



the **FACT** *ivist*

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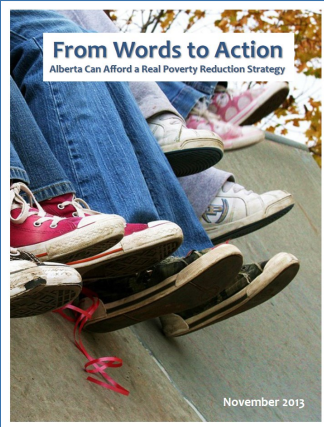
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Additional Resource



Kolkman, J. and Kilgannon-Moore, B. (2013) *From words to action : Alberta can afford a real poverty reduction strategy*. Retrieved from <http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/national/2013C2000NATIONALREPORTCARDNOV26.pdf>

From Words to Actions : Alberta Can Afford a Real Poverty Reduction Strategy contains updated information on the extent of child and family poverty in Alberta. Also highlighted are the many worthwhile programs, services and initiatives already underway that contribute to reducing poverty. This report makes the case that Alberta can readily afford a poverty reduction strategy.

Foreword: From Band-aids to Breakthroughs

By Susan Morrissey, ESPC's Executive Director



Welcome to this edition of the fACTivist, which focuses on child poverty. Much attention has been paid of late to children in poverty, with the release of our report, *From Words to Action* (for which we partnered

with Public Interest Alberta and the Alberta College of Social Workers) and the Government of Alberta's commitment to end child poverty in 5 years. We thought it only fitting to devote an entire issue to exploring this topic in greater detail.

During the last summer months, ESPC held focus groups with vulnerable individuals in Edmonton, to discuss and provide feedback to the GoA on the Children's Charter. During that time we met with and heard from over 45 individuals. Here is a bit of the feedback we received:

Poverty is seen as an almost never-ending

struggle, of getting by every day and moving in circles that never allow you to escape. There is a fear of going "down the drain" and landing in an endless pit of hopelessness. Poor people can't seem to see the end of their poverty situation. For many newcomers, for example, poverty starts from the time they arrive. Inadequate settlement supports, and limited access to suitable and gainful employment and affordable housing are real barriers these people face.

We asked them what would help their current situation and what had built their resilience in the past. The top three things they said were: outreach workers who are sensitive and caring, who believe in the capacity of people to change, and who never gave up on them; services that were available throughout the night; and their support network of family, friends and community.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the fACTivist.

The Current State of Child Poverty in Canada: Statistics and Responses

By Stephanie Kowal, Volunteer Writer

2014 marks twenty-five years since the Canadian House of Commons passed a unanimous resolution to "seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000" (Government of Canada, 1989). Today, 1 in 7 children still live in poverty, despite growing prosperity in Canada (Conference Board of Canada, 2013). Furthermore, unsettling disparities exist in terms of who bears the burden of child poverty. For example, over half (52%) of lone mothers caring for children under six live in poverty (Statistics Canada, 2006). Despite the high proportion of single mothers living in poverty, most impoverished children do live in two-parent families. The children affected in these other vulnerable groups include those from families of immigrants (41%)—especially

new immigrants (48%)—or those with racialized identities (33%) (Statistics Canada, 2006). 27% of children with disabilities live in poverty because their parents often accept compromised work schedules to accommodate childcare responsibilities (Family Service Toronto, 2011; Statistics Canada 2006). Finally, compared to the national average of 15%, survey data shows that 40% of Aboriginal children currently live in poverty (MacDonald & Wilson, 2013).

Experiences of poverty vary widely and can cause physical and mental exhaustion for children. Chronic stress in children caused by living in substandard housing, for example, with adults who are also suffering from stress, can effect lifelong damage (CBC, 2013). Physiologically, chronic stress stunts healthy brain development, which

negatively impacts learning and behavior (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012). Stress is also associated with higher rates of diabetes, mental illness, stroke, cardiovascular disease, intestinal disease, central nervous system disease, and injury (Statistics Canada, 2006). Compared to their peers, poor children are less healthy, trail in emotional and intellectual development, and are less likely to graduate from high school (Frenette, 2007). Also, poor children are likely to become the poor parents of the future (Fleury, 2008).

Child poverty is a growing policy concern given the impact it can have throughout children's lives. There is a growing movement that argues poverty is a disease that affects health and that it should be addressed with the same enthusiasm accorded other illnesses. The amount of press this perspective currently receives is new, but poverty has long been understood as negatively affecting resiliency and protection against poor health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2013).

