

W Counting omen IN

**A Toolkit for
Rural Action
on Poverty**





Counting Women In

A Toolkit for Rural Action on Poverty

A Project of the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee

Preparation of Report:

Colleen Purdon

Contributors:

Colleen Purdon, May Tettero, Pam Hanington, Dr. Susan Turner

Project Coordination:

Colleen Purdon

Design and Layout:

Robin Paul Design Consulting

June 2009

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all of the women living with poverty who inspired and supported the tools and action in this toolkit. Women shared generously of their time, their wisdom, their pain and their hopes for a better life in their rural communities. They contributed their thoughts, experiences, stories, and recommendations for change as committee members, workshop participants, report card respondents, speakers, presenters and artists.

We would like to acknowledge the current and past members of Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee members: Pam Hanington, Francesca Dobbyn, Robin Paul, Nancy Shular, Lisa Wilde, Amy Zoethout, Cathy Vautour, Glenda Devlin, Katie Padfield, Colleen Purdon (project coordinator) and May Tettero (project consultant), who steered the work over many years and shepherded this toolkit process through many obstacles, difficulties and triumphs.

Thank you to all of the community advocates, service providers, municipal politicians, community activists, community organizations and the media that supported the development of the pilot strategies, attended workshops, focus groups and community forums, and got the word out about the project throughout the four counties. Thank you to Terry Sanderson, Mayor Gwen Gilbert, Councillor Chris Peabody, Councillor Carol Barfoot, Councillor Judy Gay, Pamela Stanley and Heather Lyons.

A very special thank you to the members of the Celebrating Women working group that created the Travel Trunk of Poverty. Their donation of time and artifacts created a deeply personal and educational arts installation. Thank you to May Tettero and Amy Zoethout for facilitating the process, to artist Mary McCarl for her artistic vision and support, writer Dawna Proudman for her sensitive and empowering workshop on creative writing, and to Mary Lee, Robin Paul, Rosa Rego, Lin Marsden, and all the

other women who brought their stories and ideas to life with the Travel Trunk. And thank you to Norman White and Craig Bignell for their technical support.

We had wonderful support from many organizations for this project: The United Way of Bruce Grey, Women Today of Huron, The Grey Bruce Legal Clinic, Emily Murphy Centre, Stratford, the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Grey Bruce Peace and Justice Coalition, Rural Women Making Change (University of Guelph), Bruce County, Goderich Public Library, the North Grey Union Public Library, The Women's Centre (Grey & Bruce) Inc, and SHARE. Thank you to all.

We are deeply indebted to the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Poverty Project and Jim Giles, and Rural Women Making Change, University of Guelph, and Dr. Susan Turner and Kristie O'Neill. Our partnering organizations enriched this project and allowed us to carry out additional research, reach educators and schools, present at the United Nations, and reach people provincially, nationally and internationally with information about rural women and poverty.

