



# Transcript: Community Meeting on Poverty Reduction

Quesnel, BC  
February 3, 2018

## Introduction and Event Summary

On February 3, 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction hosted a community meeting in Quesnel, BC to discuss poverty and poverty reduction with local residents. The event brought together approximately 80 to 90 participants including people with lived experience of poverty; poverty reduction front line workers and advocates; people from the non-profit and business sectors; and community members from all walks of life.

The event began with a welcome from Elder Terri Boucher of the Lhtako Dene Nation, followed by opening remarks from Mable Elmore (Parliamentary Secretary for Poverty Reduction).

Participants then engaged in round table discussions in groups of 8 to 10 people per table. Each table had a dedicated facilitator from a local community group or from SPARC BC who helped to guide the conversations. Each table also had a dedicated note taker who helped to record the discussion.

There were two rounds of discussion which focused on the following questions:

1. What are the issues facing you and people living in poverty right now?
2. What would address these issues and help you and others out of poverty?

Following the discussions, participants were invited to put a sticky dot beside the strategies or solutions that were most important to them. Each participant received four (4) sticky dots. Following the individual priority setting exercise, participants were asked to determine as a table the top three (3) priorities from the evening and to report these priorities back to the room.

Mable Elmore, the Parliamentary Secretary for Poverty Reduction then shared some closing remarks.

## Document Organization

This document contains the transcripts from the flip chart notes from those in attendance. The flip chart notes have been transcribed verbatim, correcting only for spelling and grammar as needed. The notes are organized according to the feedback received to the two questions beginning with:

1. What are the issues facing you and people living in poverty right now?
2. What would address these issues and help you and others out of poverty?

## Question 1: What are the issues facing you and people living in poverty right now?

- 31 missing and murdered women in Quesnel
  - o Trauma for families
  - o Affects whole community
  - o Self-coping: drinking, violence, abuse -> poverty
  - o More services badly needed to support
- Lots of people not telling their story
- Poverty impacts
  - o Paycheques
  - o Work
  - o Lapse in judgement
  - o Health circumstances
- More supports are needed
  - o Pre-counselling needed
  - o more pro-active supports
- Low income working poor
  - o If people even missed one pay cheque lots more people would be in poverty
  - o i.e. if the sawmill shut down – people still in same position if income missed
  - o Working poor results in multi-generational poverty
  - o Even lack of work for even a week ca affect people’s ability to get by
  - o Misconception that workers in higher paying jobs are better off – not so anymore
  - o People who are really stressed are those who have sick children
  - o Childcare costs are high – it is not possible to get ahead
- Lack of opportunity for single parents kids’
  - o Many single parents lack the means to really help their kids,
  - o Transportation is a challenge
  - o People don’t have the time they needs to spend with their kids when they are holding down two jobs
  - o It means that the kids fall behind because the parents are not able to help the kids do more
  - o This is an issue that cuts across all ethnicities and genders – it is not only female single parent families that struggle many male single parents also struggle, often grandparents also have to help.
- Income assistance funding is not enough
  - o The money for food that is provided through income assistance only lasts for a week
  - o Sometimes people have to eat rice for the rest of month once the money from income assistance is gone
  - o It costs money to get around even \$1.50 to get a free meal (\$1.50 bus)
  - o There is no ability for people to get moose meat in town

- Navigating systems can be difficult
  - o There are lots of different programs but if you're not tech savvy it is difficult to know what is available and difficult to do
  - o On paper the programs look good but they do not always help the families that they are intended to help
  - o There is the need for more coordination - a "one stop shop"
  - o People really have to have good technical skills - sophistication with technology
  - o People also need to feel safe when going to access services
- Community Connect meeting
  - o Funding from children's first (BC govt)
  - o Strategic plan in place 2-3 years now
  - o First Nations org, MCFD, school District, Prov Govt Child Dev Center, City of Quesnel, Women's Resource Centre, Amata, Seasons House
  - o Used to get funding and take coordinated approach to ensure funding approved for community organization
- Navigating has many barriers
  - o Language
  - o Connecting people to the services
  - o Level of comfort with technology
  - o Connectivity in North
  - o Lack of phone or cell coverage in rural areas in the North
  - o Leads to fear of pursuing something that would be advantageous
- Stigma and preconception:
  - o Single dad and single mom viewed differently
  - o Single dads withdraw and don't ask for services
  - o inner share and social share
- Food security
  - o Not enough food banks
  - o There are three food banks in Williams Lake
  - o In Quesnel there is only one that is open every 3 months
  - o Williams Lake gives you choices at food bank people can chose pasta sauce, macaroni, then buy hamburger with their cheque
  - o There is less choice in Quesnel
- Clothing and Other Supports
  - o Clothing vouchers are not available in Quesnel
  - o This is something that is available in other communities like Williams Lake
  - o This type of service would be good in question
  - o Help with furniture like a voucher from Salvation Army – this type of thing would also be helpful