To alleviate child poverty, different levels of government have created various policies. For example, federally, our progressive income tax system, working income tax benefits, income assistance ("welfare"), Old Age Security, Employment Insurance and child tax credits aim to reduce the tax burden for low-income earners. While the federal government is responsible for national policies that govern areas related to income re-distribution, such as public health care and education, these policies are often administered and delivered by provincial governments.

While the programs mentioned above attempt to reduce poverty rates, they are too small in size or scope to help achieve poverty *elimination*. For example, some federal housing subsidies exist, but a comprehensive and effective affordable housing program is missing in Canada's national policy focus. In fact, every industrialized country but Canada has a national affordable housing strategy (Campaign 2000, 2011). Housing is the largest living expense for low- and modest-income earners. 1 in 4 Canadian families pay 30% or more of their income into housing,



Photo by Alvimann

resulting in 750,000 children under 15 living in unaffordable, substandard, and/or overcrowded living situations (Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, 2009). Affordable housing has obvious policy potential for poverty elimination in Canada but is hindered by a lack of committed public expenditure, both short and long term (Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2011).

Accessible childcare is also lacking Canada-wide, resulting in an inadequate volume of affordable childcare to meet the needs of Canadian families. Today, registered childcare facilities fall 3.7 million spaces short of meeting the number of childcare-aged (0-12 years) Canadian children (Campaign 2000, 2011). The lack of space in childcare facilities perpetuates poverty by forcing families to reduce their employment hours to care for children, or to pay more than they can realistically afford to place children in these facilities.

Traditionally, provincial governments have created and implemented ad hoc policies and programs to reduce the impacts of poverty. Recently, however, provinces have begun forming and committing to poverty reduction policy frameworks that attempt to build province-wide directed action. Alberta released its own document in 2013, the Social Policy Framework, which contains a promise to eliminate child poverty by 2018.

Governments have the responsibility and capacity to work towards eliminating poverty by developing benefit- and work-focused policy (Conference Board of Canada, 2013). As of yet, current efforts are not achieving the poverty elimination for



Additional Resource

Unicef Canada. (2013) Poverty...The one line we want our kids to cross. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/TAKE%20ACTION/ADVOCATE/DOCS/canadian_companion_updated.pdf

Low income is linked to poor child outcomes. In a society committed to prioritizing children's best interests, the child poverty rate would be lower than the overall poverty rate. Although child poverty is higher than the overall rate of poverty on average among industrialized countries, ten countries (about a third of the total) including Australia, Japan and Germany have lower child poverty than broader population poverty. Canada is not among them. [Taken from report.]



Additional Resource

Campaign 2000. (2013) 2013 report card on child and family poverty in Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/national/2013C2000NATIONALREPORTCARDNOV26.pdf>

The 2013 national report card, entitled Canada's REAL Economic Action Plan Begins with Poverty Eradication highlights the compelling reasons why the federal government needs to take leadership [on poverty reduction in Canada]. It presents the latest [Canadian] statistics on child and family poverty. [Taken from publisher's website.]

which we resolved in 1989; however, municipal efforts do demonstrate on-the-ground political will to make sincere efforts in poverty elimination. Here in Edmonton, the City is currently developing an aggressive poverty elimination strategy (Edmonton Poverty Elimination Strategy Steering Committee, 2013). This strategy aims to use the capacities of municipal government, community organizations, academics and individual citizens in a collaborative response to eliminate poverty in Edmonton. Poverty is a national problem that is not properly addressed, but local efforts, such as Edmonton's, allow us to demonstrate our support for, and to help achieve, poverty elimination in our communities.

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Investing in Tomorrow: Alberta's Plan to Abolish Child Poverty

By Manuel Francisco Escoto, Volunteer Writer

Poverty is an intergenerational issue. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to live in poverty as adults. The reasons are simple: children in poverty are more likely to suffer from health problems, have developmental and behavioural issues, and are at risk of attaining lower levels of education (Conference Board of Canada, n.d). This is an issue that affects all Canadians, exemplified by the OECD conclusion that, "failure to tackle the poverty and exclusion facing millions of families and their children is not only socially reprehensible, but it will also weigh heavily on countries' capacity to sustain economic growth in years to come" (as cited in Canadian Conference Board, n.d).

Child poverty is not a new phenomenon, and it has both political and social roots. The lack of policy aimed at reducing poverty and the historical marginalization of certain demographics have contributed to child poverty.

Twenty-five years ago, the House of Commons adopted a resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. During the 1990s, however, economic recession increased child poverty, and here both the federal and provincial governments responses were failed ones. Rather than investing in programs aimed at providing food security, affordable and accessible housing, respectable wages, inexpensive child care, child tax benefits and other social programs, governments were more concerned with balancing their budgets.