Thank you to Status of Women Canada for the original grant for this project, and to the Ontario Women's Directorate for leaping into the breach with a grant to help us to complete the project. We are so grateful for the donations and encouragement we received from community organizations for research and printing costs when our core funding disappeared. Thank you to the Grey Bruce Labour Council, A'Cappella Chamber Choir, the Zonta Club of Owen Sound & Area, Rural Women Making Change (University of Guelph) and The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Colleen Purdon & Associates and Bruce Grey United Way for bridging the gap.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 6 |
| THE GOAL OF THIS TOOLKIT | 9 |
| CHANGING THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT WOMEN & POVERTY..... | 11 |
| HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT | 16 |
| 5 STRATEGIES TO CHANGE ATTITUDES & MOBILIZE ACTION ON POVERTY..... | 17 |
| STRATEGY 1 GATHERING WOMEN & COMMUNITIES | 18 |
| PLANNING A COMMUNITY GATHERING | 20 |
| Step 1: Getting Started..... | 20 |
| Step 2: Organizing the Practical Things | 21 |
| Step 3: Promotion & Detailing the Agenda | 22 |
| Step 4: Holding the Gathering & Follow Up | 22 |
| THE WORLD CAFÉ – A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ABOUT POVERTY | 24 |
| Facilitating a World Café on Poverty | 25 |
| Developing Discussion Questions | 26 |
| Consolidating Ideas & Building Action Plans | 27 |
| Insights from the Women's Gathering on Poverty..... | 28 |
| Evaluation | 29 |
| Additional On Line Resources..... | 30 |
| STRATEGY 2 GETTING THE FACTS ABOUT POVERTY: COMMUNITY REPORT CARDS | 31 |
| WHAT IS A COMMUNITY REPORT CARD? | 32 |
| CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY REPORT CARD ON POVERTY | 33 |
| Step 1: Getting Started..... | 33 |
| Step 2: Information Gathering Tools | 35 |
| Step 3: Engaging the Community & Collecting Data | 38 |
| Step 4: Analyzing Data, Developing Findings & Recommendations..... | 39 |
| Step 5: Producing & Distributing the Report Card..... | 41 |
| Step 6: Evaluating the Report Card Process | 42 |
| WHAT WE LEARNED..... | 42 |
| Additional On Line Resources..... | 47 |
| STRATEGY 3 CELEBRATING WOMEN - A RURAL COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT | 48 |
| THE TRAVEL TRUNK OF POVERTY | 49 |
| CREATING A RURAL COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT | 54 |
| Getting Started | 54 |
| Issues to Consider..... | 54 |
| Consider, Decide & Communicate..... | 55 |
| Explore Possible Approaches..... | 55 |
| Finding & Involving Participants | 57 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Creating Safety | 58 |
| Involving Professional Artists..... | 59 |
| Putting Things Together with the Travel Trunk of Poverty..... | 60 |
| Community Networking..... | 61 |
| Travels with the Travel Trunk of Poverty..... | 62 |
| Challenges | 63 |
| Evaluation..... | 64 |
| Additional On Line Resources | 65 |
| STRATEGY 4 ENGAGING MUNICIPAL DECISION MAKERS | 66 |
| FINDINGS FROM OUR RESEARCH WITH MUNICIPAL POLITICIANS & STAFF | 68 |
| The Need for Municipal Leadership..... | 69 |
| Where poverty issues fit in municipal government | 70 |
| Strategies to Engage Municipal Governments in Poverty Issues | 73 |
| Changing Attitudes About Women & Poverty..... | 74 |
| How do Municipalities Work?..... | 76 |
| Working with Local Government - Representing Your Organization to Council..... | 86 |
| Working with Local Government - Taking an Issue to Council | 87 |
| Working with Local Government - Constraints and Opportunities | 90 |
| 2 Case Studies of Work with Municipalities | 91 |
| Additional On Line Resources | 93 |
| STRATEGY 5 PARTNERSHIPS | 94 |
| TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS | 94 |
| The Partnership Continuum:..... | 95 |
| KEY ELEMENTS FOR PARTNERSHIP WORK..... | 96 |
| Agreement on Purpose, Values, Principles and Structure for the Partnership..... | 96 |
| Agreement on the Ground Rules & Structure for the Partnership | 96 |
| Agreement on the Goals & Objectives for the Work | 97 |
| Commitment to Collaborative & Respectful Work Together..... | 97 |
| Resources to Support the Partnership & Carry Out the Work | 98 |
| STEPS TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS | 99 |
| THREE PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDIES..... | 100 |
| CASE STUDY - POVERTY & MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS | 100 |
| CASE STUDY - POVERTY & PUBLIC EDUCATION | 103 |
| CASE STUDY - COMMUNITY PLANNING FORUMS ON POVERTY..... | 105 |
| ADDITIONAL ON LINE RESOURCES | 107 |
| REFERENCES..... | 107 |
| APPENDIX..... | 108 |
| FOOTNOTES | 108 |

Introduction

In 2001 a small group of women founded the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee and began a community discussion on the reality and impact of poverty on rural women, their families and communities. The questions that brought this group together were: What is the face of women's poverty in rural communities and what can be done about it?

So it's a matter of breaking the cycle...
There are too many problems we face.
We have to break the cycle, and the way to
break the cycle for us is to do something
that is doable, is to do something.
(Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize winner 2004)

We launched a research project and held workshops with women living with poverty in Grey, Bruce and Huron Counties, and completed a literature review to find some answers. We found that rural poverty, and the impact of poverty on rural women and communities, was largely invisible and ignored. In workshops women spoke about their despair and loss of hope when they were plunged into poverty because of abuse, illness, separation the loss of employment, or farm crisis. They spoke of their frustration and humiliation dealing with fragmented and at times punitive community services that did not come close to covering their basic needs, but excelled at soul destroying and mind numbing bureaucracy. They offered many suggestions on what needed to change to address poverty in their lives and in their communities.



