THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF POVERTY REDUCTION

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www.vibrantcommunities.ca

www.tamarackcommunity.ca
Being human is the quintessential collaboration.

Kindness and accommodation are the catalysts for real change.

(in the spirit of Nelsen Mandala)
Tamarack Institute

We develop and support learning communities that help people to collaborate, co-generate knowledge and achieve collective impact on complex community issues.

Our vision is to build a connected force for community change.
My Biases

- Purposeful disruption
- More “We” in our lives.
- A Just Economy
- Local Leadership
- Charity is good but not enough.
- The really important stuff cannot be measured.
- Poverty is solvable.
What is “poverty”? 
“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.”

(World Bank Organization)

Poverty is defined as when people lack, or are denied, economic, social and cultural resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community.

(Edmonton Task Force definition, 2014)
Types of Poverty

- Chronic
- Transitional
- Intergenerational
Vulnerability Factors

**Personal Vulnerabilities:** language, literacy, skills, generational trauma, disability.

**Disruptive Events:** job loss, injury/illness, violence, recession, death in family.

**Life Stages:** Child, Youth, Adult, Parent, Senior.

**Systemic Barriers:** access, rules, discrimination, racism, low wages, credentials.
THE IMPACTS OF POVERTY

Health

Well-Being

Safety

Society

Education

Economy
WHAT DOES ‘LIVED EXPERIENCE’ LOOK LIKE?
imagine.
alone.
Once the rent and bills are paid, I have $30 left for groceries.
terrified
unimaginable
disgusting
Homelessness
Proofing our Streets
My husband beat me.
I live on the streets.
He still has a job and a home.
“Last time I talked to her she didn't sound like herself. She's depressed. It's awful what happens when people run out of money. They start thinking they're no good.”

Barbara Kingsolver, Pigs In Heaven
The Goal: Take the Indian out of the Child.
This is William.

Brought up on the street.

Heavy Drinker.

Fighter.

Homeless.
Meet Sally and her two kids, Sarah & Allan.
Sally has a job offer to be a teacher either in Vancouver or Revelstoke.

The position pays $45,883 per year. That’s $22.06 per hour (based on a 40 hour week). Her benefits are pretty good.

She wants to know how well she will make out in either community
MONTHLY EXPENSES

- Housing & Transportation: $3,681
- Living & Personal: $2,034
- Savings: $2,239
- Basic Tax: $2,444

Bottom Line: -$2,888

http://www.costofliving.welcomebc.ca/

$45,883
$22.06/hr
Sally would get tax free cheque of $900 (Child Tax Credit and GST).

If she made 100,000

Sally would get a tax free monthly child tax credit of $423.

Does that make sense?

**Hey, what about tax credits?**
Housing & Transportation

MONTHLY EXPENSES

Bottom Line

- $2,888

- $1,446

Housing & Transportation

$45,883

$22.06/hr

Living & Personal

$2,239

Savings

$2,444

Basic Tax

$792

Safety Net Figures

Low income Cut Off

Vancouver: $38,816

Revelstoke: $26,719

Minimum Wage

$21,376

“Welfare”

$12,744

http://www.costofliving.welcomebc.ca/
Where’s the welfare in welfare?

Income Assistance for a Single Parent deemed employable with 2 young children.

$1,061.16

$660

$401.16

etc.
Coping Strategies?

■ Cheaper housing
■ Cut food budget
■ Decrease car insurance expense.
■ Use credit cards
■ Cut child care costs.
■ Decrease clothing budget
■ Borrow (family, friends, bank, pay day loan)
■ Use food bank.
■ Take a roommate
■ Get second job.

IMPLICATIONS
Crowded conditions
Dietary quality decreases.
Insurance risk.
Debt risk.
Care of children not as high.
Used clothing takes time to find.
Relationships are stressed
Second job may not cut it.

Time away from children.
Could impact main job.

Constant stress and worry.

No time for “me.”
ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS
“Inequality dampens investment, and hence growth, by fueling economic, financial, and political instability.”

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND
86 Canadians have more wealth than 11 million of the poorest or low income Canadians.

More wealth than everyone and every institution in New Brunswick.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
As Income Inequality has risen so has Consumer Debt
Federal Gov’t Revenues and Spending

30,000 (MIL)  36,000 (MIL)

As Income Inequality has risen so has Federal Debt.
Income Inequality Decreases Productivity

- Raising the wages of high earners.
- Decreasing the wages of low income earners.

https://www.equalitytrust.org
GDP Growth Canada
GDP Growth Rate - Canada
Average Hourly Wage - Canada

1,000,000 + Canadian workers earned the minimum wage or less, double the number in 2000.
60% are over 24 years of age. 71% are not in school.

Labor Force Participation Rate - Canada
Unemployment Persons - Canada

A rising number in a shrinking workforce as a percentage of population.
Unemployment Canada – Selected Groups

6.2% Unemployment of Caucasians

12.4% Unemployment of Visible Minorities

12.3% Unemployment of Indigenous People

14.8% Unemployment of Persons with Disabilities
Critical Connections: Ratio Seniors to Workers

Our birthrate is below what is required to replenish the workforce.

How will this impact government revenue and spending?

What are the solutions we should craft?
Who is economically poor?
Nearly 40% of Aboriginal children (under the age of 18) live in poverty.

1 in 4
or 25.3% of Aboriginal people live in poverty

1 in 7
or 14.1% of non-Aboriginal people live in poverty
Poverty among People with Disabilities

On average, the poverty rate for people with disabilities is **1.5 times** the rate for people without disabilities.