Nationally, the child poverty rate is 14 percent, ranking Canada 24th of 35 of the main industrialized countries (Globe and Mail, 2013). In Alberta, approximately 84,000 children—about 1 in 10—live in poverty (Government of Alberta [GoA], 2013a). Suffice it to say, a viable long-term policy for child poverty is critical to the long-term development of Alberta. Our strategy must begin with a commitment from government for stronger social investment.

And thankfully, by promising to eradicate child poverty, the Government of Alberta has finally acknowledged the seriousness of the problem.

Premier Alison Redford made sweeping pledges during the 2012 provincial election to eliminate child poverty by 2017. This was followed by a community-based public consultation process, which resulted in Alberta's Social Policy Framework, as well as an action plan to reduce child poverty known as the "Together We Raise Tomorrow" initiative. This is noteworthy because, prior to this, all other provinces except British Columbia and Saskatchewan were either developing or had already implemented poverty reduction plans (GoA, 2013c).

Alberta's approach to poverty reduction is shaped by three questions:

First, how is poverty defined? Based on public feedback, the GoA defines poverty as "the exclusion or the lack of resources, resiliency, capabilities, and choices necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of life" (GoA, 2013b). This definition is quite extensive; income is but one tenet in defining poverty.

Second, how is poverty measured? Alberta uses the nationwide measurements of the after-tax Low-Income Measure, the after-tax Low-Income Cut-Off, and the Market Basket Measure. In addition, Alberta is developing the Deprivation Index which measures other non-monetary aspects of poverty (GoA, 2013b).



Photo by jmiltenburg



Additional Resource

Winland, D. Gaetz, S. and Patton, T. (2011). Family matters : homeless youth & Eva's Initiative's Family Reconnect program. Retrieved from http://www.threesource.ca/documents/May2011/family_matters.pdf

In the report, Family Matters, [the Family Reconnect program of Eva's Initiatives in Toronto] is examined to evaluate how reconnecting with family may help some young people avoid long term homelessness. In doing this review, the authors raise some important questions about the Canadian response to youth homelessness. They argue for a rather radical transformation of this response, one that reconsiders the role of strengthened family (and community) relations in preventing and responding to youth homelessness. [Taken from report.]



Additional Resource

Alberta. (2013). Fact sheet : Child poverty in Alberta. Retrieved from http://povertyreduction.alberta.ca/files/documents/child_poverty_fact_sheet.doc

This fact sheet describes some key issues and trends about child poverty in Alberta. The following facts use the standard poverty indicators of LICO (Low-Income Cut-Off), LIM (Low-Income Measure), and MBM (Market Basket Measure).

Third, what causes poverty in Alberta? This question is vital in that knowing the root causes of a problem will give insight into finding practical solutions. The GoA is currently researching this question, but in the case of children, we know that family network is imperative to their well-being.

Based on this feedback, Alberta developed and passed the Children First Act, aimed at supporting the “safety, security, education, and health of all children in Alberta” (GoA, 2013a). The act includes five principles based on these values.

The Government of Alberta has finally recognized the need for a strategy to end poverty, and now it is up to the GoA to invest in this project. It is estimated that Alberta’s tax payers spend approximately \$7.1 billion to \$9.5 billion per year on costs related to poverty (Briggs and Lee, 2012). A large figure, no doubt, but it is estimated that a mere \$1 billion dollars invested in preventative measures would go a long way toward reducing poverty in Alberta (Kolkman and Moore-Kilgannon, 2013). Albertans are taxed \$10.6 billion less than the next lowest-taxed province (Kolkman and Moore-Kilgannon, 2013), due to Alberta’s use of a flat tax system, rather than a progressive tax system. In addition, the province has low royalty tax rates for companies in the natural resources sector. This illustrates that Alberta can afford to eliminate child poverty.

Rather than exploring increased tax revenue as a potential resource, however, the government prefers to cut funding to social programs. The 2013 provincial budget, for example, showed that Redford made cuts to programs that assist low-income families (Kolkman and Moore-Kilgannon, 2013).

Going forward, the Redford government must adopt responsible policy and ensure that its election promise and the work in “Together We Raise Tomorrow” is more than rhetoric. If the Government argument is that there are not enough resources to fund social programs, then first and foremost, the Government must adopt a progressive tax system.

Second, because working families suffer from poverty, the Government must

supplement income. This can include benefits such as a child tax credit and/or funding childcare.

Likewise, Redford must ensure that Alberta has a fair and equitable minimum wage—one that rises with the rate of inflation. Having a fair wage will assist parents in providing education, health care, and recreational activities needed for proper child development.