The 2002 report *Rural Women Speak about the Face of Poverty* captured the words of women and their definition of women rural poverty:

- when you can't afford a car, or keep a car on the road.
- when everyone has permission to comment on how you spend your money or live your life.
- when you must turn your other cheek to humiliation, discrimination and denigration because there is no other option – you are dependant on these people for your existence.
- when you can't afford milk, fresh fruit and vegetables for yourself and your children.

"Most people in my community have no idea as to why I live in poverty. I did not choose to get hurt at work. I did not choose to go bankrupt and lose my home, my car, my savings and finally I lost my mind... And yet I get this stigma that we are drunks, druggies, losers who take advantage of the government assistance programs. It hurts deeply because not only do I have to be the only provider for my children but I have to keep hearing things from people around me." (Report Card 2008)



Women said they needed help to navigate an uncoordinated maze of government and community services. They said negative community attitudes compounded and exacerbated their day-to-day struggles to feed and care for their children, and to move forward with their lives. Simply put, women felt that they didn't "count" once they were poor.

In 2004 we began the second phase of our work. Together with women living with poverty we developed an information and resource handbook for rural women and rural communities called



How We Count: A Handbook for Rural Women and Rural Communities on Poverty. It provides information for women and providers about why women are poor, women's rights, where to find local resources and supports, how to navigate systems and supports, and self care strategies for women and their families. The Handbook has been reprinted twice and remains a popular and

helpful tool for women and providers.

It is now eight years since we began this work. We have met with hundreds of women in focus groups, at community gatherings, through surveys and workshops, through media and the Internet. We have seen the issue of poverty gain traction and attention, locally and provincially, and the Province of Ontario launch a Poverty Reduction Strategy.

"I do not believe we have even begun to realize
how much poverty is out there."
(Report Card 2008)

The Goal of this Toolkit

For the past three years we have researched and implemented pilot projects with women and communities to create Counting Women In: A Toolkit for Rural Action on Poverty.



"Eliminating poverty is perhaps the single most important thing our community can do to help children, women and families to live a full and worthwhile life." (Report Card 2008)

The goal with this toolkit is:

To provide strategies and tools to build a deeper understanding of rural poverty and to engage women, service providers, municipalities and rural communities in action to reduce and end rural poverty.

The Toolkit seeks to:

- “Count Women In” so women are valued and celebrated for their paid and unpaid contributions to families and communities, regardless of their economic status;
- Ensure every woman, regardless of her economic status, will find respect, support, assistance when it is needed, and equal access to community resources;
- End discrimination and unhelpful responses based on negative, unhelpful, stereotypical attitudes about women and poverty;
- Bring rural women, families, communities and local governments together to build partnerships and action plans to make rural communities vibrant and sustainable for all;
- Build hope, innovation, leadership, common purpose, and respect for diverse perspectives to ultimately end poverty in our rural communities.



Changing the Way We Think About Women & Poverty

There are negative behaviours and attitudes that women experience in rural communities that make it hard for them to live with poverty, and even harder to get out of poverty. Women and children living with poverty internalize the negative attitudes they feel and hear in their communities, adding to their feelings of hopelessness or lack of worth.

The chart that follows documents some of the most problematic behaviours and attitudes that women and providers identified in their communities. They also talked about positive, affirming and supportive behaviours and attitudes that support change and instill hope. These are set out on the right side of the chart.



attitude n

1. an opinion or general feeling about something
2. a physical posture, either conscious or unconscious, especially while interacting with others
3. An arrogant or assertive manner or stance assumed as a challenge or for effect (informal)

(Encarta® World English Dictionary)

An iceberg floats in the sea but we only see the tip. Behaviours are the tip of the iceberg – what we can see and describe happening with people and in our communities. Under the water is the greatest mass of the iceberg. This is the region of attitudes, beliefs and values. They are unseen and often unspoken, but powerfully shape and support behaviour and the kind of action that is taken to address poverty.

