presentation of Findings to Board of Directors – October 2021
- Community Forum to Share Findings with Public – October 2021

Key points from other completed Housing Needs Reports:

Canal Flats

One challenge in Canal Flats is the population fluctuations of the past 15 years, with people moving away and then people moving in again. Also, with a median age of 50.5 years in 2016, the Village has an older population than both East Kootenay and British Columbia.

Fernie

In Fernie, home purchases are unattainable for many local residents, especially first-time buyers. Since 2006, the average sale price of a single-family dwelling in Fernie has increased by over \$285,500, according to BC Assessment data. There is a considerable gap between the income needed to buy the median house in Fernie, and the actual median income of renter households.

Invermere

Invermere's report states that renters are employees. The renter household participation rate in the workforce (as employees or looking for work) by those 15 years of age or over is much higher at 81% compared to 65% in owner households. Employees face a lack of rental housing, especially in summer months when many rental units are turned into short term vacation rentals.

Kimberley

In Kimberley the high cost of housing is placing pressure on a range of households. The high cost of rent is challenging to afford for low- and moderate-income earners and the lack of rental supply makes it difficult to find larger units. Kimberley's cohort of aging households is finding it difficult to transition to housing that better suits their changing needs. Young families are not able to find affordable homes that can accommodate them.

4. Community Support for Vulnerable Populations

A. The Need for Accessible, Monitored Washrooms

Even with the opening of the temporary shelter in Cranbrook there will still be a need for people facing a degree of housing insecurity to have washroom facilities available. After hours and on weekends many service providers that normally open their facility for washroom use are closed.

Suggested Action

Provide a facility with washrooms that are available between certain hours on a daily basis. Having set hours, perhaps early morning to evening when facilities remain open, would allow people to use the facility. Creston maintains such a facility on Main Street, as does Nelson. This may be needed in other communities as well.

B. Harm Reduction Services

People with complex needs such as substance use disorder often rely on food and housing/shelter support. Through that context they face poverty challenges and are therefore identified in this project.

A substance use disorder is a medical illness characterized by clinically significant impairments in health, social function, and voluntary control over substance use⁴³. Substance use disorders range in severity, duration, and complexity from mild to severe. For those with mild to moderate substance use disorders, treatment through the general health care system may be sufficient, while those with severe substance use disorders (addiction) may require specialty treatment.

Suggested Action

Recommendations must include the experts in this area; people with lived experience and professionals working in Mental Health and Substance Use services such as East Kootenay Addiction Services Society, ANKORS, and Interior Health. Improve regional access to support agencies associated with outreach and education programs, needle/syringe exchange programs, overdose prevention education, and access to naloxone to reverse potentially lethal opioid overdose. These strategies are designed to reduce substance misuse and its negative consequences for the users and those around them, such as transmission of HIV and other infectious diseases. They also seek to help individuals engage in treatment to reduce, manage, and stop their substance use when appropriate.

Supplying more containers for safe needle disposal provides a means for discarding the syringe. Understandably users may not be of the mind set to search for one of the containers but agencies working with this vulnerable group have suggestions for locations where the drugs are often injected and use of the disposal container may be more readily used.

C. Mutual Aid

We must take care of each other, especially as living conditions for those without the wealth or income to access essentials like clean air during smokey wildfire conditions, clean drinking water during times of drought, or air conditioning during extreme heat events. Social isolation and inequality that makes people vulnerable to these kinds of dangerous situations. In all likelihood people in the East Kootenay could be living with smokey skies and extreme heat at any time during the foreseeable future.



Similar challenges have appeared as a result of COVID-19. This pandemic is not over. Variants and future pandemics will arrive within our lifetimes. Those without wealth or income that keeps up with the cost of living are vulnerable to illness and death.

Suggested Action

During times of crisis people in the community step up to help. “Survival is meant to be a collective burden, not an individual obligation.” This is seen during evacuation alerts from floods or fires when others volunteer to house pets and domestic animals, provide shelter, food and more to those displaced, or deliver nourishment and refreshments to front-line personnel fighting fires.

Communities are strongly encouraged to develop a Heat Alert and Response System (HARS)⁴⁴. Preparation is key to avoiding illness and deaths from extreme heat events.

5. Advocacy

The definition of advocacy is, “The act of speaking on the behalf of or in support of another person, place, or thing”. An example of an advocacy is a non-profit organization that works to help women experiencing domestic abuse who feel too afraid to speak for themselves. There are numerous effective ways that people who want to help reduce poverty can advocate for change. While some methods — such as contacting elected officials — are easier than others, every single method is valuable, and everything that people do to advocate for change is important. The most important thing to remember is that it does not matter what is done to advocate for change just as long as people take some action that helps to achieve the change. For example;

- i) Educate people about poverty.
 - a. Of all the advocacy examples that people could choose from, education is one of the most important ways to advocate for change. Unless people are educated about a problem, there is no way to mobilize others to make a difference.
- ii) Contact and encourage an elected official to fight local poverty.
 - a. Contacting a representative allows the elected official to know that an issue is important to their constituents, and that knowledge can then be translated into actionable change in regard to poverty.
 - b. Residents, businesses, and local/regional government staff as well as elected officials are encouraged to advocate to higher levels of government for support in addressing information and communication, employment (including child care and living wages), housing and supporting vulnerable populations.
- iii) Volunteering to help fight poverty.
- iv) Involve people with experience living in poverty to share their ideas.