The Government must also ensure that these solutions are accessible and affordable, and avoid placing responsibility in the hands of the market. Private-public partnerships are alluring because they reduce government spending, but they also reduce accountability, quality and effectiveness of services, since companies have an overarching goal of earning profit. This point becomes even more apparent when Canada is compared to the top four OECD countries in child poverty – Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Norway – all of whom spend at least 3 percent of their GDP on family-oriented programs (Conference Board of Canada, n.d).

The Government of Alberta’s leadership is needed and it should be obvious that reducing child poverty has positive long-term effects for Albertans. To maintain our interests, Redford must invest in the future of children and follow through on her 2012 promises.

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Coming Soon...



Dear fACTivist Readers:

Over the next few months, ESPC will be undergoing a number of changes, both exciting and necessary.

Our Resource Coordinator, Stephen MacDonald, will be leaving the organization at the end of January. Stephen has contributed a great deal over his two and a half years at the Council, and we wish him all the best as he embarks on this new chapter of his career.

Stephen's departure also marks the end of the 5-year Resource Coordinator position at the ESPC. Stay tuned for changes to your monthly research update and fACTivist newsletter.

In early February, our current Research and Communications Assistant, Virginia Dowdell, will also be leaving the organization. After just under a year with the Council, Virginia will be moving on to a position in management consulting.

Finally, ESPC will be unveiling a new website in late February. This update promises a bold new look for ESPC and increased user-friendliness for you!

Next year we will be 75 years wise and still growing strong. We thank you for your patience as we move through this period of transformation. As always, we will continue to provide leadership in the community by addressing and researching social issues, informing public discussion, and influencing social policy.

Yours,
The ESPC Team



The Politics of Poverty Reduction in Alberta

By John Kolkman, ESPC's Resource Coordinator

Additional Resource

Alberta Health Services. (2011). E-SYS : Enhanced Street Youth Surveillance : Edmonton site results 1999-2010. Retrieved from http://www.knowmo.ca/Libraries/Reports/E-SYS_Report_FINAL_web.sflb.a shx

The Enhanced Street Youth Surveillance (E-SYS) is a multi-centre, enhanced surveillance system that describes socio-economic factors and sexual and drug use behaviours associated with STBBI among SIY. Edmonton has been involved with the surveillance project since 1999 and has completed 5 cycles of data collection (1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2010). The goal of E-SYS is to inform strategies for health promotion and identify gaps in disease prevention programming and policies for the SIY population. [Taken from report.]



The invitation landed with a thud in the inboxes of executive directors at Calgary voluntary sector and anti-poverty organizations on the afternoon of April 10, 2012. The first

sentence of the invite said: "I am inviting you to join Premier Alison Redford and Calgary Progressive Conservative candidates to learn more about the 10 year plan to eliminate poverty in Alberta."

As the invite made its way around the province that afternoon, many noted the use of the word "eliminate" in reference to poverty, rather than the more open-to-interpretation "reduce."

Those who attended this PC Party election event, scheduled for the next morning, were not disappointed. After years of rebuffing calls for a poverty reduction strategy, Premier Redford announced that, should the PC Party be re-elected: "Our Plan for Poverty Reduction **will focus on a 5-year plan to eliminate child poverty and a 10-year plan to reduce poverty overall** [emphasis theirs]" (PC Party of Alberta, 2012). Premier Redford promised that public and stakeholder consultations would begin in May 2012, almost immediately after the April 23 provincial election.

On a disconcerting note, the PC Party statement said the poverty elimination promise would be funded through savings found elsewhere in the Human Services Department budget. Another warning flag was one of the core commitments of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 2012 election platform: "A new PC Government will deliver a balanced budget by 2013 with **no new taxes and no service cuts** [emphasis theirs]" (PC Party of Alberta, 2012).

Of the three promises embedded in the above commitment, only the pledge of no new taxes has been kept. A balanced budget was not achieved, and the 2013 provincial

budget contained deep cuts to government services and programs not seen since the early years of Ralph Klein's premiership. To understand why, it is important to look at Alberta's political landscape today.

The poverty elimination promise was part of a PC Party appeal to progressive voters. The underlying message was to appear progressive in the areas of health, education and social programs while simultaneously scaring voters into thinking this would all be put at risk with the election of a Wildrose Party government. As a political strategy, it worked brilliantly. The PC Party overcame a 10 percentage point deficit in mid-election polls to win the popular vote by a 10 percentage point margin over their Wildrose Party opponents. This translated into another large majority government with the PC Party winning 61 of the 87 seats in the Alberta Legislature.