- Housing and help finding housing
  - o Williams Lake has Housing Outreach Worker
  - o This is a good service
  - o It is hard to find the same support network in Quesnel – I am here because my girlfriend likes it better here – this is where her family/children live
- Mental health supports
  - o Don't want to have to move to have supports, family is here in Quesnel
  - o Quesnel's shelter is better than Williams Lake
  - o But there are more wrap around services and support in Williams Lake
- Cost of housing
  - o Rent in Quesnel is high like in Vancouver
  - o The cost of housing is too high
  - o Rents are \$800/month in Quesnel
  - o Need to team up /share with others to afford
  - o There is also landlord discrimination especially Indigenous people
- Accessible housing
  - o It is a problem finding accessible housing for someone in a wheelchair
  - o My girlfriend is in a wheel chair and we can't find housing
  - o There is no support to find housing
  - o Drawing on Williams Lake support network because nothing in Quesnel
  - o Rental subsidy only pays half the rent and only available for some people
  - o If the rent is \$800 you still have to pay \$400
- Other supports
  - o There should be more funding even if it is temporary to "help people back on their feet"
  - o Give people a chance
  - o People make assumptions and judge you before they know you
  - o You often feel alone - social isolation
  - o Sometimes you end up having problems with roommate
  - o It can also be boring by yourself
  - o I had a bad roommate situation - drug issues
  - o It is hard trying to break a cycle, but you feel stuck – like the song "Hotel California" - you can come and go but you can never leave"
- Accessible housing
  - o Can't find a stable accessible housing in Quesnel
  - o Been in and out of shelter more than 6 mos.
  - o There shelter in Quesnel is accessible, but doesn't have a nice place to gather
- Laundry
  - o We panhandle to get the money we need to wash our clothes
  - o money for food
  - o We sometimes get kicked out of Safeway but it is the best place to pan handle
  - o There are no laundry vouchers to clean clothes

- There is a washing machine but no dryer at the shelter and the washing machine breaks down all the time because people misuse it,
- We take our clothes to a laundromat (5\$/load, 3\$ dryer – 1.5 hour cycle)
- The laundromat is close to the shelter
- Sources of Income
  - People have to pan handle to get extra income
  - We move around so don't get pushed out; Time Hortons, Safeway,
  - We aim for \$50/day pan handling to help cover costs
  - We also work at different types of jobs – i.e. sometimes do things for the landlord to get a deduction in the rent
- Supportive Housing
  - There is no temporary/short-term support in Quesnel
  - There is transitional housing for women but this type of housing is also needed by men
  - Safety is an issue for anyone if you don't have a door to shut
  - It is difficult on the street
  - There are no places to cook for yourself in the shelter, but they do have a good food program except that there is no food programs on weekends, no lunch on weekends
  - They also lock the shelter doors at 9:30 pm, re-open around 9:30 am
  - The shelter has 5 rooms (2 beds to a room), 10 mats
  - The rooms have a television and phone
  - There are some rooms above the shelter that rent for \$375 to \$500 per month
  - This is some of the most affordable housing in the City although \$500 is not affordable to everyone
  - There are also rules around this housing – for example you can only have 1 person per room and no visitors
- Other Housing Choices/Challenges
  - It is hard to get a landlord to accept you
  - There is racism/discrimination
  - Landlords look for people who are “working or going to school”
  - Even though we have reliable government cheques they won't consider us
  - There is also a lack of outreach workers or advocates in Quesnel who can help to advocate on your behalf.
  - There are no solid support from outreach worker but she does her best
  - There is also a lot of competition for the housing that is available –for example you start to look for housing at the middle of the month (i.e. around the 21<sup>st</sup>) because you will not have any money to pay for the housing until the start of the month – it is hard to get all of the funds together
- Identification
  - We have difficulty with the banks
  - Banks won't accept cheque without ID in Quesnel
  - We have to have to get a stamp from social services because don't have proper ID (SIN, birth certificate) in Williams Lake the banks would let you to use your care card as ID.

- Recreation and Social Opportunities
  - o Everything fun costs money,
  - o In the shelter in Williams Lake you could play music in free time
  - o Theatre costs money –sometimes we sneak in to the theatre but the police are called
  - o There is no place to exercise
  - o The Salvation Army in Williams Lake used to have a work out room
  - o It was a good place to meet with other people - a gathering place
  - o The shelters should be open longer so people can stay, watch TV.
  - o The recreation centre is too far from town
  - o It takes too long to get to, too hard to go in the snow/weather
- Transportation
  - o Cabs in Quesnel aren't wheelchair accessible
  - o Transportation issues: buses shut down at 12
- Services for Families/Children and Youth
  - o Bakers School is closed, no place for youth/kids to go
  - o Not enough services for families/youth, everything costs money
  - o No accessible recreation opportunities
- Poem:
 

*“People ask me where I’ve been and what I’ve seen.  
I say I’ve been here, I’ve been there, I’ve been everywhere  
I’ve lived in a hostel, a hospital, and even jail in the city of Quesnel.  
Hoping to get well and to erase the spell.  
It’s like we’re in chains - doing everything all over again.  
Day in, Day out.  
Like a cage full of rage.  
Like a vicious game. I just don’t want things to be the same”*
- The police/law enforcement/jail
  - o It is hard to recover when you’re around certain people
  - o People go to jail for shoplifting, fighting
  - o There is nothing else to do ,
  - o They put you in the drunk tank
  - o Police hope we get better, but we can’t get the help we need
  - o They let you sleep in drunk tank but they don’t feed you (for 12 hours)
  - o You are left hungry,- they should feed you, you would sober you up faster
  - o RCMP offers support – they will drive you to shelter
  - o Some police pick on you rather than help you - some cops are corrupt in Prince George
- Income Sources/Pan Handling
  - o People pan handle in front of the new Tim Hortons,
  - o If you panhandle in front of subway you get gift cards,
  - o \$20 pays for a good meal for 2 people