If we hope to change unhelpful and discriminatory behaviours and take more effective action to address rural poverty we need to acknowledge the link between behaviours and attitudes. If we want to change the way we deal with poverty (behaviour) we will need to change the way we think about poverty as well (attitudes and beliefs).



| Unhelpful Behaviour | Underlying Attitudes | Helpful Behaviours and Attitudes |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Isolation | <p>Us and them mentality.</p> <p>Shame (no one should know).</p> <p>If they can't contribute they should leave.</p> <p>You should be able to solve your problems yourself.</p> <p>It can't happen to me.</p> | <p>Outreach and connection to services and supports.</p> <p>Value women's contributions regardless of economic status.</p> <p>Community engagement and partnerships.</p> <p>Inclusion of women and families living in poverty.</p> |
| Disrespect | <p>Women on welfare don't want to work.</p> <p>When I am poor I don't deserve respect.</p> <p>Young Moms have babies so they can get welfare.</p> <p>Single mothers are bad mothers.</p> <p>Work = Respect.</p> <p>You lose your right to privacy when you are poor.</p> | <p>Non-judgmental, respectful, helpful, attitudes and behaviour.</p> <p>Recognition of the complexity and uniqueness of each person's situation.</p> <p>Response based on facts not myths and stereotypes.</p> <p>Respect for privacy and rights.</p> <p>Recognize impact of disabilities.</p> |
| Devaluing and Discrimination | <p>'They' don't contribute.</p> <p>'They' are ripping off the system, wasting tax payer's money.</p> <p>'They' just need to get a job.</p> <p>If you are poor I have the right to judge you.</p> <p>Racist, sexist attitudes.</p> | <p>Equal opportunities for women.</p> <p>Women and people living in poverty contribute to the economy and community.</p> <p>Protect the rights and dignity of people living with poverty.</p> <p>Address racism and discrimination.</p> <p>Advocate and work with vulnerable.</p> |

| Unhelpful Behaviour | Underlying Attitudes | Helpful Behaviours and Attitudes |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Blaming and Shaming | <p>Women are responsible for their poverty (poor judgment, bad choices, personal failings).</p> <p>There are lots of jobs if you wanted to work.</p> <p>Everyone has equal opportunities.</p> <p>Women are responsible for the failure of their marriages.</p> | <p>Compassion and understanding.</p> <p>Recognition of barriers to economic self sufficiency (transportation, child care, fair wages, farm crisis) and plans to address these.</p> <p>Address sexism, gender inequality, sexual harassment, and woman abuse.</p> <p>Focus on personal assets not deficiencies.</p> |
| Acceptance of poverty | <p>The poor will always be with us.</p> <p>There is nothing that I can do, it is up to them to make change.</p> <p>There are simple solutions to poverty.</p> <p>It's a generational problem – people are born into poverty.</p> | <p>Training and understanding of systemic poverty issues.</p> <p>Collaborative work to address rural barriers and poverty issues.</p> <p>Realistic plans for short and long term rural poverty reduction.</p> <p>Different approaches to situational and generational poverty.</p> |
| Ignoring, Making Invisible | <p>I don't hear about poverty so it must not be here.</p> <p>Poverty isn't so bad here (nobody sleeping on the streets, dying of hunger).</p> <p>Poverty will go away or they will go away if I don't pay attention.</p> <p>The poor have no right to ask for help or speak out.</p> <p>Only the middle class counts.</p> | <p>Research and facts about poverty issues in rural areas.</p> <p>Engaging all community members in poverty strategies.</p> <p>Positive action at community, municipal, provincial, federal and international levels.</p> <p>Address middle class bias in policy and service delivery.</p> <p>Include voices and perspectives of women living with poverty.</p> |

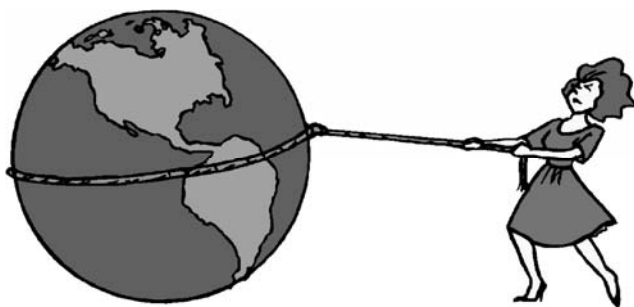
| Unhelpful Behaviour | Underlying Attitudes | Helpful Behaviours and Attitudes |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Band-Aid Solutions to poverty | <p>Poverty is an individual failure so we don't need structural or systemic changes.</p> <p>Big changes will cost too much.</p> <p>Too much help makes people dependent.</p> <p>Only help the deserving poor</p> <p>Anyone can succeed if they work hard enough.</p> | <p>Recognition of the need for broad systemic change to distribute wealth fairly.</p> <p>Short and long term plans to implement systemic changes.</p> <p>Short and long term plans to address attitudes and action that perpetuate poverty.</p> <p>Collaboration and Partnerships.</p> |

When we see poverty as individual problem we ask "why are you poor?" and expect simple solutions (get a job, get a husband, get off your butt, move somewhere else).