As worded in the PC Campaign Platform, the pledge of no new taxes seemed to leave the door slightly ajar for increases in some existing taxes. However, that door was firmly slammed shut in Premier Redford's January 2013 province-wide television address. As Redford put it: "It's not good enough to take the easy way out and raise taxes."

Left unexplained was how raising taxes is the easy way out. Doing so seems anything but easy for Alberta's PC government.

The appeal to progressive voters was seen as imperative to stop the Wildrose Party during the 2012 election. However, the same imperative now makes it politically difficult for the PC Party to raise taxes to make the needed investment to keep its poverty elimination promise. This is because the PC government sees the major political threat to its continued hegemony to come from the right, not left, side of the political spectrum.

Alberta's spending is on par with other Canadian provinces. It's on the taxation side that Alberta is seriously out of kilter. According to the Alberta government's own

numbers, were Albertans to be taxed at the same level as the second lowest taxed province, \$10.6 billion in additional revenue could be generated (Government of Alberta, 2013). In other words, Alberta is experiencing a tax shortfall of \$10.6 billion, a small portion of which could be applied to investing in poverty reduction.

The Alberta government did keep its commitment to consult with Albertans by launching a broad-based public consultation on social policy and poverty reduction. An interactive website was launched and hundreds of community consultations were held in the summers of 2012 and 2013 to gather input on a social policy framework and poverty reduction strategy.

Yet when the 2013 Budget was brought down last March, cuts were made to many programs and services supporting low-income Albertans. This included deep cuts to skills training and academic programs, and cuts to rent supplement programs at the same time that vacancy rates were plummeting and market rents rising.

Without additional investment in key solutions, the goal of ending child poverty in 2017, and reducing overall poverty by 2022, will not be achieved. The *From Words to Action* report, jointly published by ESPC, identified two modest revenue measures that would bring in a minimum of \$1.2 billion in additional revenue per year, more than paying for a comprehensive poverty elimination plan. The report also detailed additional provincial investment of \$1 billion per year which would go a long way to

eliminating poverty in this province.

The 2014 Alberta budget will be tabled in the next month or so. Will this budget at least begin to invest in such key priorities as children's benefits and affordable housing? Or will the PC government continue to underinvest in these priorities by not implementing modest tax increases for wealthy individuals and profitable corporations who can readily afford to contribute a little bit more?

Now approaching the mid-point of its electoral mandate, the time has come for the Alberta government to put its words into action and keep its promise to end child poverty.

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Transcript/Video of Premier Redford TV Address: Retrieved from: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/01/24/alison-redford-tv-address-alberta-budget-oil-shortfall_n_2546726.html



Additional Resource

Murphy, B., Zhang, X. and Dionne, C. (2013). Low income in Canada: A multi-line and multi-index perspective. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2012001-eng.htm>

International practice has shown that using a number of different low-income thresholds can facilitate a more complete picture of the low-income population and this report examines three such lines: Statistics Canada's after-tax low income measure (LIM) and after-tax low income cut-off (LICO), and the Market Basket Measure (MBM) of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)... This report uses these three thresholds applied to the Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF) and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) to present and examine broad trends in the low-income population over a 34 year period from 1976 to 2009, with particular attention given to the changes between 2007 and 2009. The report examines the incidence (rate), gap ratio (depth), severity and persistence of low income for Canada as a whole and across different provinces, cities, family types, as well as for specific groups with a high risk of persistent low income. [Taken from report.]

Save the Date!

Annual General Meeting

May 6, 2014



edmonton
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Additional Resource

Jackson, M., Richter, S., and Caine, V. (2013). A visual narrative inquiry into the experiences of youth who are homeless and seek mental health care: final report: a research project by Margot Jackson, Solina Richter, Vera Caine. Retrieved from http://www.homewardtrust.ca/images/resources/2013-01-30-17-17CaineRichterJackson_Final_Report_2012.pdf

Our study, a narrative inquiry into the experiences of at risk youth who experience precarious housing situations and mental health needs, is a collaborative conceptualization among representatives of iHuman staff, youths and researchers. Key findings relate to: the number of distinct and disconnected services youth have had contact with in their lives; the life situations and events that at risk youth have experienced over time; their feelings and emotions on what it is like to be homeless; as well as the youths' suggestions and recommendations for services they deem important for themselves and future generations. [Taken from report.]