- Getting Around Quesnel
  - o We are getting too old to travel on Greyhound,
  - o Quesnel might lose Greyhound, this will be tragedy, it is the only way to get around
  - o Ticket cost \$35 to Williams Lake one-way, - it feels like a reasonable price considering what gas costs
  - o The shelter used to provide bus tickets but it doesn't provide them anymore
  - o The women's shelter still provides some tickets
  - o People go to the detox centre in Prince George but then you get stuck and have no way to get back home
  - o If you are in a wheelchair getting around is really hard – I had to miss two medical appointments because I had no way to get there. I also had to miss my sister's funeral because I would not get there. I asked everyone at the shelter for help but no one would help.
- Mental Health and Addictions Supports
  - o There are detox beds in Quesnel
  - o People who need a detox bed are forced to go to Prince George
  - o There is a high crime rate in Prince George – I would never want to live there
  - o It is hard to get into the women's shelter in Prince George
  - o There need to be better resources in cities and greater equity across cities
  - o RCMP throw you in jail for nothing in Prince George, don't understand mental illness, pushed to limits, "if they would have left me alone I would have done alright"
- Impact of the wild fires
  - o The wild fires had an impact
  - o People lost their place in Glendale
  - o They were really bad in Williams Lake
  - o Before it was possible to get a 2 bedroom unit for \$650
- Lack of work (jobs at Max)
  - o Is it lack of training?
  - o People hire a relative
  - o Other people do not even get called for an interview
  - o Most of the jobs are low level service jobs or construction
- Housing Quality
  - o The quality of housing is poor
  - o The housing is very low quality
  - o Electricity in suite in house
  - o Municipal governments are left to deal with issues of poor quality housing
  - o There are often issues with poor maintenance as well as safety and quality
  - o Inspections/write up and work on enforcement
  - o There is the need for more provincial support to help municipalities to deal with this
  - o There are real concerns about kids living in poor quality housing
- Income and Access to Opportunities
  - o Students have high student loans



- Have no employment in community
- Where do these students who are in poverty go?
- Transit
  - The bus system “sucks”
  - People can be waiting at a bus and no bus will come
  - One person was waiting at a stop at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday when another person stopped to tell them they there would be no bus until Monday morning!
  - Transit is a partnership between the Province and the municipality. However, BC Transit calls a lot of the short- they look at ridership and base decisions on statistics that do not necessarily fit the local context
  - A rural lens is needed in smaller communities -not using ridership costs
- Income Assistance
  - Income assistance rate are too low
  - Many seniors receiving OAS/GIS are also struggling
  - The low rates help to create poverty –people get trapped
  - Poverty can be systemic and multi-generational
  - A basic income/standard is needed
  - There need to be more living wage employers
  - The basic income assistance rates also need to increase
  - The government should also look at the penalties for earning or training
  - Under income assistance and the current rules there is no incentives to rise above the situation (when you can earn more \$ it just means that they are deducted off cheque)
  - We need to find a way to help people rise above the poverty line
  - We also need to have a realistic amount for assistance
- Training and Other Opportunities
  - People receiving income assistance should also have access to training
  - If you are receiving training you shouldn't be cut off assistance
  - There should be investments in business and training
  - People should get training for data entry and coding as well as security
  - Perhaps people receiving income assistance could get the security contract for government and in this way they would have access to jobs and opportunities
  - This type of model has bene done before – a good example is West Virginia
  - The government might also want to look at training people to on fibre optics – perhaps this is a way to help create a workforce for this type of work?
- Why is there no technology in Quesnel
  - In the 90s there was so much investment in training
  - This was important – as a single mom in BC I was able to get my ticket to trades
  - We could look at setting up a wild fire centres in Quesnel –provide real training
  - Climate change affects poverty as well as other natural disasters
  - The pine beetle and wildfires have both had an effect on poverty in Quesnel
  - There were people who lost everything in the wildfires and who now know poverty for the first time

- The effects of the Residential School System
  - o There effects of the residential school system is also real
  - o There are four First Nations communities in Quesnel
  - o Residential schools have created a history and legacy of poverty
- The Federal relationship with First Nations
  - o The dysfunctional relationship with the Federal government also has implications
- Kids and Schools
  - o 50% of the population in schools will be First Nations
  - o There are many vulnerable kids in schools
  - o Quesnel had one of the highest vulnerability index to poverty in schools
  - o What are schools doing? What do we need to do?
  - o There is a Breakfast Club at school and 2 workers from each First Nations community to get kids connected to school
  - o It always costs money – food, participation in programs
  - o Poverty can really affect a child’s mental health and sense of belonging
- Social and Recreations Programs
  - o Quesnel has a new arena
  - o Quesnel is not really a hockey town
  - o Hockey is also one of the least affordable sports
  - o We need to find ways to make sport/arts affordable and available
  - o We need to find ways to help break cycle
  - o If we can create ways to get kids involved in after school and build a sense of pride and connection – teach them new things like hula dancing at the Luau
  - o Must find ways to create involvement in after school activities as it is a way to both help ensure that kids have access to food but also a sense of connection
  - o It would be good to have some physical activity, then food and then an art project – however, there is no Provincial funding for this
  - o This type of initiative would also help parents who work as well
- Mental health
  - o Mental health supports are lacking
  - o Primary workers – worried about their mental health
  - o People shut down due to stress
  - o It takes a community to help break the cycle
  - o People don’t know how to ask for help and in some case help is only available in certain place = not everyone is comfortable
  - o In Quesnel some of the services families needed were located in the same building as MCFD and this was a barrier - families had to go to MCFD building but this was associated with child protection
  - o We need to get the child and youth mental health services out of child protection office