If we see poverty as a community problem we ask: "why is there poverty?" and the answers are complex and require broad social change.

If we fail to ask "why is there poverty?" community strategies don't happen.

If rural communities don't have comprehensive strategies, effective community partnerships, or coordinated efforts to address poverty, it could well be that they are asking the wrong questions.



How to Use the Toolkit

This toolkit is organized in five sections. Each section details strategies, tools and information to change attitudes about women and poverty and to support local action to improve the lives of women, families and communities in rural areas. We



have also put together an online kit with templates, forms, and examples from the work that we piloted. There is a list of online resources at the end of each section, and information about the location of the web resources in Appendix 1.

The strategies and tools were developed and piloted in Grey, Bruce, Huron and Perth counties over the past three years. They can be modified and used in any rural community, and we have included some suggestions on how you can do this. Some strategies will require funding for printing, transportation, childcare and food costs. We found that local community groups are supportive and willing to help out with these costs. Provincial and federal agencies (Status of Women Canada, Ontario Women's Directorate) may provide funds in response to written proposals.

The strategies and tools in this toolkit came about because of deep and enduring relationships in our rural communities that helped us overcome planning and funding challenges. The project brought together diverse people and groups from four counties with a geographic landmass the size of Prince Edward Island. Our working relationship was based on our common concern about poverty and the need to change attitudes that limit equality of opportunity for women and their families in rural areas.

5 Strategies to Change Attitudes & Mobilize Action on Poverty

| Strategies | Tools |
|--|--|
| 1. Gather women and community members to talk about the reality of poverty in rural communities and to develop local action. | Women's Gatherings, Community Forums, World Cafes. |
| 2. Get the facts about poverty and the impact of poverty on rural communities to dispel myths and mobilize action. | Community Report Cards. |
| 3. Celebrate women and educate communities about the contributions women make regardless of their economic status. | Community Arts Project. |
| 4. Engage municipal decision makers to address poverty and improve the quality of life in rural communities. | Learning from the pilot research, Tools for working with municipal government. |
| 5. Build partnerships within rural communities and between rural and urban-based groups. | Partnership Framework, Key Elements for Partnerships, Case examples. |

Strategy 1

Gathering Women & Communities

Poverty creates barriers, isolates and stigmatizes women in rural communities. When we create opportunities for connection and build knowledge, leadership and hope within our communities we can change attitudes and build community strategies to address poverty.

"I am a woman of great knowledge and talents and now know how to seek others."
(Women's Gathering Participant)

The Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee launched the Counting Women In project with a Women's Gathering in June 2006. We brought together 75 women from Perth, Huron, Bruce and Grey Counties for a day of dialogue, learning and strategy building.

There was a balance of perspectives at the Women's Gathering that included diverse women living with poverty, and a wide range of workers from health, education, social services, child welfare, legal services, women's advocates, and the voluntary sector. At the Women's Gathering we engaged everyone in a 'World Café' discussion on rural women and poverty. We ate together, participated in workshops and ended with recommendations for action to change attitudes and address women's poverty.

Women living with poverty were provided with an honorarium to cover their childcare, transportation and out of pocket expenses.





Goals for the Women's Gathering

1. To support leadership for rural women taking action on poverty
2. To develop local strategies to change rural attitudes about women and poverty
3. To celebrate women's expertise and contributions to community and family.
4. To build networks for action across the four counties.

The Women's Gathering was a great success. Women shared their diverse perspectives and ideas in a welcoming and creative space. New relationships and networks were developed and we all learned a great deal about the value of coming together. We also learned about the strength and solidarity that we have as women when we get past isolation and assumptions and channel energy into finding common purpose, sharing new ideas and building strategies.

Planning a Community Gathering

Step 1: Getting Started

- Discuss the purpose of the gathering and what you hope to accomplish. Recruit a planning committee for the gathering and invite some new perspectives to be part of the planning.