Sheltering Homeless Youth

By Aneesa Gill, Volunteer Writer

In October 2012, the number of homeless children and youth counted in Edmonton had almost doubled from the number counted two years earlier, rising from 123 to 223 (CBC, 2013). One option for youth with no home is Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS), a shelter that is often at capacity. Without enough beds, workers have two options – transferring youth to Hope Mission downtown, or back on to the street. The lack of space at the facility is also impacted by recent layoffs and program cuts after a funding shortfall (Parrish, 2013). YESS states that more than 2,000 children and youth passed through their shelter in 2012.

Although dated, a survey conducted by Crerar (2006) on 106 homeless youth in Edmonton concluded that better youth housing is needed in Edmonton, in particular in multi-faceted facilities where the youth can find food, clothing, and shower facilities. The study also found that basic hygiene was a major issue for youth, due to lack of knowledge about available facilities, as well as the absence of facilities available.

Compared to children and youth with permanent homes, homeless children suffer from a lack of educational opportunities and experience higher levels of infection, obesity, anemia, injuries, burns, developmental delays, and incomplete immunization, and homeless youth experience more injuries, sexually transmitted infections, mental health problems, and pregnancies (YWCA Regina, n.d.).

Currently in Edmonton there are a number of agencies providing accommodation and meeting the other basic needs of youth-at-risk. YESS provides both emergency shelter and long-term housing for youth. Their Nexus program provides short-term shelter and security, with a focus on rapid re-housing for youth under 19 years old who are newly homeless (YESS, n.d.). For those youth who need it, YESS also provides a safe, supportive, longer-term home.

Depending on their individual needs, youth live at either Graham's Place on Whyte Avenue, or Shanoa's Place in West Edmonton.

The Inner City Youth Housing Project (ICYHP) provides programming to a wide range of marginalized youth, from those who are high-risk and sexually exploited to those who have come from transient family backgrounds and need a safe place to live. ICYHP operates six homes in the Edmonton area, providing shelter for up to five youths per house. To qualify for shelter, the youth have to be between the ages of 14 and 17 (ICYHP, n.d.).

The Hope Mission offers two shelter programs for youth. The first is the Emergency Mat program, a free overnight emergency accommodation service for co-ed youth aged 16-24 years. The second is the Shift Program, a program for youth who are willing to take the necessary steps to live a stable and responsible lifestyle. The shelter has 12 beds for male youth (Hope Mission, n.d.).

Other community services for youth include:

iHuman Youth Society offers art-based programming for youth who engage in high-risk lifestyles. The agency desires to re-integrate youth into the community by developing skills, self-esteem, and a sense of worth and ability through mentorship, crisis intervention, and targeted programming. iHuman serves 500 youth in Edmonton aged 12-24 years (iHuman, n.d.).

Old Strathcona Youth Society (OSYS) provides information and referrals to high risk and street-involved youth aged 14-24, through building supportive and trusting relationships. The organization provides information on drugs, their effects, addictions, and harm reduction. OSYS provides recreational, arts and musical opportunities for youth (OSYS, n.d.).

Boyle Street Community Services offers resources for youth aged 16-24. The High Risk Youth Project focuses on self-care and

harm reduction using youth specialists who work with marginalized and street youth. Boyle Street Youth Services also have a housing program for children and youth that provides safe and supportive accommodations in a home setting (Boyle Street Community Services, n.d.).

Children who are escaping family violence often have to stay at emergency shelters with their mothers when they leave their homes. The Women in Need shelter had 523 children use their service in 2012/2013, an increase of 14 from the previous year (Edmonton Women's Shelter Society, 2013). Lurana Shelter Society, another shelter for children and women fleeing family violence, saw 237 children service-users in 2012/2013 (Lurana Shelter Society, 2013).

This is by no means a comprehensive list of the organizations in Edmonton that provide community resources for children and youth. It is important to note that only agencies and organizations within the City of Edmonton proper have been included. A service that provides more information on available resources is www.211edmonton.com.

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Photo by Paodoruvel

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Additional Resource

Youth Empowerment and Support Services. (2013). In this Issue: Fall 2013. Retrieved from http://yess.org/images/uploads/YESS_Spring_Newsletter_2013.pdf

This is the fall edition of the Youth Empowerment and Support Services newsletter. It focuses on new developments at YESS.



Additional Resource

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Using a holistic approach, Eagle Feather Workers (EFW) from the five participating on-reserve women's shelters provided one-on-one support to children who experienced domestic violence. The EFWs worked with the children's families, schools and community supports to create safer environments for the children and also to support healing within the families. [Taken from publisher's website.]