An excellent example of mutual aid and advocacy:

The following is an unedited email from Ireland Benson, a young woman in Cranbrook who helped make a difference:

For as long as I can remember I’ve always seen this man sitting at the four-way stop across the tracks by signal collision, always waving his thumb in the air for a ride. I started a job as a parts delivery driver for Lordco in 2017 and while spending my work days driving around in the Lordco car I started to see this man more and more. Sometimes I noticed he was there daily, waiting for someone to help him out and give him a ride. Although I wanted to help I hadn’t as I was working

and not allowed other passengers in the car. I felt so sad for him because it was very rare I seen someone pick him up. It wasn't until this year (January 2021) that I made the choice to help him out and give him a ride! I contemplated this for years, as a young woman who often drives alone was nervous, because we always assume the worst especially when people look a certain way.

I am more than happy I decide to pull over that day and help out a fellow community member, Roger. On my way home from running errands, I happened to see Roger sitting at the corner waiting for a ride. I pulled over and offered him a ride. He needed a hand to the car as he isn't very mobile and it being January there was quite a bit of ice on the ground. He got in my vehicle and put on his face mask to be cautious regarding covid. He had me take him to two stops, food and stuff and King Edward liquor store, each stop he went into the store and grabbed what he needed while I waited in the vehicle. During our time together we had great conversation- Roger really loves to talk! He mentioned how much he liked my name and that he couldn't forget a name like that! He asked how old I was and reminisced about the good ol' days when he was my age! I asked if many people pick him up, and he said no. He has sometimes waited 3 hours sitting in the cold and no one has stopped, meaning he has to walk back home with no luck in getting what he needed. When he told me this my heart broke, poor Roger! Which is what had pushed me to write my Facebook post in the Cranbrook BC page. I dropped him back off at his home (unsure of the building name but it is right behind where the Tudor house once stood). He asked for me to help him carry his bag of stuff we'd picked up to the main door of the apartment building. He took the bag from me at the door, said thank you and carried on to his apartment.

In days since I have driven past many times and seen others already pulling over to help him out as I did! So many people were so willing to help that I hardly get the chance to give my new friend a ride, but I always enjoy the conversation and catching up when I do get the opportunity! A close friend of mine picked him up a few weeks after I did and he talked about me with her when she mentioned we were friends, he still knew my name and recognized similar traits between me and my friend-this touched my heart as he remembered me so well even after our short encounter! Helping him out only took 15 minutes out of my day but to Roger it made a huge difference.

I just wanted to let you know again regarding your last email, that if you are permitted to use my name in your report you definitely have my permission! Thank you for giving me a chance to share my story! Let me know if you need any more details. Sorry for the grammar or punctuation mistakes in the above paragraphs lol

Thanks,

Ireland

Impact of COVID

The quality of life and well-being of individuals and families in the East Kootenay, as throughout Canada, has been dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the course of 2020 and into 2021. The many dimensions of how social and economic well-being have changed during this period are becoming well documented through a national scope using numerous data collecting techniques. Canadians have, in general, reported a significant decrease in overall life satisfaction⁴⁵. When asked to rate how satisfied they feel with their life as a whole right now on a scale of 0 (dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied) the Canadian population scored an average of 8.09 in 2018. However, by June 2020 this figure had declined by 1.38 points to 6.71 – the lowest level of life satisfaction reported over the 17-year period that these data have been recorded.

Looking at the data another way, the number of Canadians rating their life satisfaction as an 8 or above out of 10 decreased from 72% in 2018 to 40% in June 2020. Youth and immigrants have self-reported the largest declines in life satisfaction since the start of the pandemic.

For individuals experiencing homelessness, the stay-at-home orders were difficult to practice. Underhoused people also faced difficulties in attempting to keep their distance in overcrowded residences. Overall, Canada's low-income population was most at risk of experiencing the disastrous effects of COVID-19.

To date, regional data about the impact of the pandemic for Cranbrook and area has not been collected, however the profound economic and social impacts identified through the various national snapshots are indicative of the multiple dimensions the residents of the East Kootenay are experiencing. In order to fully understand Question 1 of the Poverty Reduction Plan project, "*What is happening throughout the region right now?*" the impact of the pandemic must be considered, even though it cannot be substantiated by current quantitative data. Qualitative data obtained through engagements among people with lived and living experience of poverty, service providers, and various community members indicates challenges to well-being will continue to exist well beyond any date identified as the end of the pandemic. The pandemic has increased the need for support to those who were already facing poverty prior to the pandemic. It has also increased the number of individuals and families facing poverty. The next step for Poverty Reduction for Cranbrook and Area must provide a means of support, a hand up, to those having crossed the poverty line during the pandemic, as well as for those who have been living the experience prior to it.

