

**BC POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY**

**Small Group Discussion**

**Osoyoos, BC**

**March 7, 2018**

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**AGENCY: Desert Sun Counselling and Resource Centre**

**Oliver/Osoyoos, BC**

**Attendance:** 25

**Average Age:** 44.9

<b>Age</b>	> 55	9	36%
	40-55	5	20%
	20-40	6	24%
	< 20	3	12%
	unknown	2	8%

<b>Working:</b>	Yes	48%	2 teachers, 7 community members, 3 service providers
	No	52%	2 students, 4 retired, 7 immigrants

**What are the issues facing you and people living in poverty right now?**

**HOUSING:** Lack of affordable housing

There is a definite lack of affordable housing and the affordable housing that is available is substandard. People are living in “pickers” cabins without heating and insulation. ie: Heating with a space heater (\$900+) which is more than the rent (\$800).

Rentals are extremely hard to find ... too expensive, restrictions such as age (over 55, seniors only), no children, proof of income – employment & bank statement, excessive damage deposit, limited number of residents allowed. Also, many “affordable” rentals are in the rural area. There is no public transportation available which makes it extremely hard to travel back and forth to employment.

Double tier utilities system – power extremely expensive

**FOOD SECURITY:** Food costs are extremely high, too few dollars left for food

Osoyoos food bank is only open 1 X week. Food quality and quantity are poor. It is unrealistic for those who access the food bank to manage on one food bank per month. Families are often left sourcing out other food during the month ... scavenging, service organizations, handouts etc. Many individuals and families with children go hungry more than once during the month.

No access to low cost fresh nutritious food.

Inadequate social assistance system ... welfare & PWD payments

**EMPLOYMENT:** Lack of permanent full time employment

The lack of permanent full time employment is a real concern.

Families have both parents working long hours both at minimum wage. Extremely difficult to make “ends meet”.

Majority of employment in our area is seasonal.

Fixed income for seniors is putting our senior population in jeopardy. Many are reducing their food intake to conserve money to pay for shelter and health related expenses.

**CHILD CARE COST:** Lack of affordable child care.

Day care costs consume a high percentage of after tax income.

Extremely difficult for single parents to work and provide quality day care for their children.

Many find it hard to qualify for Child Care Subsidies.

Too few child care spaces ... Lack of Early Childcare Educators.

**What would address these issues and help you or others out of poverty?**

**HOUSING:** Regulations and standards for rentals

Rental property guidelines and standards would reduce the number of substandard housing. Regular inspection of rentals to ensure they meet a respectable standard.

Balance of rentals available ... there's a need family rentals as well as senior ... multi-generational housing.

Increase rental subsidies and rental "caps" for low income.

Rental co-ops ... Rent control

Mandatory for developers to include social housing in plans

**FOOD SECURITY:** Increase access to low cost food.

Osoyoos food bank should be offered weekly with an increase in the quality and quantity of food offered.

Community gardens and increase use of community kitchens.

Increase PWD and welfare payments.

Free hot lunch program at all schools

**EMPLOYMENT:** Increase full time employment

Increase minimum wage

More permanent full time jobs with better pay and benefits

Government training for low income

Increase government/private partnerships to increase employment and wages

**CHILD CARE:** Increase child care subsidies and number of spaces available

Free child care for all regardless of income

Increase awareness of the importance of early child education

Increase quality care for all children

**SUMMARY:**

There were four tables and each table was issued two dots of red, blue, green and yellow for a total of eight dots per colour.

The participants identified affordable quality housing as the most important.

8 red, 6 blue, 4 green, 2 yellow

Food Security was identified as a close second.

1 blue, 2 green, 2 yellow

Permanent full time employment was a major concern amongst the younger participants.

1 blue, 1 green, 2 yellow

Quality and affordable child care was a concern to working parents.

1 green, 2 yellow

### **TOP THREE SOLUTIONS:**

The area is in need of affordable quality rentals. Develop a system that would regulate the quality of rentals. This would ensure that a standardized level of housing is offered. Rentals inspected on a regular basis to enforce regulations. Rental subsidies' and more affordable housing made available to low income families.

Food Security was identified as an issue with many families living below the poverty line. Increased access to local food bank to once per week. Also, an increase in the quality and quantity of food received from food bank.

An increase of permanent full time employment was an issue to the young participants. Government and private sectors work together to diversify employment opportunities within the area. Affordable child care as well as an increase in day care spaces.