Aboriginal Children and Poverty in Canada

By Kayla Atkey, Volunteer Writer

Poverty among Aboriginal children is a pressing issue in Canada. According to a 2013 report by the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, the average poverty rate for Aboriginal children is 40%, compared to an average child poverty rate of 17% for all children in Canada (Macdonald and Wilson, 2013). Considering these statistics, this article explores factors that contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal children among the poor and the impact of poverty on this population. The article ends with a brief discussion of strategies for breaking the cycle of poverty in Aboriginal communities.

Factors Contributing to High Rates of Poverty Among Aboriginal Children

A range of social, political, historical, and cultural forces contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal children among the poor. At the same time, the adverse consequences of living in low-income increase the barriers faced by individuals and families, creating cycles of poverty. While the relationship between the causes and consequences of poverty are complex, a number of factors contributing to the high rates of Aboriginal children living in poverty are highlighted below.

Colonialism, Racism and Social Exclusion

The high rate of poverty among Aboriginal



Photo by Penwise

children compared to the general population in Canada links closely to the history of colonialism, racism and social exclusion experienced by Aboriginal peoples in our country (Reading and Wein, 2009, Best Start Resource Centre [BSRC], 2009).

The history of colonialism has significant implications for Aboriginal child poverty. According to Greenwood and de Leeuw (2012), Aboriginal children in Canada are “born into a colonial legacy that results in low socio-economic status, higher rates of substance abuse and increased incidents of interaction with the criminal justice system” (p. 382). This legacy is linked to historical trauma caused by residential schools, which resulted in a devastating loss of culture, language and family ties (Greenwood and de Leeuw, 2012; Reading and Wein, 2009).

In addition, a long and ongoing history of racism and social exclusion contributes to the cycle of poverty by creating systemic barriers to the full participation of Aboriginal peoples in society (BSRC, 2009; Reading and Wein, 2009). For instance, many Aboriginal peoples experience racism during their educational career and upon entering the workforce, which negatively affects self-esteem and influences one's ability to secure high paying jobs (BSRC, 2009; Reading and Wein, 2009).

Family Structure

Family structure represents an additional factor that may increase the risk of Aboriginal child poverty. Over the last several decades, the incidence of lone-parenthood has increased in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population (Quinles, 2013). While data suggests the majority of Aboriginal people live in two-parent households, Aboriginal households are more likely to be headed by lone-parents compared to non-Aboriginal households (Halseth, 2013). Pathways to lone-parenthood are complex and include factors such as widowhood, separation, divorce, childbirth outside of marriage, and changing family dynamics (Quinless, 2013).

Lone-parents, in turn, face a range of financial, educational and emotional challenges that increase risk of poverty (Halseth, 2013).

Education and Employment

Barriers to education and meaningful employment also contribute to high poverty rates. While a growing number of Aboriginal peoples are obtaining post-secondary degrees, the percentage of Aboriginal individuals with formal education remains lower compared to the general population (Halseth, 2013; NCCAHa). Factors contributing to this trend include the mistrust caused by the legacy of Canada's assimilationist policies, unequal access to funding and resources for reserves and remote schools, and poverty and unemployment (NCCAHa).

In turn, educational under-attainment tied with a range of additional factors, such as racism, influences an individual's ability to obtain employment and the high paying jobs necessary to avoid poverty (BSRC, 2009).

Inadequate Housing

In addition, factors related to material deprivation, such as inadequate housing, work to aggravate the experience of poverty (BSRC, 2009). Due to a range of systemic factors, Aboriginal families are more likely to live in overcrowded housing and houses in need of major repairs. This issue is particularly pressing on reserves (BSRC, 2009).

Not only does inadequate housing contribute to poor health outcomes, it also contributes to adverse behavioral outcomes, such as substance abuse and learning difficulties (Reading and Wein, 2009), which may perpetuate poverty in future generations. Inadequate housing is also a risk factor linked to the high number of Aboriginal children in care (BSRC, 2009).

Impact: Poverty as a Social Determinant of Health

Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age (World Health Organization, 2013). The experience of

poverty is a strong determinant of health that has significant implications for the health and well-being of Aboriginal children in Canada. For instance, poverty is linked to the over-representation of First Nations children in care, increased crime, poor childhood development, increased substance use, mental health issues, risk of chronic disease, injury, and early death (NCCAHB).

Addressing Poverty among Aboriginal Children and Families

Addressing poverty among Aboriginal children and families is a large task, but it can be achieved. Accomplishing this goal requires the cooperation of numerous stakeholders and the use of integrated and multi-faceted approaches (NCCAHB). According to the NCCA, a key strategy for reducing Aboriginal poverty is addressing the inequity in federal per capita spending between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Further, there must be an emphasis on bottom-up approaches that, with adequate funding, allow Aboriginal peoples to determine appropriate and viable solutions to the issues affecting their communities (NCCAHB, n.d.).