In April 2020, Canada Without Poverty launched the Poverty Pandemic Watch (PPW)⁴⁶, a project aimed at developing a national image of (1) Housing Insecurity, (2) Income Insecurity and (3) Food Insecurity, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings will help provide an understanding of the pandemic impact for the East Kootenay.

Housing Insecurity

In 2020 Cranbrook counted a homeless population of 63 people⁴⁷ (a 117% increase from 2018.)

- 48% of the 63 individuals are Indigenous
- 44% of the 63 individuals have lived in Cranbrook 10 years or more
- 53% reported mental health issues
- 64 % reported addiction issues
- 70% are from ages 25- 54
- 57% are men, 40% are women, and 3 % other gender identity



During the COVID-19 pandemic, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments urged individuals living in Canada to stay home, shelter in place, and practice social distancing to prevent community spread of the virus. Unfortunately, housing issues still being experienced by low-income earners and families included:

- Overcrowding in homeless shelter
- Overcrowded housing units
- Renters facing “renovictions”
- Increase in family violence
- Illegal evictions

Food Insecurity

During the COVID-19 pandemic, access to healthy nutritious food has become even more difficult for low-income and marginalized people in the East Kootenay. For many reduced incomes resulted in inefficient funds to save money through bulk purchases, resulting in more grocery store visits and increased exposure to COVID-19. Seniors were concerned about attending grocery stores because of exposure, leading some grocers to offer options such as phone-in orders and senior shopping hours.

During COVID-19 the Cranbrook Food Bank fed approximately 100 people per day through food hampers and bulk delivery. This equates to 2500 people served in 2020/21 or 33,000 pounds (15,000 kg) of food per month. During COVID approximately \$13,000 a month was spent purchasing food for hampers because food donations were down as a result of adhering to safety protocols.

Organizations and individuals collaborated to schedule the provision of daily meals.

Income Security

The partial or full closure of businesses and workplaces in March 2020 devastated the workforce and affected the financial security and stability of Canadian individuals and families. In April 2020, 5.5 million workers were negatively impacted by loss of employment or reduced hours⁴⁸. A significant number of those who had lost work hours or who had become unemployed struggled to meet the financial needs of their family in the first year of the pandemic. By September 2020 nearly half (42%) of Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) recipients found it difficult to meet necessary expenses. Both unemployment and financial stressors have been disproportionately felt by women, youth, Indigenous people and minority groups.

The Pandemic and Children

The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic highlight one key factor: “Children’s most basic rights to life, survival and development are in jeopardy and their best interests must be given paramount consideration in Canada’s recovery efforts⁴⁹.” The economic, social and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on British Columbia’s children, youth and families have been profound. The full and long-term economic effects of the pandemic on children and youth in BC are still not known or experienced, as emergency income and other supports have helped many families but are due to expire in the coming months⁵⁰.

The inequitable impacts of the pandemic on families raising children and on young people themselves are showing up in indicators on job loss and income insecurity, housing insecurity, food insecurity, the digital divide, access to child care, education, health care and other social services, and mental health. The federal Fall Economic Statement 2020⁵¹ reports:

The virus has disproportionately spread in low-income and racialized communities. Job and wage losses have been higher among young people, low-income workers, people living with disabilities, and women. Mothers with small children, racialized and newcomer women and the women who often take on the additional burden of unpaid care work, also have reduced access to community services and supports. Lower-wage workers, who were already vulnerable to income shocks given lower savings and reduced access to credit, also lost jobs in disproportionate numbers.

The federal report also notes that an Oxfam-commissioned survey indicated Indigenous respondents were three times as likely as white respondents to say that increased unpaid care responsibilities had affected their economic opportunities and that they have had to give up looking for paid work.

Survey data from BC is showing the pandemic’s impacts are hitting people of color harder through disproportionate job losses and financial hardship⁵²

This year’s BC Child Poverty Report Card⁵³ is published ten months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Emerging data, personal stories and other reports tell us the economic, social and health impacts of the pandemic on children, youth and families have been profound. The pandemic has amplified pre-existing inequities and poor children and their families have been among the worst affected. While the data in this report does not reflect the current situation for families, it gives us a good understanding of which children were at greater risk of living in poverty before the pandemic began.

Through the pandemic, service providers throughout the East Kootenay have experienced a higher demand for their support. This increase emphasizes the need to support their work through greater collaboration, streamlining of services where possible, identifying third party financial support, and sharing their stories with the public.

Another valuable perspective learned from the pandemic is that when a crisis is at hand, governments can act quickly; contrary to the slow bureaucracy most people are used to seeing. Money swiftly moved to provinces and individuals, altering the assumption that federal and provincial change must move at a slow pace. This is hopeful for emergencies such as the housing crisis as we now see how a willingness for responding to dire situations leads to quick action.