1 in 5

or 20.5% of people with disabilities live in poverty

1 in 7

or 13.2% of people without disabilities live in poverty
Poverty among Recent Immigrants

1 in 3

34.2% or almost 400,000 People live in poverty
Poverty by family status in Canada

Vancouver: 32%
Abbottsford-Mission: 31%
Kelowna: 34%

1 in 4
1.5 million single adults live in poverty

1 in 3
1.4 million lone-parent families live in poverty

1 in 12
696 thousand couple families live in poverty

Canadian Council on Social Development
Poverty by Education level across Canada’s cities**, 2010
Figure 22
Total social assistance cases and recipients, British Columbia, 1996-97 to 2013-14

Up 27% over 6 years
Employment Insurance Facts

- Divided up into 58 economic regions
- Benefits are based on the region.
- 1996: a $56 billion surplus in EI
- Another $14 billion surplus, 2013-2016
- 2008-2013 premiums rose 25%.

58% of the unemployed in British Columbia receive EI benefits.

On average nationally the unemployed receive 77% of the maximum EI benefit.
Economically Vulnerable

- 46% of Canadians live pay cheque to pay cheque (Payroll Association of Canada)
- 1.6 million Canadians at risk of losing their homes (CMHC)
- A growing number of seniors will not be able to afford prescription medications.
- As many as two-thirds of those living in poverty are working.
Poverty and Prison – Inmate Profile

- Grade 8.
- 80% - addiction or substance abuse problems.
- 80% of federally sentenced women - sexually abused.
- One-third has Hepatitis C and 5% have HIV.
- 50% - mental illness
- Aboriginal people - 25%
- Aboriginal women imprisonment up 80% in the last ten years.
- The incarceration of visible minorities has increased by 75%, while the incarceration of Caucasians has declined significantly.
Selected Federal Expenses (2011)

- $68 billion to Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Allowance for Spouses
- $20 billion to EI
- $26 billion to Health Transfers
- $11.2 billion to Social Transfers
- $82 billion for government operations.

The cost of poverty to Canada is estimated at $75 to 80 Billion.
The cost of homelessness

$4.5 BILLION

“Taxpayers funded a decade of relative inaction on homelessness that cost nearly $50 billion.” (Laird, 2007)

$10,900 /mo.
Hospital Bed

$1,932 /mo.
Shelter Bed

$4,333 /mo.
Provincial Jail

$199.92 /mo.
Social Housing

$2,495
Homeless Person

$701 /mo.
Rental Supplement

Homeless Hub
PROFITS

- Canada’s Big Banks: $35 Billion
- Royal Bank Profit is 26% of revenues
- TD Bank – 20%
- Bank of Nova Scotia – 24%
- 10 companies in the top 15 (the banks make up the other 5): $27 billion
What about the Living Wage Movement?

A fair wage for a worker.

Two parents making a living wage would be “okay”
LIVING WAGES IN BC

http://www.livingwagecanada.ca/
Five Conditions for Healthy, Vibrant Communities

1. Individuals are physically and emotionally healthy and have the capacity to engage with one another and with systems.

2. Families nurture children effectively and are safe, functional havens for their adult members.

3. Institutions function effectively and honestly as creatures OF community.

Adapted from the work of Marvyn Novick, Ryerson University.
Five Conditions for Healthy, Vibrant Communities

4. Communities are safe and functional and foster meaningful connections among members.

5. Economies work for the large majority.

Adapted from the work of Marvyn Novick, Ryerson University.
Key Questions

- What are our rights and obligations?
- How do we want things to be for one another?
- What do we do to get there?
- What should I do?
- What are the game-changers?
What are our rights and obligations?

What if the government said:

■ There is no more money for high school education.

■ You can be arrested “for your own good.”

■ You and those you identify with are not allowed to congregate in groups more than 10 at a time.

■ Your children can be taken away from you in order to assimilate them into society.
What are our human rights?

“Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.”

United Nations
What are our rights?

- right to work
- right to adequate food
- right to adequate housing
- right to health
- right to education
- right to personal security & privacy
- right of equal access to justice
- civil & political rights

The human rights approach requires poverty reduction plans to reflect the **principles of equality and non-discrimination**, often called a pillar of international human rights law.
How do we want things to be for one another?

What are the game changers in your community?
What do we do to get there?

What should I do?

How should I change?
Poverty is not over “there” happening to “someone else.”

Poverty is happening to all of us.
That I feed the hungry, give to charity, volunteer when I can... these are good things, these are great virtues.
But what if I should discover that the poorest of the poor, the wild-eyed homeless man or woman, the offenders of our sensibilities...
...are all within me... and that I stand in need of the alms of my own kindness, that I myself am the one who must be helped and loved.
What then?

Paraphrased from Carl Jung
Mark Holmgren joined Tamarack in January 2016 to lead its Vibrant Communities initiative and sit on Tamarack’s team of Directors. His background includes providing executive leadership to two Edmonton-based, inner city human service agencies focused on addressing poverty and homelessness; as well as providing consultation to a number of groups on issues relating to social housing development, organizational change, strategy development and leadership.

Most recently Mark served as CEO of Bissell Centre (www.BissellCentre.org) where he led a team of 130 staff delivering Housing First services, assertive street outreach, family and children services, and programs in the areas of mental health, addictions, homelessness prevention, FASD interventions, and employment services.

Known for his big picture view and his ability to work on the ground, Mark has a long history of leading and contributing to social innovations that benefit low income people. Examples include leading the collaborative design of the Community Bridge (homelessness prevention); developing a multi-purpose centre with housing attached for hard to house, inner city seniors; leading the development of three social enterprises; and, developing innovative approaches to employing marginalized populations.

Since early 2014, Mark has sat – and still sits – as a member of Mayor Iveson’s Task Force to End Poverty in Edmonton. He also chaired the Mayor’s Working Group on Housing and Transportation and played a key role in engaging people with lived experience in his work for the task force.