



REVELSTOKE POVERTY REDUCTION ACTION PLAN
(2013-2017)

City of Revelstoke
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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background	2
Poverty Reduction Workshop	3
Community Goal 1: Improve information sharing, networking and communication on poverty reduction goals and strategies	4
Community Goal 2: Improve income security for all residents	4
Community Goal 3: Improve access to affordable rental and emergency housing	5
Community Goal 4: Community-wide and individual food security	5
Community Goal 5: Social inclusion for all	6
Community Goal 6: Improved access to resources	6
Community Goal 7: Improved low cost local transportation options	7
Community Goal 8: Community-wide support for early childhood development	7
Community Goal 9: Strengthen and expand lifelong learning opportunities for residents	8
Community Goal 10: Continued access to affordable clothing, footwear and other necessities	8



Acronyms

Community Connections (CC)
Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR)
Community Housing Society (CHS)
Early Childhood Development
Committee (ECD)
North Columbia Environmental Society
(NCES)
Okanagan College (OC)
Poverty Coalition (PC)
Revelstoke Child Care Society (RCCS)
Revelstoke Literacy Action Committee
(RLAC)
Revelstoke Performing Arts Centre
(RPAC)
Social Development Committee (SDC)

Introduction

As a community, Revelstoke has a strong vision and desire to be a great place to live, work and play. Part of that vision is being inclusive of all citizens regardless of income. Yet, in the last few years, the rising cost of living has appeared as a community issue. As a result, community-wide poverty reduction has been identified as a high priority for action. Poverty reduction is seen as critical not only to moving forward – both socially and economically – through times of growth and change, but also to build community resiliency and help address factors beyond local control.

The Revelstoke Poverty Reduction Strategy (2012) clearly outlines challenges and opportunities Revelstoke faces as a community. The strategy is based on research, data analysis and community consultation (see www.revelstokesocialdevelopment.org for the complete report). It is time to act – to bring people together from all sectors, build on existing assets, learn together as we seek to reduce the number of citizens living on the margins in the community, and further build a robust local economy.



Background

The Revelstoke Social Development Committee and the newly formed Revelstoke Poverty Reduction Coalition play important roles in turning this plan into local actions that build community partnerships that aim to alleviate and reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for those most affected by issues of poverty.

Continuing the work of Revelstoke's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2012), on September 26th, 2013, the City of Revelstoke and SPARC BC hosted "Reducing poverty in Revelstoke: Building shared prosperity." Twenty-five (25) participants from a variety of backgrounds attended the workshop. Participants undertook the following objectives:

1. Review the Revelstoke Poverty Reduction Strategy;
2. Build consensus on the priority actions for the implementation of the strategy;
3. Establish a Poverty Reduction Coalition to assist in the implementation and monitoring of the strategy.





Poverty Reduction Workshop

The workshop began with a welcome & introductions by Social Development Committee Chair, Nelli Richardson. Jill Zacharias, Social Development Coordinator, reviewed Revelstoke's poverty reduction work to date. Following the historical review, Scott Graham, from SPARC BC gave an overview of effective community-led poverty reduction initiatives, as well as affordable and targeted strategies. A review and brainstorm of collaborative actions followed with goals, cost options, pros & cons, potential leads, and key partners.

Participants were divided into small groups to set three (3) priority actions of the ten (10) community goals, which they later reported back to the main group. The larger group reconvened to set the final priorities based on selections made from small groups, and identified local leaders that could serve on the Poverty Reduction Coalition. The workshop concluded with a summary of the day's events and outlined some next steps for action.

Community Goal 1:

Improve information sharing, networking & communication on poverty reduction goals and strategies

The Poverty Coalition (PC) led by the Social Development Committee (SDC) forms the basis for many of the recommended actions that follow. This 'round table' concept provides a forum for working together to build local assets and decrease barriers to accessing opportunities & services in the community.

Strategic Priorities:

- 1.1. Further develop a multi-sector poverty coalition (PC) to take the lead on addressing local challenges and raising awareness.
- 1.2. SDC to research and develop a strategy for building public knowledge of school grants, programs and supports for families.

Community Goal 2:

Improve income security for all residents

A wide range of employment-based options generates individual & community prosperity. The Poverty Reduction Action Plan promotes developing more bridges to employment for individuals, and encouraging employers to think creatively to support financially secure living for citizens.