- Services and supports in the community
  - o Where you go for help makes a big difference
  - o People will go where it works for them
  - o Don't have enough \$ to support people
  - o Map out mental health resources
  - o Political struggle -> poverty is a system and people have lots of reasons why they end up poor
- Political Will
  - o Politician make a decision as to what is a priority
  - o Fentanyl overdose happens at home but put into street overdose
  - o Hip and knee survey get all the attention but it's about other issues
  - o It's the band aid versus the solution
  - o Resources happen after the fact
  - o Services intervene when kids are in adolescence, schools don't have resources to help in the early childhood years when it could make a difference
  - o There needs to be a greater emphasis on prevention and not just band aid solutions
- Stigma, discrimination and respect
  - o There is stigma on all levels
  - o Everyone knows each other in Quesnel
  - o The Indian Act - this can't be law?
  - o It is hard to know where to go to get help – people feel ashamed to ask
  - o Reserve do well but First Nations have different belief systems and share money
- Judgement in the system
  - o Need to find ways to break the judgement and stereotype
  - o There is the need for training to help stop the stigma
  - o Mental health workers harden their opinions of people
  - o People in seniors homes are afraid of pan handlers
  - o People need to spend time with other people and really get to know them
- Fentanyl and the Opioid Crisis
  - o Opioid crisis is everywhere
  - o Quesnel has relatively high #s
  - o Professionals/mental health at home
  - o Doesn't align in mental health strategy
  - o 4 hr/day harm reduction program but there a people who aren't visible
- Food security
  - o The cost of food/prices are high
  - o The number of people using the food bank is high 100 people /day use meal programs
  - o There are also about 120 families who use the food bank
  - o It is not the most nutritious food – not really healthy
  - o The healthy food is perishable so it is more difficult
  - o Bread is easy to get but not always good
  - o The food bank also gets the working poor – there are 130 people who are working poor

- The foodbank tries to give necessities
- Toothpaste/family support
- Walmart and KFC partner
- Walmart provides dog food to the SPCA
- Salvation Army provide basic needs
- Helps with the flu shot and other supplies
- Housing
  - People can't afford a place to live
  - It is difficult if you have pets
  - Some people can't have roommates
  - The rental portion of disability assistance too low
  - Lack of resources/accessible rental units
  - Not enough jobs, you have to know someone to get work, wages too low
  - Income assistance too low
- Mental health services
  - Wait list for psychiatric assessment for adults, need for service
  - Have to have severe issues
  - There is more of a push to group therapy when one-to-one support more appropriate
- Children in poverty
  - Kids fall through the cracks
  - Not getting services
  - Not enough resources
- Education
  - There is no one teaching about poverty
  - There are lots of high need kids in schools
  - There is a lack of supports for kids with disabilities (educational assistants)
  - There are large classrooms - schools closing
  - There are more portable classrooms - Have to go outside in winter seasons
- Harm reduction resources
  - Homeless shelters have resources but need a new facility
  - There are waiting lists for treatment
- Transportation
  - Bus service are limited for families
  - There are also limitations in terms of the service hours (shift workers have issues)
  - Not having access to transportation can be a barrier
  - It is hard to access services
  - It is also hard to find a job or get to a job
- Child care
  - Child care is a crisis in the community
  - There is no access to child care services after 6:00pm
  - There is a shortage of spaces and qualified workers
  - The wages of ECE workers are too low

- There are limitations in terms of the practicum placements
- People often have to leave the community to find a practicum
- Stigma
  - People living in poverty face a stigma
  - There is real stigma around the services provided by MCFD
  - Don't want to be judged – they do not want to be seen going into the building
- Weather
  - People face high heating costs
  - In winter it can cost \$200-\$300 per month for a house
  - Many people also live in hazardous living conditions (i.e. with mould)
- Addictions
  - People have to choose between drugs and eating
  - People who are addicted will choose drugs
- Income disability assistance
  - It is hard to get disability assistance
  - The website to apply is too long and complex
  - Literacy is a barrier
  - Many people do not know how to use online resources
  - Have to have email/phone to apply online
  - Office just send applicants to a computer
- Other Services
  - Seasons House has good resources
  - Agencies work together well
  - Government services are not enough
  - There should be more willingness to invest in supports like early childhood funding
  - There is not enough funding for health care services in the community
  - Recruitment of social workers in rural communities is an issue
- Families in poverty
  - Food security while pregnant is an issue
  - The food bank is open once every 2 months
  - Seasons House had to stop food program
  - Without Seasons House people would probably die
  - There is one (1) soup kitchen that is open 9-1 Tues-Fri
  - It is hard to get food on the weekends
- Community Support
  - People are not always aware of what is going on (ex. Lack of food)
  - More focus on resource industry
  - There are a lot of gaps (i.e. some schools don't have breakfast programs)
  - Early childhood development supports are not always there
  - There are waitlists for services (i.e. speech pathology, etc.)
  - There is a lack of counsellors in schools
  - Getting assessments done is a challenge