Conclusion

Poverty costs us all in many different ways. It places significant stress on our families and our neighbours, it wears away at the vibrancy of our communities, it reduces the size, resiliency and diversity of our economies, and it burdens our health, justice and social assistance programs. Poverty is linked causally to an increased likelihood of chronic health concerns and of educational and skill-based deficits. Growing up in poverty increases the likelihood of living in poverty as an adult and experiencing those health and educational deficits. As a result, our economies suffer a substantial loss in productivity and tax revenue.

Poverty is one of the biggest burdens on the economic, healthcare, and criminal justice systems in Canada. Poverty causes serious health problems for those individuals living in poverty. For example, living in poverty can double or triple the chances of developing diabetes and complications such as blindness and cardiovascular disease⁵⁴. There is a direct link between poverty and high rates of incarceration. Unfortunately, the common response to poverty has been to increase social assistance spending.

It is challenging to know precisely how much is spent on poverty. In 2019 British Columbia allocated \$4 billion towards its first poverty reduction strategy⁵⁵. The 2021 budget includes an increase in health spending by \$2.6 billion over three years, \$500 million in new funding over three years for mental health and addictions support, and a nearly \$700 million boost in spending on social development and poverty reduction⁵⁶. Although difficult to determine how much of the costs are supporting poverty-specific expenditures the underlying fact, as supported by numerous studies, is that investing into the cause of poverty reduces the amount spent on the fallouts of poverty. Unfortunately, an analysis of the funding that agencies in the East Kootenay receive would likely reflect the fact that most is spent on supporting people living in poverty with very little allocated to helping people out of poverty.

As mentioned earlier, Kootenay Employment Services is one agency providing people with skills and work experience to better enable their students to find employment. More programs designed to “lift” people out of poverty are required, whether they train certified child care workers, provide adult learners with their high school diploma, support the development of affordable short-term housing, or deliver any creative initiative that helps people gain employment. One way to deliver such programs is to collaborate between agencies to develop solutions unique to the needs of the community/region that attract funding from provincial and federal budgets.

In attempting to understand causes of poverty there must be a recognition it is a systemic issue; it persists because as a society we have created systems that perpetuates poverty and allows it to persist. Characteristics of Canadians most likely to be living in poverty⁵⁷ are children and vulnerable groups (Indigenous people, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, single parents, and unattached individuals aged 45 – 64).

Too often we look at issues of poverty by focusing on people who are poor. We look at personal failings or bad choices as something they have done wrong to find themselves poor and we have perceptions about what they need to do to better themselves out of poverty. These may include comments, “Go get a job”, “Quit drinking”, “Stop begging”, “Find a place to live”, or any other opinion about what the individual must do to eradicate the circumstance they find themselves in. If only it were that simple. Programs and policies must recognize an individual approach is not effective in poverty reduction.

The solution for poverty reduction in Cranbrook, Elk Valley and Columbia Valley can best be addressed through a collaborative approach creating an East Kootenay strategy that will work for our ‘societal culture’. Discussions with mayors and councillors throughout the region reinforce the need to have an approach for reducing poverty that extends beyond their individual struggles within the silos of their community. The most common recommendations heard throughout the course of the work was for improved communication, with emphasis for a central point of easily accessible information about where to find supportive services. Either existing municipal committee members or, preferably, a paid individual (Community Navigator, Services Coordinator, Poverty Facilitator) would best establish and keep current such a valuable network of support.

However, the most logical inauguration for regional collaboration starts with the organizations presently working in this field. Collectively identifying the individual strengths and capabilities in order to build a comprehensive regional model of available support will address many of the gaps and answer the “what we need” comments heard throughout this project.

The **Social Planning Society of Cranbrook and Area** (SPS) is best situated to lead such a project. Their advocacy encompasses the many topics uncovered in this report and they are in a suitable position to initiate regional alliance to reduce poverty. The society was formed to advance collaboration and common goals of community organizations. Their Vision states, “A healthy, caring and inclusive community through collaborative engagement and strategic action”. Their Mission, “To improve the living circumstance of all citizens through social planning initiatives, collaborative engagement and strategic action”. The SPS is the logical organization to coordinate the next phase and blueprint poverty reduction strategies in the region.

As major partners of the Poverty Reduction Plan for Cranbrook and Area, the City of Cranbrook and Regional District of East Kootenay must take the initiative to identify the next step in building a regional network of support for reducing poverty. The best approach would be to establish a point of contact (temporary staff reassignment, contractor, a non-profit organization) that will work towards fulfilling the recommendations of this report to build a collaborative network across the East Kootenay region. This affiliation may be bolstered by a connection with the Association of Kootenay and Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG) to source provincial and federal funding options targeted for initiatives that cover a larger geographic region. Perhaps developing a poverty reduction strategy for the entire Kootenay region would result in receiving more funding than through individual municipal proposals. The option for this consideration should be examined.