Strategic Priorities:

- 2.1. Continue to promote community-wide economic diversification with the City CED & other groups like Community Futures.
- 2.2. Support the Employment Centre & business community to work to help find flexible employment for people with mental health concerns & disabilities and provide employees with adequate access to medical benefits packages.
- 2.3. PC, OC and CC to improve volunteer and training opportunities that lead to improved employment.
- 2.4. PC to encourage the municipality to take the lead in becoming a living wage employer & to develop an award/recognition program for employers who are paying a living wage in Revelstoke.





Community Goal 3:

Improve access to affordable rental and emergency housing

As the number of people accessing housing programs in Revelstoke increases, the Poverty Reduction Action Plan promotes the provision of safe and affordable housing for all citizens in Revelstoke. The Municipality has a key role to play in land allocation, property taxes, and support for construction opportunities for affordable rental housing projects.

Strategic Priorities:

- 3.1. Work with BC Housing and CHS to construct and operate an emergency shelter.
- 3.2. Work with BC Housing, CHS and Women’s Shelter Society to construct and operate safe second stage housing for women and children.
- 3.3. Enforce the Rental Property Maintenance Bylaw to address properties with identified health hazards.

Community Goal 4:

Community-wide and individual food security

A considerable amount of work is already happening in the community to improve food security. NCES has implemented ‘Field to Table’ program & is working on a local Food Charter. The Real Estate Association offers a funding opportunity to improve community-wide food resiliency. Community Connections has been able to continue Farmer’s Market Coupon Program although the administration requires additional support.

Strategic Priorities:

- 4.1. Develop an integrated food centre that works to provide healthy food options and food preparation skills year-round.



Community Goal 5: Social inclusion for all

The Poverty Reduction Action Plan aims to ensure that everyone has access to healthy leisure activities in Revelstoke.

Strategic Priorities:

5.1. Encourage municipal and community groups to connect with recreation leaders, School District, Youth Liaison, and Food Bank to offer free recreation opportunities, tickets or scholarships and transit tickets to movies, RPAC, or sports games.

5.2. Partner with employers to offer affordable recreation activities for their employees.

Community Goal 6: Improved access to resources

Within the goal of improved access to resources, there was a particular interest in developing strategies to support some of the community's most vulnerable members.

Strategic Priorities:

6.1. Support RCCS and CCRR to continue assisting families accessing childcare subsidies and other supports.

6.2. Contact a variety of sources to acquire funding to support the Social Justice Advocate to become a full time position to provide increased support for citizens.





Community Goal 7: **Improved low cost local transportation options**

Revelstoke has seen transportation improvements in various programs in the community and would like to continue to see additional improvements over time.

Strategic Actions:

- 7.1. Transportation options and other supports to assist children to attend school & other programs.**
- 7.2. Continue to investigate and support additional transportation options that include out-of-town medical services.**

Community Goal 8: **Community-wide support for early childhood development**

The work of the Revelstoke Early Childhood Development Committee has made a difference in the community. It is critical to advocate for and provide resources for this committee to continue doing this effective work.

Strategic Priorities:

- 8.1. PC, Revelstoke and ECD to encourage employment practices which are responsive to family needs including flexible working arrangements, job sharing & family leave of absences.**
- 8.2. PC and ECD to offer community education for funding opportunities and programs available for children and families.**



Community Goal 9: Strengthen and expand lifelong learning opportunities for residents

The Revelstoke Literacy Action Committee is working to build awareness of the impact of literacy on well-being and health. The Poverty Reduction Action Plan aims to see community-wide advocacy for stability and core support for community-based learning programs and initiatives.

Strategic Priorities:

9.1. PC, Work BC, OC, CC, RLAC and employers to work together to increase awareness of benefits of having employees attending skill building programs offered by OC and other agencies.

Community Goal 10: Continued access to affordable clothing, footwear and other necessities

The Poverty Reduction Action Plan aims to work with the community to make quality of life essentials available for its citizens.

Strategic Priorities:

10.1. Work with local charities to build a fund to support low-income earners, and approach medical professionals (dental/optometry) for opportunities to access (tax deductible) free services.