- There are no psychologists on staff
- There is the need to help kids if kids are 4-5 years old before they get help it is too late
- You have to go to Prince George to get FASD assessment – there are long waiting lists
- Lack of youth activities
  - New skateboard parks are being built
  - Schools are old and have to move – this impacts school clubs
  - Infrastructure issues in general
  - Youth centres exists but some kids can't get to it
  - Young adults try to get out of the community to get jobs
- Postsecondary education
  - Too expensive for many youth and their families
  - Most need student loans (face high interest)
  - It is hard to pay back student loans if your income/wages are low
  - Education should be free
  - Funding is focused on trades
  - People working minimum wage will find it difficult to pay back student loans
  - People really struggle when they are on their own to get through school
- Seniors
  - There is a large senior population in Quesnel
  - There is a 1 to 2 year waitlist for supportive housing
  - Pension too low
  - Seniors have to choose between prescriptions or eating
  - There is caregiver burnout
  - There is only limited respite care
- Challenges for People in Low Income
  - People rely on the food bank but they can only access every 2 month
  - The majority of household finances go into housing
  - Means that people rely on community services
  - There should be more funding community kitchens
  - Welfare rates to low
  - There is a lack of stable housing
- Transportation/Transit
  - It is hard to get to the box stores which are at the top of hill if you do not have access to transportation -Transit only runs limited hours
  - People are not allowed to bring a lot of groceries on the bus – some people have been told that they can only bring one bag of groceries on the bus
  - People are told that there are no Christmas hampers allowed on city transit
  - People also can't get to medical appointments
  - Northern health provides some transportation support but it is limited
  - There is a real barrier if you have short notice for appointments
- Health and Medical Appointments
  - Out of town appointments are also expensive

- People often have to travel out of town for medical appointments
- There are no funds to help with medical appointments - need a community solution
- Income Assistance
  - Application for income assistance are online
  - You need email to apply
  - Not everyone is able to scan documents –this is a barrier
  - The whole online system for income assistance is a huge barrier
  - Online application are difficult if there is no face to face contact
  - There are no longer workers that you can talk to
  - There have been so many changes to the Ministry
  - Rural communities no longer have offices where people can go
  - Cut backs have created a huge barrier
  - It has placed a strain on community with more people falling through the cracks
- Cuts to services
  - The women centres have had funding cut
  - Preventative services have been cut
  - It costs more in the end with lack of services
- Complexity navigating the system
  - For income assistance the Ministry wants five pieces of paper
  - Need doctors referral along with ID
  - Some people do not have a doctor
  - Some people have addiction issues, mental health challenges
  - Some doctors “fire” patients
- People Experiencing Trauma
  - Residential school victims traumatized, need more services
  - Income assistance online application traumatizing,
  - Many people who are homeless can’t get Income Assistance
  - People don’t have the ID they need, they fall through the cracks.
  - Getting ID can be hard
  - People “aging out of care” can also fall through the cracks, no supports
- Services and Supports for Youth
  - Need a youth home in Quesnel
  - Don’t need to invest more in foster care investing in families keeping children
  - People need a home bedroom, food, to get children back in their care
  - If people have no finances they can’t do this
  - Same pattern, barrier after barrier
  - Need to find ways to remove the barriers help people keep their children
  - There should be more funding for First Nations
- Food Security
  - Children in the schools depend on breakfast at school
  - Fund breakfast program, there is a huge need

- Housing
  - o Lack of affordable housing
  - o Seniors, substance, mental illness – can't stay in senior housing
  - o Homeless need supports
  - o First Nations through homeless shelter
  - o MCFD requirements while kids are in care, beaten down
  - o Homeless prevention plan- one worker supports 50 people,
  - o There is the need for more funding for housing with support
- Mental Illness and Substance Use
  - o Increase in homeless massive
  - o There is growing desperation
  - o There is the need for funding for severe mental health and addictions
  - o There are too many traumatized people in the community,
  - o There is lack of supports which means an increase of drug issues
  - o There is stigma around addictions and drug use
  - o It is a public health issue and is combined with other health issues
  - o There is the need to invest in in treatment
- Social Isolation and Connection
  - o Need to help to build connections
  - o Connection to home
  - o Help people to develop a feeling of comfort and belonging
- Basic Funding and Supports
  - o Medical funding, eye exams, glasses, should be covered,
  - o Dental and hearing aids
  - o Child care funding
  - o Basic funding to look after people –rebuilt the social safety net
  - o Lack of child care, after hour care for the working poor
  - o Lack of spaces
  - o Access of affordable schooling post-secondary
  - o Tuition fees, parking fees
  - o Livable wage, income for everyone
  - o People on income assistance able to make a certain amount a month, not just PWD clients
  - o IW rental amounts too low, can't rent anything for \$375 a month
  - o Preventative community programs needed seniors living in poverty
  - o Medical trips
  - o Medications
  - o Challenge for rural services – medical



## Question 2: What would address these issues and help you and others out of poverty?

- Basic Supports
  - o Medical funding, eye exams, glasses, should be covered,
  - o Dental and hearing aids
  - o Child care funding
  - o Basic funding to look after people –rebuild the social safety net
  - o Tuition fees, parking fees
  - o Livable wage, income for everyone
  - o Increase the basic income assistance not just PWD clients
  - o Increase the shelter portion of income assistance -\$375 is too low
- Child Care
  - o Lack of child care, after hour care for the working poor
  - o Lack of spaces
  - o Access of affordable schooling post-secondary
- Basic Health Care Supports
  - o Preventative community programs needed
  - o Supports for seniors living in poverty need
  - o Assistance with medical trips
  - o Assistance with medications
  - o Recognition of the challenge for rural communities –medical services
- Poverty
  - o People living pay cheque to paycheque and day to day
  - o Minimum wage increase?
  - o Middle class now living in poverty/working poor
  - o Have money but can't access services because income excludes them
  - o People working multiple jobs to support families
  - o Multi generations caring for children/children left on own
- Community is part of the solution
  - o Need to be grown from the ground up: community input
  - o People will stay away from places/services they perceive to be unsafe
  - o When no home to raise kids in, leads to other issues
  - o Lots of couch surfers: living in public spaces
  - o Lots of young people in this situation
- Housing challenges
  - o Rents are too high \$600 to \$800 for a single bedroom - shelter allowance is too low – the \$375 per month shelter reach is making shared accommodation a necessity
  - o Renters are stuck as they run into roommate problems they have to cover the rent or face eviction