- Set some realistic goals for the gathering.
- Brainstorm a list of individuals and organizations that may be interested in participating. Be sure to include all the perspectives and diverse people who may be interested in participating (gender, ethnicity, ages, sexual orientation, cultural

backgrounds, economic status, ability/disability, race, etc.).

Contact other networking groups that are allied with poverty issues (unions, community groups, faith groups, not for profit agencies, advocates, etc) and invite them to attend.

“Speaking with women who deal and live with poverty everyday of their lives
– it puts a face to poverty.”
(Women’s Gathering Participant)

- Plan for a balance of people living with poverty and the people who provide services or supports so the gathering is not dominated by professional voices.
- Plan for a variety of ways for people to interact and share perspectives: discussion, presentations, panels, workshops, music, movement, ceremony, visual arts, and diverse perspectives.

Step 2: Organizing the Practical Things

- Book a location. Consider practical issues when choosing a location for the gathering: number of people and size of the room, geographic location, accessibility, access to kitchen for food, cost, possibility for sponsorships, transportation, cultural considerations, welcoming environment, privacy, etc.
- Invite local experts who have expertise, knowledge or skills as speakers and presenters for the gathering. Often local agencies will donate staff time for workshops and training if requested, and this helps women get to know about local resources and supports.
- Develop the budget for the gathering: honorariums to help people living in poverty pay for child care and transportation costs, costs for food, materials and copies, speakers fees, travel expenses for speakers, rent for the facility, advertising.
- Plan a date for the gathering that will allow for time to: develop the agenda, get invitations and notices out, arrange for any speakers, arrange for funding, arrange for transportation, prepare a media release.
- Decide who will handle registrations and who will be the contact person to assist people with information needs and any access issues. Sometimes a local organization will donate staff time to help with this. Set up a spreadsheet to keep track of the registrations for the gathering.



Step 3: Promotion & Detailing the Agenda

- Finalize a one-page flyer that is an invitation and send out to individuals, organizations and community groups well in



advance with a request that people RSVP by a certain date. The flyer provides a brief overview of the purpose of the gathering and what the expected outcomes will be, along with details about the location, time and what to expect. Let people know that they can get help with childcare and transportation.

- Send out the flyer electronically, post on relevant websites, contact media to announce the upcoming gathering, send to key community leaders, advocates and community groups and ask them to make it available to clients and staff, post print versions in places where people living with poverty can see them, or hear about the event.
- If you are holding a world café, the planning committee should spend time thinking about the discussion questions, facilitation and note taking.
- Finalize the agenda, including speakers, facilitation, food, etc.
- Send out a reminder about the upcoming gathering and the final date for registrations.

Step 4: Holding the Gathering & Follow Up

- The Planning Committee finalizes their tasks and individual responsibilities for the gathering including: set up, take down, registration, distribution of funds for childcare and transportation, organization/preparation of food, preparation of information kits for the gathering, development of an

- evaluation feedback form, liaison and honorariums for speakers, payment of bills for food, hall, etc.
- Set a date for a post gathering follow up meeting for the Planning Committee and any other interested people.
 - Order food, prepare honorariums and fees for speakers/facilitators, prepare participant kits, set up the space, prepare evaluation tool.
 - Enjoy your Gathering. Thank participants and speakers/facilitators. Encourage participants to join an email or mail list to keep in touch.
 - Collect notes from the Gathering and prepare a short summary of key points, action items, follow up items and next steps. Distribute the summary to participants and post on your website, or a community agency website.
 - Meet with media or prepare a short report on the event for local media.
 - Organizing group meets to review evaluations, summary report and to determine next steps.



The World Café – A Community Conversation About Poverty



The world café is a good and simple process for bringing people together around questions that matter. It is founded on the idea that people have the capacity to

work together, no matter who they are. The café is an intentional dialogue that is based upon the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult of challenges. A World Café is an evolving round of dialogues within a single, larger, connected conversation. It allows for the cross pollination of ideas, new insights and questions, and builds new connections between people. The collective wisdom of the group becomes more accessible and innovative possibilities for action emerge.²

"In this troubling time when many people are so disconnected from one another, I keep searching to find those ideas, processes, and behaviours that can restore hope for the future. The World Café does just that. (Margaret Wheatley, 2005)

The World Café process works well with large, diverse groups where people want to share their different kinds of knowledge and find ways of building productive relationships. It is a welcoming and encouraging process that values all contributions and brings the wisdom of lived of experience forward.

