

Date	March 12, 2018
Community	Prince George
# of Participants	17 Plus 3 facilitators
# of Organizations	2

About the Participants:

This workshop took place at Prince George New Hope Society, a drop-in and support centre for Survival Sex Trade workers and all marginalized women in Prince George. The group of people who attended this workshop were predominantly indigenous women between the ages of 25-50. Many of these women are homeless or have precarious housing, are on different kinds of social assistance, most are living in addiction (although some are in recovery from addiction). Some of these women are living with HIV and HCV. Survival Sex work is a source of income for many of these women.

About the Findings:

Issues:

- Would like to have a house to host and cook for family and friends
- Dignity, face a great deal of stigma
- Need more emergency shelters
- Need more subsidized housing units
- More educational and re-training opportunities to assist with looking for employment
- More affordable housing
- Increase in federal pension funds
- More cultural resources and supplies, and access to spaces for cultural practices
- More shelters
- Shelter staff, and other frontline service agency staff, need more training to ensure they are able to understand and respond to issues facing clients
- More training for shelter staff/frontline service agency staff around overdose prevention (including naloxone training)

- Dealing with homelessness, poverty, lack of safe shelters all the time. There needs to be more housing and shelter options available.
- More shelters; more outreach available at shelters.
- More supportive housing options.
- Sense that without many housing options, landlords can be choosy, and that people on government assistance, people who don't have jobs, face discrimination and stigma. There is a need for more outreach workers and advocates to assist people in getting housing.
- Need a Boys & Girls Club, or other ways to empower children for future opportunities
- Face a great deal of stigma and discrimination from frontline service staff
- More mental health supports, counseling services
- Access to rides, or help getting to appointments and places I need to go
- Because of the amount of stigma and discrimination, people are deterred from seeking the help they need.
- More oversight of unjust police practices

Possible Solutions

- Have frontline service staff that know what they are talking about. Currently, these employees have no lived experience [of poverty]. They can be judgmental, stereotyping, abuse their power, and overall may not understand what it means to have to survive while living in poverty. More training around first aid, overdose prevention, harm reduction
- Cultural barriers can make it difficult to access services; more resources for cultural practices, and training around cultural safety for frontline staff, is needed. It would be great to have things like Indigenous language classes and resources. Access to Elders and cultural resources and teachers; and also, more support for these Elders.
- More programs and resources during the day at shelters and drop-in centres. This could also include more peer support, learning and training opportunities to increase training of peers. There is currently a lack of welcoming, open spaces for people without houses to spend time during the day. Without these resources, people feel very isolated, bored, stressed, and negative.
- There is need for more frontline services where people are treated with respect, accepted for who they are, and where people are there for one another and take the time to support one another.
- For people who are homeless or precariously housed, there is a need for more support to find housing

(including providing things like access to computers to look at online housing lists)

- Transportation support for assistance in going to doctors' appointments, grocery shopping, looking for housing.
- For people who are receiving Social Assistance, they are not allocated enough money to pay rent, as there is a lack of affordable housing options. If they are able to pay rent, very little money is leftover for all other needs. There also needs to be more harmonization between Provincial and Federal funding programs; currently, Federal pension cheques are reduced from Provincial monthly Income Assistance cheques.
- Need more consistent and accessible transportation options along Highway 16, **many people are still hitch-hiking.**

Solutions and Actions That Can Make a Difference

- (a) Looking at the list of issues and solutions generated, what types of solutions did the individuals who participated in your meeting identify as most important to them? Your summary report should include any of the solutions that received a dot from those that received the most dots to those receiving only one dot.
- (b) What emerged as the top 3 solutions or ideas based on the conversations and the individual priority setting?
1. Culturally based 'in the moment' treatment centre in the North, with pre and post support.
 2. First Nations Counselors, a place for comfort, eating, and communicate, verbally, emotionally and physical. New Hope is too much of a small place to help all in need, the women are applying themselves, but the home is too small. In need to expand for 24/7 service we are desperately in need. Such as a sleep area, controlled drug use. Acknowledging information, and teaching and guiding us for our prophet in life.
 3. Pension or small wage earnings deducted from welfare (social assistance) "shoplifting because can't afford to eat-we should also be able to look after our elders"

3. Important Reflections and Questions

Overall Views from participants:

- Question from participant: If we have these meetings and share our experiences, how long will it take for something to come to pass? It is great that the government is giving money for these workshops, but it seems like everyone is getting money to do things like this, and there is no money for us?
- It should not take another generation of poverty for things to change!
- New Hope helps support women in the direst poverty. Many of the issues are related to the treatment at the services that are supposed to help.
- Shelters here are like jails, we need smaller satellite shelters that are smaller, comfortable, safe and respectful.
- Way to close to home, emotions, heavy, a lot of tears.
- Empowered I have a voice.
- Felt good to be a part of something so needed
- Take poverty out of the equation; less crime, less deaths.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Focus Group, Prince George New Hope March 12, 2018

My initial thoughts.