- Seniors/residential care when 1 partner in res care combined income – leaves remaining spouse w/ 20% of income to support themselves
- Lots of seniors cashing in pensions/savings/reverse mortgages to be able to live and support families
- Food Security
  - Salvation Army is highly used –offers lunches
  - Food bank at Salvation Army
  - The food bank is only available once per month – very limited
  - There are more families and singles using it
  - Christmas Cheer” 80+hampers are given
  - School breakfast programs of offered every school in Quesnel
  - First Nation organizations in town provide their own hampers
  - District lunch program and salad bar program: the numbers are increasing
- Community gardens
  - Every organization is asking for donations to support community gardens in some schools
  - Community garden in community
  - The community is oblivious to the problems
  - Inadequate access to food- people living in poverty, seniors living in poverty, people working two jobs just to maintain their income
  - Pension inadequate to support
  - Voice to seniors: west Fraser (crew)
  - Brings in mass amounts of food monthly to Fraser Village (seniors village average age 80-90)
  - Put food for anyone to help
- Dakelth: store front for food – minimal cost to support
- New focus: program and supports
- Counselling
  - Trauma counselling
  - Women’s resources: women only
  - Lack of resources to support men
  - Family counselling for those who have witnessed
    - Self-treating via addictions, etc.
- Wildfire situation
  - Has led to deteriorating mental health
  - There is a wait list for support
  - Huge increase and no supports available
  - People feeling forgotten and not addressed
  - Fear for upcoming fire situation
- Homeless and Outreach Services
  - More outreach/street counseling needed – meet people in their environment
  - Good source of data

- Front line workers and training would be invaluable source of information as to what is still needed
- Training and retention is a problem in communities
- Safe place for young adults/youth/teens to access
- Youth centre currently: sporadic hours – run by volunteers
- School district: no funding for assessment process
- Lack of psychologist, speech pathology, assessment to support
- Northern communities disadvantaged
  - Travel often needed to be able to access what needed
  - Families advocate for family members
  - Single people have road blocks if no wife or mother.
  - Difficult for families to get info and supports
  - Keep kids out of care so not in poverty (1 vote)
  - Support grandparents to keep kids out of poverty (2 votes)
  - Education to eliminate stigma people feel when asking for assistance from groups/govt
  - Increased funding for building subsidized housing connecting funding & groups (3 votes)
- Daycare subsidy:
  - Not available locally for shift workers or for non-normal schedules (1 vote)
- Funding for support groups geared to men
- Education funding(2 votes)
  - LIFT program for women
  - Lack of funding for men
  - Education families and teens about opportunities
- Healing resources
  - Multi-ethnicities and demographics needed (1 vote)
- Community gardens
- Championing increased programming geared to North through CNC/UNBC
  - i.e. physio etc. if trained in Norther, people will stay in North (1 vote)
- Agricultural centre of excellence – food sciences
  - Community gardens, processing, medicinal plants
  - Transition to new economies and diversification
  - Mushroom task force
  - More funding for families and groups
- Technology hurdles (3 vote)
  - Present challenges to people or groups looking for support
  - Needs to be more options than “go online” or phone tree
- Need more services
  - Need more coordination between federal and provincial agencies
  - Need a “one-stop” approach
  - Services and programs for youth
  - Programming geared for younger people (i.e. those between the ages of 15 to 25)
  - Provide 6 months of additional support to help people get back on their feet

- Need a place to gather like in Williams Lake
- People/organizations need more people to provide support and place to go to do that
- Housing and supports
  - Need more housing, foundation to succeed, without you can't go to school, work, live properly (2 votes)
  - More \$\$ for food, laundry, clothing, basic essentials
  - Better food banks
  - Somewhere to get clothing and furniture (1 vote)
  - More housing first (1 vote)
- Education
  - Opportunities to get Dogwood,
  - More training and opportunities for employment, places like Vancouver
  - Work is hard to find – training to working at mill, restaurant (cooks), meat/butcher at Safeway
  - Supports to update resume, computer training/literacy
  - Do training at the library for computer literacy
  - Apprenticeships provide hands on training – need more apprenticeships
- Poverty is not a choice
  - we don't want to live like that (understand that)
- Places to gather
  - Increase Salvation Army hours
  - Need a gathering place
  - Somewhere to go
- Other basic services
  - Need offices for housing support
  - Laundry
  - Spread services out (different offices) but close together
  - Support for education,
  - Counselling
  - Sport programs
  - Gyms for youth so they have something to do - there is an ad that shows youth smashing windows or playing baseball image
- Seniors housing
  - Difficult to access
  - Seniors are living off of CPP only once you retire
  - Need more work to increase the money you receive through CCP
  - Seniors can't afford housing or medication
- Other types of assistance
  - Provide basic help for everyone: seniors, youth, single moms
  - Daycares services while women/men go to school, work