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This report summarizes the baseline demographic, education, employment, housing, social inclusion and health information for the 207 Aboriginal families that participated in the FFE study. [Taken from report.]



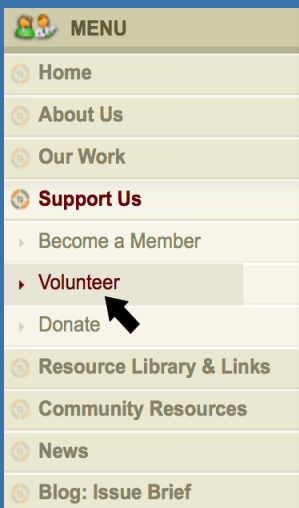
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Board Member Profile: Jarrod Bayne



Jarrod Bayne is an Edmonton-based professional with a passion for tackling tough problems in the public sector. As a senior manager and with KPMG, Jarrod has almost a decade's experience consulting with government and community agencies in Alberta in a variety of fields, including homelessness, children's services, developmental disabilities, FASD, and legal services. Much of his work involves bringing together people with very different perspectives to build solutions for complex issues.

Jarrod is an active member of the community who devotes his time in support of agencies who take a preventative, evidence-based approach to strengthening community in Edmonton. He was a member of the inaugural board of REACH Edmonton, and currently serves as a director on the board of the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Volunteer Profile: Manuel Escoto



Born and raised in Edmonton to parents who emigrated from El Salvador, Manuel's values and beliefs in social justice and in the creation of a more equitable world are rooted in his childhood,

where he saw the barriers that his parents endured as low-income minorities.

Manuel moved to Calgary to pursue an education based on the values of social justice and equality, stimulated by the oppressive history of Latin America and taking inspiration from the various historical social movements of the region, its people, and their leaders.

In 2011, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Honours History and Latin American Studies and with a minor in Political Science. During university, Manuel's academic research gave him an in-depth understanding of issues affecting the global south, development, governance, human rights, and democratization.

Upon graduation, Manuel realized he knew very little of the issues facing Canadians and, more specifically, Edmontonians. After volunteering with various local organizations, Manuel's interests have grown to include health policy, immigration, poverty reduction strategies, political accountability, gender equality, and viable economic strategies.

Manuel deems political leadership and community engagement as critical for sustainable change to occur. For this reason, he has applied for his Masters in Public Policy for September 2014 which he hopes will allow him to be in a position that removes barriers facing Albertans.



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The ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our focus is social research – particularly in the areas of low income and poverty.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

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A healthy, just and inclusive community.

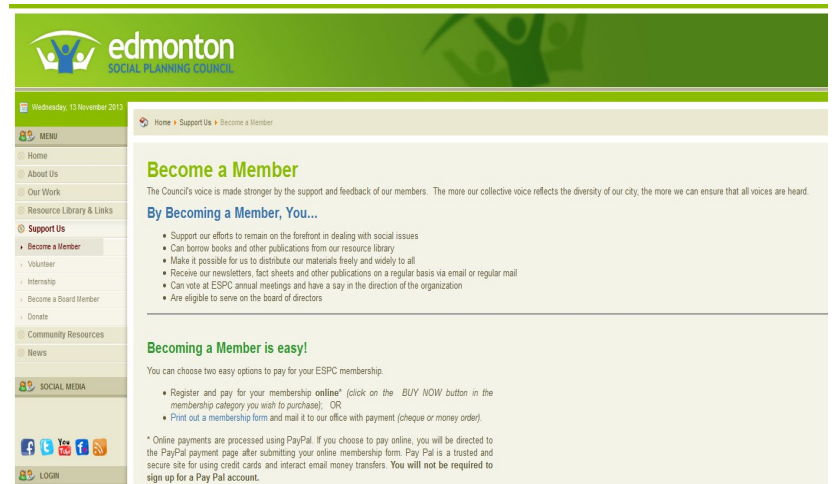
Our Mission

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides leadership within the community by addressing and researching social issues, informing public discussion and influencing social policy.

As a Member

- support our efforts to remain on the forefront in dealing with social issues
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The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu on the left, including Home, About Us, Our Work, Resource Library & Links, Support Us, and Social Media. The main content area is titled 'Become a Member' and includes a sub-header 'By Becoming a Member, You...' followed by a list of benefits: supporting efforts, borrowing books, receiving newsletters, voting at meetings, and serving on the board. Below this, it states 'Becoming a Member is easy!' and offers two payment options: online via PayPal or by mail with a membership form.



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