The challenge to create a regional approach addressing the reduction of poverty will happen through the collective input of the dedicated people in the region whose commitment is the reason our numbers are below the provincial numbers. The Poverty Reduction Plan for Cranbrook and Area has examined the different roles organizations and levels of government play in poverty reduction; and lastly, we emphasize that we can reduce poverty, and ultimately, the choice is ours; we can work to end poverty or we can maintain the status quo.

Russell Workun, MBA
Project Coordinator
City of Cranbrook and Regional District of East Kootenay Poverty Reduction Plan

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⁵⁵ Peng, G., (2019), *Vancouver Star*, *B.C. plans to spend \$4 billion on first poverty reduction strategy*, Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2019/03/18/bc-plans-to-spend-4-billion-on-first-poverty-reduction-strategy.html?rf>

⁵⁶ PressProgress, (2021), *BC's 2021 Budget Will Support Low-Income People. But Experts Say It's Missing Some Important Items*, Retrieved from <https://pressprogress.ca/bcs-2021-budget-will-support-low-income-people-but-experts-say-its-missing-some-important-items/>

⁵⁶ Government of Canada, (2016), *A Backgrounder in Poverty*, Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/backgrounder/backgrounder-toward-poverty-reduction-EN.pdf>

Appendices 1: City Examples

Kamloops

Kamloops' poverty reduction efforts have focused on linking and building on the many existing community collaborative tables and initiatives that are currently addressing poverty reduction, and ensuring that the lived experience of families is brought to these forums and shared with existing service providers. A **Poverty Reduction Working Group** was established, and will play a role in coordinating the community's poverty reduction projects and initiatives. One focus is to develop affordable, appropriate child care. To do this, the committee is exploring and researching the efforts made in other communities, working together with the school district to utilize empty space and develop child-care education through "21st Century Learning" and to consider empty space in seniors' homes.

<https://www.kamloopschangingthefaceofpoverty.com/reports>

Port Hardy

Port Hardy has faced significant challenges in recruiting a Family Consultant on a long-term basis to coordinate the efforts of its **Poverty Reduction Committee**. Despite this challenge, community partners in Port Hardy continue to move forward with a number of initiatives and strategies to address the issues related to poverty in their community — specifically, a number of projects related to food security, financial literacy, and housing and homelessness are now underway. While Port Hardy has a number of initiatives underway to address the issues of poverty in the community, these initiatives are not yet placed within a cohesive overarching strategy.

The loss of a Family Consultant to coordinate the work of the Poverty Reduction Committee has been a specific challenge. In addition to a lack of human resources, the community's ability to develop and implement a poverty reduction strategy is challenged by a lack of physical spaces for programs, aging infrastructure, lack of baseline data, and strong competition for the resources that already exist.

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/services-supports-for-parents-with-young-children/reporting-monitoring/01-bc-changing-families/t15-0144_community_poverty_reduction_strategies_2015.pdf

Prince George

The **Prince George Community Poverty Reduction Working Group** was originally established in 2012 and has monthly meetings to focus on community partnerships. Since 2012, 21 families have received direct services through Prince George's Family Consultant and the efforts of the Poverty Reduction Working Group. This has included helping families to access income assistance and disability benefits as well as community agencies and services like the Elizabeth Fry Society, Salvation Army, Baby New Beginnings, Family Connections, Active Support Against Poverty (ASAP), KidSport program, and counselling services like the Rainbows Grief and Loss program, Métis Housing, BC Housing, and the Community Care Centre. Through relationships built at the Community Poverty Reduction Strategy table, the Family Consultant has also been able to connect families to the Strengthening Families program delivered in Prince George's schools.

Over the next year, Prince George will address a number of underlying challenges to its poverty reduction efforts. For example, there is concern that more resources are needed to manage the individual and

community goals that have been set to address poverty in the city. There is also a desire to better understand the community and the specific challenges it faces, which will be addressed by creating a clearer and more detailed community profile. Prince George will assess its current approach in order to help ensure that momentum at the working group level is maintained and built upon. It will also work to raise public awareness about poverty in the community.

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/services-supports-for-parents-with-young-children/reporting-monitoring/01-bc-changing-families/t15-0144_community_poverty_reduction_strategies_2015.pdf

Stewart

Stewart, with a population of about 500, is the smallest community taking part in the Community Poverty Reduction Strategies Initiative. Poverty issues are often overlooked in rural communities, and as a result, the **Stewart Poverty Reduction Working Group** has had to work harder than others to raise awareness about the existence of poverty in the community. The group has held monthly meetings, along with two community forums aimed at identifying poverty issues and ways to address them. This work led to the creation of the Stewart Services Society, which takes a leadership role in coordinating measures to mitigate and reduce poverty in the community. Stewart has also implemented a Poverty Community Action Plan.

In Stewart, direct work with families has been challenging because the community is so small and it is important to maintain people's privacy. As a result, the Stewart Poverty Reduction Working Group has focused on reaching out to families in other ways, such as holding workshops on healthy cooking, budgeting, recreation options and parenting strategies. Specific services have included the use of tele-health for adult mental health services, a community garden established through a Healthy Communities grant, FRIENDS for Life teacher training and Outreach Early Intervention programs.