- Services for youth
  - o Youth help with school, counselling, downstairs gym
  - o Youth hub or centre - facility to support youth, tutoring, sport programs facility (1 vote)
  - o Place for people to gather for music, activities, games, (pool, darts)
  - o A place that interest everybody, way to meet people
- Other considerations
  - o Housing is the most important thing ever
  - o Great dinners at shelters: moose meat, bannock
- Health and other services
  - o Need more family doctors in Quesnel
  - o Quesnel has walk-in clinics but it does not have good access to prescriptions
  - o Even asking for a Tylenol 3 and you will be denied
  - o Funding for motorized wheelchair scooter is not available (only a manual chair that you need to have someone help to push in the snow)
- Transportation
  - o Need more accessible transportation
  - o Can't get cab fare for medical appointments
  - o Missed my sister's funeral because I couldn't get any assistance
  - o Missed medical appointments because cabs are not equipped for wheelchairs
  - o Need more transportation support/choices for people with disabilities
  - o Recognize the additional barriers they face,
  - o Because I missed three doctor's appointments – the doctor won't see me (1 vote)
  - o Handydart service hours, have to call too far in advance
  - o Local bus \$2, walking, greyhound – there are no more local vouchers for taxi
- Geographic considerations
  - o Sometimes it can be minus 20degrees in Quesnel
- Housing is the concrete foundation that you need (1 vote)
- More food banks/access (once a month instead of every 3 mos.)
- First Nation Families
  - o Children of First Nations need to feel pride in themselves to rise above - all children need this
  - o You accomplish one good thing, you'll build confidence to do the next big things – need to build pride in self
  - o Dancing should be part of First Nations community – it helps a lot to build pride for kids
  - o Kids who stopped dancing felt inspired -- start again
  - o Dancers ae becoming leaders, positive influence
  - o Provide opportunity and identity
  - o Start with the children and help the issues within their family
  - o Focus on positive influence and the ways you can influence others
  - o Kids go back into their environment and it's hard to cope, change is generational
- FN Pride
  - o Should build pride instead of stigma

- Focus on culinary skills/dance
- FN are very close knit
- More opportunity to dance and inspire
- People of dignity incorporated regardless what their background is
- Council decided to do reconciliation, but was a meaningful process
- When we first met with them there was a lot of distrust
- Grumpy but at the last meeting it was a good meeting
- Taught people how to dance
- Ask why are people there (traditional meetings)
- Enable municipality to have more conversations with FN
- Jobs
  - Need more opportunities
  - Professional recruiter – have high level vacancy (ex. Speech pathologist)
  - Service sector economy
  - If we want to redefine the economy we need a better training
  - We need to find ways to move people from assistance to jobs
  - The best solutions are grounded in the community to solve poverty
  - People work to work
- Cross-government relationships
  - FN relationships gets stuck at the Federal and Provincial level
  - Municipalities could take on more of this role but it would need resourcing
  - Enable municipality to have more conversations with FN
- Stigma (7 votes)
  - Needs to be more education on reducing the stigma
  - Need to be okay with others beliefs and their ability to express their beliefs
  - Start in schools and churches and gov't (b/c prejudice is not okay)
  - Need to address racism in the media and social media
- Celebration events
  - Self-respect and self-esteem
  - Promotes dignity and respect
  - Conscious of how you trust others
  - Dance First Nations
- Health care/school/government
  - Promote tolerance and respect in the workforce
  - Create places for First Nations
  - These are the people that are your clients
  - Two-way treatment between staff and client
  - Patience and understanding
  - Look at where they are coming from
  - Good empathetic skills
  - Imagine if 80% treat people with respect

- Education
  - o provincial wide education
  - o Course for all provincial workers on Indigenous culture
  - o Make it mandatory to listen and hold each other accountable (3 votes)
  - o Doctor and health professional want this help
- Work temp agency to help employment (1 vote)
  - o Work BC centre get involved in that work
  - o Ft. St. John – there is a white board where people put up notices about temporary jobs
  - o Creates opportunities for people to work
- Investment
  - o Channel investment and training (1 vote)
  - o An example is West Virginia where they retrained people
  - o TPP and CITA affect
  - o Fiber optics infrastructure is here already
  - o It might be a way to stimulate the local economy (Ex. Mills)
- Communication and Outreach
  - o Bombard people on media and social media with education
  - o positive messaging
  - o Breaking the stigma
  - o Good news story about how to change it after the bad news story (ex. Modular homes near the school. Teens created a Facebook page to support these homes)
  - o Lack of empathy for cedar house
- Attract Skilled Workers
  - o Make Quesnel a loan forgiveness area
  - o Ft. St. John is a loan forgiveness area (1 vote)
  - o Attract people to these jobs (occupational therapist)
  - o Can't attract people new grads
  - o Can't give the basic/free services for low income people and poverty line
  - o So much opportunity in Quesnel/how housing cost
  - o Younger people leave and don't comeback – “brain drain”
  - o In many ways younger people can't afford to come back
- Transportation
  - o Better transit needs (1 vote)
  - o Last bus is at 4:15 pm in evening (1 vote)
  - o Walmart/ Can Tire – why do they put up with it as they can't get to their business
  - o Downtown with services not near housing
  - o BC transit should create a rural plan
  - o Less on ridership #s
  - o More on connecting smaller communities
- Food security
  - o Brockville Salvation Army had a budgeting and cooking skills (2 votes)
  - o People do not just lack of food but also budgeting skills

