



Community Summit 2017



SUMMARY REPORT

Contributions from participants in United Way’s Community Summit 2017.

Discussion centred on tactics to help ameliorate the impacts of family poverty on children in Cape Breton.

On Tuesday, April 11, 2017 the United Way of Cape Breton held a 2- hour facilitated planning session designed to invite the input of community stakeholders in the area of childhood poverty. Specifically, the discussion was structured around identifying strategies and tactics that could inform the United Way’s investment planning in this critical area.

The session was preceded by a full day of presentations by allied service delivery professionals (held March 22) and a 2-hour

OUR GOAL

5%

reduction in childhood poverty in 5 years

presentation by guest speaker Dan Pallotta (held April 11). As well, United Way of Cape Breton CEO Lynne McCarron conducted a brief presentation on United Way priorities and plans, immediately prior to the facilitated discussion.

Collective impact.

Cape Breton has the highest rates of childhood poverty in the Province and the United Way of Cape Breton wishes to make alleviating childhood poverty a central focus of its future program investments. Success will require the commitment of not just the United Way and its donors and stakeholders, but also creativity and commitment by United Way -funded agencies who have the ability to expand existing (and institute new) programs an initiatives.

Focus areas.

The discussion was framed in the context of the priority areas identified by the United Way (see right) as areas of investment and program focus for the 5 years ahead. These focus areas demonstrate great promise in alleviating the impact of poverty on children and families.

Food Security

Housing Stability

Employment and Financial Security

Education Training and Skills Development

Accessible Transportation



Alleviating childhood poverty in communities across Cape Breton means considering ways and means to minimize family poverty.

Format.

Participants formed groups of approximately 8 persons, and were asked to discuss and report on their collective responses to 6 “defining questions.” — What programs and services hold the promise for having the greatest impact? What communities will be the central focus ?What community partners do we need to engage? What other stakeholders should be involved? How can we attract financial investment to support our vision? What does success look like and how do we facilitate it?

Summary of contributed strategies and tactics.

Food.

- programs and services that provide access to affordable and healthy food beyond emergency situations
- Island-wide network of food access programs
- diverting food waste from grocery stores
- nutrition programming in partnership with grocery stores
- investments in food banks
- community gardens
- provide healthy affordable recipes
- engage furniture vendors to contribute freezers, so those in poverty can purchase staples when on sale and freeze items
- regional food hub that provides choice and autonomy
- establishing a food security task force to take a coordinated approach; a group that includes schools, youth clubs, grocers, Ecology Action Centre, farmers' markets, Island Food Network, and CBRM transportation

Transportation.

- easier access to affordable transportation via car dealer partners & car sharing
- improved bus service and expanded routes to outlying areas
- volunteer drivers for those without car
- make a bus available to take people from outlying communities to the city once or twice a month

Children & youth.

- expanded youth centres and programming
- broaden options for daycare via private home providers
- invest in parenting supports and Family Resource centres

Housing, employment & financial security

- step up government advocacy for increasing basic income level and providing expanded employment skills development opportunities
- employment programming through YMCA's
- consider availability of housing relative to availability of employment
- programming in financial literacy, job interview training, and basic human self-sufficiency skills

Geography.

- North Sydney
- Eskasoni
- Glace Bay
- New Waterford
- Sydney Mines
- North Sydney
- “outside of Sydney proper”
- “inside of Sydney proper”
- all communities in CBRM have a stake in solutions

Health & wellness.

- expand health programming to outlying areas with greater centralization and

Stakeholders.

- Food Hub
- Ecology Action
- CBRM
- grocery stores
- food banks
- food producers
- Meals on Wheels
- Government
- Community Health Boards
- NS Health Authority
- United Way
- day care providers
- seniors
- religious groups
- Salvation Army
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- chiefs in council
- CBU
- beneficiaries
- public health providers
- police
- hospitals
- Talbot House
- Caper Base
- private sector
- neighbours
- single-parent households
- addictions & recovery resource providers
- employment support providers
- First Nations community members

Other strategies.

- enhanced use of libraries as community-support facilities
- expanding network of community navigators (eg. volunteers)
- more research on the root causes of poverty and its manifestations (eg. research on housing count)
- evaluating solutions deriving from other communities that achieved success
- evidence-based understanding of the impact/benefit of poverty alleviation to the health of the entire community
- greater effort at community engagement at program planning stage
- invest early in programs that are scalable and build in strategies to make them sustainable
- accept the risk inherent in investing in pilot programs
- step up engagement with community stakeholders (Elders, youth, those living in poverty)
- focus on scalable solutions provided by organizations that are largely self-funded (eg Boys & Girls club)
- build capacity by investing in, and equipping, front-line care workers in the community
- tap into volunteer resources through existing organizations like Kiwanis Clubs
- strike issue-specific action committees in areas like employment, children, quality of life, and food security
- place greater priority on supporting seniors with new programs
- engage community stakeholders in “conferences like this,” but make them more affordable
- make an effort to education people on the availability of existing programs and services
- look to private sector business to fund research and programs including pilot programs

Success defined.

- 5% reduction in childhood poverty in 5 years

Conclusion.

In his precedent-setting address, Dan Pallotta made the following observations which can inform the United Way's effectiveness moving forward;

- *A dream taken seriously with planning and sophistication, drives innovation.*
- *Complex challenges require that we have patience both with the process and with each other.*
- *Our organizations are miniature up against the magnitude of these societal problems.*
- *If you can't fail then you can't innovate. If you can't innovate in fundraising, you can't expand revenue to solve social problems that are many orders of magnitude larger than you are.*

Solutions in the areas of family and childhood poverty require ongoing partnership and collaboration, creativity and perseverance. The facilitated planning session in April 2017 gave rise to new and creative ideas from stakeholders and concerned community members. And it set the stage for ongoing and deepened engagement that, if fostered, will lead to real and lasting progress.