Over the coming year, Stewart will work to address the identified challenges in reducing poverty in the community. These include both a lack of specific services such as child care, addictions services and mental health counseling and systemic challenges, such as engaging community partners and leaders. Stewart plans on working specifically with municipal government leaders and partnering with the business community to begin to concretely address the lack of affordable housing in the community.

Stewart also faces challenges that are specific to a small community, including combating the stigma that families face when accessing poverty-related services and the impact that the stigma has on families' motivation to seek help. In this respect, the Family Consultant will play a key role in expanding partnerships and coordinating efforts to raise awareness about the issue and how it affects the community as a whole.

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/services-supports-for-parents-with-young-children/reporting-monitoring/01-bc-changing-families/t15-0144_community_poverty_reduction_strategies_2015.pdf

Surrey

When the Community Poverty Reduction Strategies Initiative launched in 2012, it was intended to complement and build on work that was already underway to address poverty and other social issues in communities. When Surrey was identified as a participant in the initiative, the community had already developed a Poverty Reduction Plan, which Surrey City Council adopted in July 2012. The Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition, which has representation from multiple sectors, was established to oversee the implementation of the Plan and its 75 recommendations.

Since the beginning of the initiative, 22 families have received direct service through the work of the Family Consultant. Support to families has included referrals to services and programs like the food bank, QUEST food exchange, the Rental Assistance Program, StrongStart BC and inclusive family recreation.

<http://surreyprc.ca/>

Nelson

Nelson's End Poverty Initiative (EPI) began in 2013 to examine the nature and scope of poverty in Nelson and to take action towards reducing its impact and incidence. Since 2013, EPI has conducted many consultations and interactions with a broad range of community representatives, other poverty reduction groups, and people living in, or vulnerable to poverty. The initiative included projects that built relationships, mentored, gave voice to, and acted on the first-hand experience of poverty while putting money and resources into the hands of people living in, or vulnerable to, poverty. EPI also included work that enabled Local business owners to consider how they might assist low-income workers to mitigate vulnerability to poverty. The event generated considerable interest, providing opportunity for follow-up to encourage more businesses to adopt similarly innovative strategies. In 2018 the End Poverty Initiative launched Voices for Change; a two-year, three-part, \$150,000 poverty reduction project funded by Columbia Basin Trust aimed at building upon earlier work by piloting initiatives to support specific demographic groups at a higher risk of experiencing poverty. Voices for Change consisted of three sub-projects:

- i) Benefits Incubator (aimed at adult low wage earners)
- ii) Community Café's (aimed at low-income children and families)
- iii) Financial Literacy Youth Skills Builder (aimed at low-income youth)

EPI's current work is focused on creating an Action Plan (scheduled for release during the Fall of 2021) to reduce poverty in Nelson which has just completed (May 2021) the community consultation phase where people with lived and living experience of poverty, local business, government office representatives, and non-profit community organisations indicated the need to offer counselling, education, training and free daycare to help lift people out of poverty and overcome the barriers and gaps such as:

- i) Affordable housing;
- ii) Affordable and available childcare (including after-school care);
- iii) Convenient and affordable transportation options;
- iv) Access to healthy and affordable food;
- v) Access to technology and digital literacy;
- vi) Financial literacy support;
- vii) Good paying, stable, ongoing jobs; and

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- viii) Presence of stigma and discrimination preventing access to opportunities, supports and services.

<https://www.bestnelson.org/together-nelson/>

Revelstoke

In 2012 the Revelstoke Poverty Reduction Strategy was produced to provide a detailed analysis of the true cost of living in Revelstoke, how poverty impacts the local economy, and what could be done about it. In September 2013, an Action Plan was created and a local Poverty Reduction Working Group was struck with implementation of the strategy a top priority. In the spring of 2014, Revelstoke City Council endorsed the national Poverty Reduction Charter. In the fall of 2014, the Revelstoke Times Review published a series of articles on poverty reduction, each linked to a community goal in our strategy. Measuring poverty is critical to moving forward. The State of Poverty in Revelstoke Report was completed in February 2018 in partnership with the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute. In June 2019, the working group voted unanimously to spearhead and transition to **'Vibrant Revelstoke – Affordability for All' – a Collective Impact Initiative** that will expand and deepen the work started in previous years.

https://www.revelstokesocialdevelopment.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Revelstoke_PovertyReductionActionPlan-copy.pdf

Richmond

This past winter (2013), Richmond Children First worked with partner organizations to explore the impacts of poverty on children in Richmond. It was recognized that many of the solutions to poverty can only be resolved at a provincial and federal level. However, there are many ways that community groups and organizations, help make a difference at a local level. At a community forum held June 20, 2013 community groups began to strategize community solutions where it was heard that it is hard to understand poverty. Forum participants asked Richmond Children First to help the community understand child poverty and the impacts in families. The report, **It's Not Fair! The Face of Child Poverty: A Call to Action**, released in November 2013, de-mystifies poverty, puts a face on child poverty and serves as a call to action for the Richmond Community. Richmond Children First presented a number of recommendations for community organizations:

- i) Recognize the full face of poverty; children's health and well-being depend on the health and well-being of their parents.
- ii) Include sensitivity training as part of professional development.
- iii) Educate boards of directors.
- iv) Use a child and family lens.
- v) Improve access and coordination of services.
- vi) Develop family-friendly resources.
- vii) Develop collaborative approaches.
- viii) Involve all sectors in the community.
- ix) Implement universal strategies when appropriate.