The methods and support for the property reduction workshop were very effective, with some adaptations. The participants in the focus group live perhaps the most marginalized lives. Working the streets, often homeless, or at best , shelter accommodations that put them back on the streets before 8am and don't take them back before 5pm. (they must sign in between 3:30 and 4:00 to have a meal and secure a bed)

Recently, the higher than usual death toll had left the women hypervigilant and anxious. We began the focus group using the methods as was laid out in the excellent support materials. We quickly realized however that the high level of emotions was not allowing the women to contribute. We took a break and returned to a simple talking circle. We encouraged the women to draw and doodle and write important issues on the post it notes. We then placed all the post notes on the wall and discussed each one. Then we gave the women the voting dots and then discussed the final arrangement.

This process enabled the women to share deeply unwisely. The questions posted priory, were only supporting a negative venting. This is not to suggest that the negative venting was not important; it did not

focus on reducing poverty.

We believe we collected the answers to the questions as laid out in the focus group even though our answering process looked different. We trust you will value the Ideas and contributions from the women of Prince George New Hope.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Focus Group, Prince George New Hope March 12, 2018

Hello to all;

I to have to add how emotional those attending this focus group felt in the beginning. The womyn attending are so marginalized, so homeless, so stigmatized, so discriminated against, and so often unheard, (to list a few) that having an opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas in a place of safety erupted into a very emotional conversation on the treatment they and others receive with in our community. Thank you for allowing us to provide a great lunch to ease the tension and allow us to refocus and then continue using art, laughter and cake. Once refocused the womyn had some very valuable contributions.

Isolation - ^{too welcome} negative
(stereotyping/judgement)

Abuse of Power, used against you
(e.g. tv off while eating)

Use New Hope model → ASK JAN

Shelters - have supports to get you out + hope up
 → eg access to Kijii
 → transport → ^{to what needed not what's allowed}
 → appointments to view
 → + other appointments.
 More drop in shelters

Not enough money to rent a house even if you find it one
 "You can tell by the look on their face you won't get it"

(could stop in to chat, laugh, communicate)
 Be present as a person to talk to
 only place to be safe, + comfortable
 rental support - \$

GROW IT BIGGER

"don't look at me from head to toe"
 accept and welcome
 Give + Take - 2 way
 Be there for each other

Sobriety is a lonely road unless you have someone

- * Staff who don't understand the issues "look down their noses" - Judgmental.
- * Staff who can offer workshops that could teach/learn from.
- * Training for frontline workers (people die w/o their training) (clients who have to do the nation)
- * Programs funded - like New Hope (a ones that work)
- * Common areas - playpens.
- * Peer support - train a support
- * Carrier language -
- * Qll - immediate help + translation/interpreting
- * selective hearing @ LIS 100

Low income housing

End unfair, unjust policing

Culture Programs

Help end poverty: > transportation to and from Shopping, Drs, Personal activities

Community Centre for families
Mothers Time out
More funding for BSB

Pension deducted from welfare
"shopping because can't afford to eat - he should treat our elders"

BUS II can't go home to family (care not working)

Ears That Hear

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To all of you here today this is what we will give to you...

“Ears that hear, eyes that see,
A heart that understands,
One who sees the broken pieces,
Gently holding them in your hands.

Eyes that tear up with emotion,
Ears that hear what you can't say,
A heart that beats with feeling,
Helping pain to edge away.

Ears that hear the silent cries,
A heart that feels the breaking,
A soul who knows that kind of pain,
The anguish, depth of aching.

Ears that listen patiently,
Eyes that see through tears,
An empathetic, caring heart
That understands your fears.”

Remember this is what we here; give to you!

March 12, 2018

Womyn we have loved and losted.

Missing Womyn in BC (many from Northern BC)