- Instead of having reliance on Foodbanks (2 votes)
  - Work individually to help them plan and work with them - it is the saying “give them a fish, feed for a day/ teach them to fish, feed for a life”
- Basic skills training (3 votes):
  - Parenting/food/cooking skills
  - Financial management
- Split cheque into two or the delivery of services
  - Ex. Once every two weeks or as a gift card at Grocery store
- Child and youth mental health (3 votes)
  - More resource and publically funded service, not just private
  - Separate out child and youth mental health from child protection
  - School food programs should expand
  - Once per week but needs to be more, teaches kids to cook
- Housing
  - More rights for renters who have pets (1 vote)
  - More subsidized housing (4 votes)
  - Expand rental assistance program to address more situations
- Supports for people with disabilities
  - Increase employment support for persons with disabilities (1 vote)
  - Increase income assistance amount
- Increase investments in early childhood education (3 votes)
  - Every \$1 investment there is a \$10 savings across the boards (health, justice, etc.) (3 votes)
  - More funding for health care and community social services to improve mental health services and addictions (3 votes)
  - Aggressive recruitment for counsellors, ECEs, social workers
  - Pay incentives for moving
- Labour Market
  - Need to diversify employment opportunities (too much dependence on lumber) to support growth of city and address awareness of other issues (ex. Poverty)
  - Food Security
  - Need a winter storage facility for harvest
  - More public awareness that food bank needs donations
  - Increase wages so people can afford to eat (2 votes)
  - More facilities like seasons house, places to gather and have someone to talk to
- Children and youth
  - Need universal daycare, incentives for daycare centre for shift workers
  - Increase the wage of ECEs
  - Very important role in early childhood development
  - Recognize the value of work of ECE workers
  - Build better support systems in schools for students
  - Not to fail kids, should be illegal



- More supports for children in care “age out” at 19 (2 votes)
- Need to overhaul child welfare program
- Current programs are over capacity (phase 2 program)
- Create a mandatory province wide phase 2 program
- Includes kids with disabilities, they need supports too, very vulnerable kids
- Education
  - Free post-secondary education
  - Need better supports for continuing education to address transportation, working while going to school (1 vote)
  - Single parents Increase childcare subsidies for parents enrolled in school (1 vote)
- Minimum Wage
  - Increase min. wage
  - People deserve a living wage
  - Provide incentives for employers so they don’t cut hours or health benefits
- Health and well-being
  - Need spiritual leaders to increase community leaders,
  - Free yoga and meditation for increasing wellbeing,
  - More awareness, free organized sport,
  - Transportation support (van to pick up kids) for youth sports,
  - Free recreation programs in general,
  - Free transportation as part of youth service in general
- Hydro and utility costs
  - Include hydro costs within rent
  - Need better assistance for seniors and without a pension
- Racism and discrimination
  - Need to address racism with more education and understanding
  - Racism and discrimination creates barriers
  - Leads to poverty, addictions (2 votes)
- Housing
  - Housing funding/supportive housing (1 vote)
  - Outreach workers needed to help people jump through the hoops (1 vote)
  - Eliminate of paperwork, lack of help to navigate system
- Substance Use
  - Detox centre needed in Quesnel/treatment (2 vote)
  - People lose income assistance support funding when access support recovery beds
  - More supports, housing, for second stage housing (3 votes)
- In school teach cooking/life skills
- Livable wage for working families (2 votes)
- The Local Economy
  - Small local businesses less than 10 employee’s to subsidize
  - Government to support growth with local businesses

- Children and Families
  - o Counsellors needed
  - o Family support workers
  - o Sexual abuse counsellors family supports
  - o investment in children and families (1 vote)
  - o Child care resources (2 votes)
- Mental Illness and Addictions
  - o Mentally ill and substance abuse, funding needed (3 votes)
  - o Detox community program – proper supports – monitoring
  - o Restructure community thinking regarding addictions/mental health
- Transportation services (1 vote)
  - o Transportation – for medical appointments out of town
  - o Less barriers for Northern Health Bus- shorter trips
- Investment home care services, keep seniors in their home longer (1 vote)
- Need more single person housing
- Employment and Training
  - o Easier access to trades programs
  - o Employment programs, flexible, apprentice
  - o More apprenticeships
- Advocacy and Support
  - o More advocates
  - o Support workers to help with online applications
  - o Telephone to get info
  - o Community resources (1 vote)
- Child care
- Women centre funding (1 vote)
- Addiction and supports
  - o Treatment and detox services
  - o Supports for young people re: addiction (drug issues)
  - o Narcan kits help but other solutions needed - help kids feel connected to the community
    - kids feel like they are being judged when community reaches out to help
- Housing and supports
  - o Housing low income
  - o Funding for transition house for women, mental health/addictions
- Restructure income assistance ministry
- Coverage for basic services
  - o Eye exams
  - o Glasses
  - o Dental,
  - o Physio

- Housing and supports
  - o Housing low income
  - o Funding for transition house for women, mental health/addictions
  - o Lack of accessible housing
  - o Seasons housing and transitional housing
  - o Amata house – time limited. 30 days – can be extended to 90
  - o Need long term – some short term available
- Violence against women
  - o Supported in transition but order (restraining do not stop violence when out)
  - o Violence against women prevalent in Quesnel/Northern communities
  - o Traumatic for family community
  - o Lack of services for that
  - o Northern Health involved/traditional healing
  - o Funding available through Northern Health for individual situations
  - o Need ongoing resources and supports
  - o Support needed for people to try to reach out
- Addiction and Detox Services
  - o Waiting lists do not work: people won't come back
  - o Suicide, mental health, drugs and alcohol
  - o QUEST very short term: only 1 or 2 beds – 3 days max
  - o People need more time to detox/stabilize addiction issues
- Transitional and Supported Housing
  - o Transitional units: very minimal
  - o Limited short term beds between Season, Amata
  - o Pressures on all Quest