<http://www.richmondprc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/REPORT-Face-of-Child-Poverty-in-Richmond-NOVEMBER-2013.pdf>

New Denver

The Village of New Denver has limited capacity to implement poverty reduction actions due to its size. Their plan does not recommend specific detailed initiatives. Rather it provides an overview of the state of poverty in New Denver, including highlighting assets available and service gaps, and provides some next steps in the form of decision-making tools and recommended actions for the full community, not just the local government. A research project was established in partnership with the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Selkirk College to focus on indicators in the following areas:

- i) employment and income,
- ii) children and families,
- iii) housing,
- iv) food security,
- v) transportation,
- vi) education and training, and
- vii) access to services.

The key decision-making tool to drive future poverty reduction in the community is an active and engaged **Poverty Reduction Steering Committee**. This project lays the foundation for further poverty reduction actions by preparing the community to take advantage of poverty reduction opportunities as they arise, building off existing community strengths and the priorities specific to local needs and concerns.

<https://newdenver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/New-Denver-Poverty-Reduction-Final-May-2021.pdf>

New Westminster

Based on the research and consultation process, including those with lived experiences, the following barriers and challenges were identified. It should be noted that in most cases, families living in poverty and with low incomes experience multiple barriers or challenges, which speaks to the need for a collaborative approach and partnerships to assist and support them. Barriers include:

- i) Access to and Awareness of Services
- ii) Education and Training
- iii) Food Security
- iv) Employment
- v) Health and Medical services
- vi) Housing and Shelter
- vii) Income Support
- viii) Leisure and Recreational Activities
- ix) Stigma and Social Inclusion
- x) Transportation

<https://www.newwestcity.ca/community-poverty-reduction-initiative>

<https://www.surrey.ca/vision-goals/social-plans-programs/poverty-reduction-project>

Calgary

Calgary policy directions call for less red tape and alignment with the modern-day realities of parenthood, gig work, gender dynamics and systemic racism. They cut across all orders of government recognizing that each plays a role and that cities can be strong advocates across jurisdictions.

Policy Directions - Towards Enough for All:

- i) Explore a Basic Income Guarantee for Canada to ensure no one falls through the cracks and everyone can meet their basic needs regardless of work status.
- ii) Increase the Alberta Child and Family Benefit to previous levels to support healthy child development and ensure no child lives below the poverty line.
- iii) Recommend Statistics Canada collect more data on the gig economy so that we can identify and support changing needs and develop a definition of “precarious work”.
- iv) Bring an equity framework to city planning and neighbourhood investment, in consultation with The City of Calgary Social Well-Being Advisory Committee, to provide travel options and safe, accessible infrastructure to underserved communities.
- v) Deliver income supports rapidly to meet immediate needs, using a system based on trust with checks-and-balances coming later, to keep people from falling below the poverty line even temporarily.
- vi) Institute paid sick leave, and include self-employed and gig workers.
- vii) Create a minimum wage policy that ensures the minimum wage is a living wage.
- viii) Adjust other special benefits for gig workers and self-employed people to ensure they have access to the same safety nets as employees, including parental leave.
- ix) Maintain the commitment to index AISH and Income Supports, change earning exemption rates and asset limits, and ensure supports keep pace with inflation.

<https://enoughforall.ca/action/poverty-snapshot-2020>

Innovative Shelter Projects

Ulmer Nests, Ulm Germany

'Ulmer nest' is a timber pod that serves as an emergency shelter to protect homeless people from bitterly cold winter weather.



https://www.boredpanda.com/homeless-capsules-shelter-winter-ulmerness/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

Edson

The Town of Edson is testing a new emergency shelter that officials hope will translate into a long-term solution to help people without a home in rural Alberta get a good night's sleep. Five small rooms, known as pods, have been carved out of the back of a recycling building in the town 200 kilometres west of Edmonton to accommodate those who need a place to stay overnight. In the first month since opening the pods have been used about 100 times. The small rooms each have a mat, bottles of water and room for a bag. As a result, homeless individuals are no longer crawling into empty buildings and staying the night.



<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/shelters-edson-1.6106840>

Portland

In 2016, Portland State University launched the POD initiative, which attracted some of the city’s brightest architecture talent to design tiny, mobile single-occupant structures (max 96 square feet) for the city’s homeless women. The goal was to provide locking-door shelter that facilitated sleep and provided the stability necessary to transition residents to more permanent living situations. Winning designs were built by volunteer contractors and put up in Kenton, at a “Women’s Village” operated by Catholic Charities.

Residents were self-identified women over 25 (though the average age is 45), most of whom had lived on the streets for at least five years. On-site caseworkers helped them track down stable housing. Almost every resident has landed a permanent living situation within a year.



<https://www.businessinsider.com/portland-is-building-pod-villages-to-address-homelessness-2020-12>

Cowichan Valley

New sleeping cabins will provide more comfortable accommodations to nearly 40 people that were living in tents. They will now have a heated and dry place to stay every night. They’re eight feet by eight feet, fully insulated, wired, they have heating and lighting and they’re essentially sleeping bunkies with thermopane windows, insulated doors and built to be a safe, warm dry sleeping accommodation.



<https://www.cheknews.ca/emergency-shelter-units-for-the-homeless-arrive-in-the-cowichan-valley-733021/>

Appendices 2: Poverty Reduction Plan Communications

The following individuals and organizations have graciously shared their knowledge and experience in reducing poverty:

Age Friendly Community
Ambrose University (Poverty and the Law)
ANKORS
Aqanttanam Housing Society
Axis Family Resources
BC Housing
Bc211
Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays
Canadian Official Poverty Dashboard
Canal Flats Food Bank
CEO of 45 Conversations Media & Education Ltd. (Early Childhood Education Consultant)
City of Cranbrook
Club House
College of the Rockies
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy
Columbia Basin Trust
Columbia Valley Community Foundation
Columbia Valley Food Bank
Communities Ending Poverty
Community Connections Society of Southeast BC
Community Response Network
Community Social Planning Society of Cranbrook & Area
Corporate Officer, District of Invermere
Cranbrook Chief Administrative Officer
Cranbrook Chamber of Commerce
Cranbrook City Council
Cranbrook Climate Hub
Cranbrook Food Bank
Cranbrook Pride
Cranbrook Public Library
Cranbrook RCMP
Cranbrook Thrives
Dinners at Home
Director of Community Programs for Emergency Management (Alberta)
Director of Corporate Administration Services and Corporate Officer, City of Fernie
Director of Corporate Services, District of Elkford
Dwelling Place Church
East Kootenay Addiction Services
East Kootenay Boys and Girls Club
East Kootenay Child Care Resource & Referral
East Kootenay Emergency Response Network
East Kootenay Haven Transition House

East Kootenay Poverty Law Advocate Program
Ekklesia Millennium
Elk Valley Family Society
Elk Valley Hospice
Elk Valley Suicide Task Force
Elkford Alliance Church
Elkford Food Bank
Elkford Public Library
Ending Poverty Coordinator, City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County
Family Dynamix Association
Family Support Institute New Westminster
Fellowship Baptist Church
Ferne Chamber of Commerce
Ferne Women's Resource Centre
First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society
Friends of Refugees
GAM Info Rep
Haven Gardens
Homelessness Policy Directorate, Employment and Social Development Canada
House of Hope
Interior Health
Inuvik Community Greenhouse
Kelowna United Way
Kimberley Food Recovery Project
Kimberley Helping Hands
Kootenay Employment Services
Kootenay Métis Housing Society
Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Child & Family Services
Living Wage for Families
Manager of Community Development & Communications, City of Kimberley
Manager, Community Impact and Poverty Reduction
Mary Basil Recovery House
Mayor and Council, City of Cranbrook
Mayor and Council, City of Fernie
Mayor and Council, District of Invermere
Mayor, Village of Radium Hot Springs
Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction
Mission Community Services Society
MLA Doug Clovechok, Columbia River – Revelstoke
MLA Tom Shypitka, Kootenay East
Mustard Seed Calgary
National Coordinator, Canada Without Poverty / Canada Sans Pauvreté
Nelson at its Best, Nelson Poverty Reduction Project Manager
New Denver Poverty Reduction 2021
NEXUS Community Support Society
Ponderosa House
Port Hardy Poverty Reduction
Regional District of Central Kootenay

Regional District of East Kootenay
Regional District of Kootenay Boundary
Revelstoke Life
Rising Wolf
Rob Morrison, MP for Kootenay-Columbia
Rocky's Donair
Saint Aidan Orthodox Church
Salvation Army
School District #5
Scotty's House
Selkirk College
Seniors First BC
Seniors in Partnership
Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER)
Social Planner, City of Powell River
Sparwood Food Bank
St. Mary's Church
State of the Basin
Stats Canada
Strathcona County Youth Strategy
Street Angels
Summit Community Services Society
Tamarack Institute
The Bridgespan Group
The Dwelling Place Church
The Elk Valley Suicide Task Force
the Fernie Family Housing Society
Together Nelson: A Community Action Plan to Reduce Poverty
Top of the World Ranch
Union of BC Municipalities
United Way British Columbia | Southern Interior
University of Maryland (Poverty Survey)
Various periodicals and newspaper articles
Vibrant Communities Calgary
Windermere Food Pantry
Youth Curator, Communities Building Youth Futures

And many concerned citizens throughout the East Kootenay Region.