We used the World Café process at the Women's Gathering to engage 75 women from all walks of life and perspectives in a deep conversation about poverty in our rural communities. Since

the Women's Gathering we have used the World Café approach at Community Forums on Poverty to develop specific community action plans.

The World Café process is a valuable tool for communities, women and their advocates. Detailed information about the World Café process can be found in the book *The World Café*:

Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations that Matter
www.theworldcafe.com

Café Etiquette

Contribute your thinking and experience

Listen and understand diverse perspectives

Connect ideas; build on one another's ideas

Listen together, look for new insights

Play, doodle, draw.

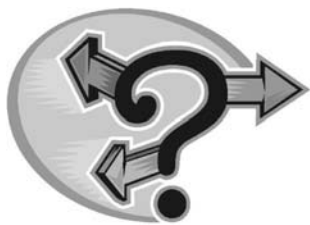
Facilitating a World Café on Poverty

Here are some ideas for facilitating a world café:

- Chose a comfortable setting. If tables are available set them up like a café, with chairs for 5 to 7 people at each table. We used bright table clothes and put a flower and candle on each table.
- Have food and drinks available so people can sit at the table and talk over light refreshments.
- Provide writing materials so people can make their own notes, write down ideas, and doodle. We used flip chart pages as table clothes on the tables and put a handful of markers and crayons on each table.



- The facilitator formally 'opens' the café and takes time at the beginning of to welcome everyone, explain the process, and acknowledge the wisdom in the room. The facilitator goes over the Café Etiquette and explains how people will move from table to table.
- One person stays put at each table to welcome and take notes. It is important that they do not facilitate the group – each person is responsible for facilitating the group and for their own participation.
- Encourage people to seek out people they do not know when they move to a new table. Always start each table round with introductions.
- At the end of the café ask people to write down the key insight or learning for them and ask them to post it on the wall for everyone to see. We used bright coloured paper and after the insights were posted the facilitator arranged them by theme while everyone had lunch.
- The facilitator formally closes the café, thanks everyone and lets people know how they can stay involved.



Developing Discussion Questions

The World Café process offers an opportunity to explore open questions about poverty in rural communities and engage everyone in planning for action. The questions help participants speak from their knowledge and experience and support thinking 'outside of the box'.

"Women are afraid to be known as
a poor person - especially farm women."
(Gathering participant)

Here are some guidelines for developing questions:³

1. Begin with a question that focuses on collective attention: What's important to you about this situation? What draws you/us together? What do we know so far and what do we still need to learn about this situation?
2. Use questions that help connect ideas and find deeper insights: What's taking shape here? What is emerging that is new? What has real meaning for you? What surprised you? What is missing from the picture so far?
3. End with questions that create a forward movement: What would it take to create change on this issue? What's possible here and who cares about it? How can we support each other in taking the next steps?

Questions from the Women's Gathering World Café

1. Why is it important to change attitudes in your community about rural women and poverty? Why do you care?
 2. What is missing from the picture so far? What are we not seeing?
 3. What would it take to create changes in attitudes? What challenges may come our way?
-
-

Consolidating Ideas & Building Action Plans

At the Women's Gathering the participants generated many ideas for action through the World Café discussion and at the afternoon workshops. We collected all of the notes, insights and discussion points and prepared a summary of themes that informed the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee on next steps for the project. This work included creating a summary for each of the questions from the World Café and

summarizing future directions that were discussed in the afternoon workshops. This information was provided to conference participants and a summary from the Women's Gathering was provided in a local newsletter. There was media coverage of the Women's Gathering and an in-depth article appeared in the local newspaper.

“Women feel separate and disconnected
– we struggle to find ‘hidden supports’
“ We need safe unobtrusive places for women to
come, share, gain strength, share experiences,
find support and solutions and to network.”
(Women's Gathering participants)

Insights from the Women's Gathering on Poverty

Here is a summary of some of the general insights from the World Café and Workshops at the Women's Gathering:

- Raising awareness, speaking out and taking leadership are three closely interrelated ways to change attitudes toward women in poverty.
- The stigma associated with poverty was identified as one of the key roadblocks to women's empowerment.
- What is missing from the picture are supportive programs and services, and supportive networks for women living with poverty.
- Education was identified as central to changing attitudes towards women and poverty. There were suggestions for: a celebration of women that reveals the true face of poverty in rural communities, and educating children, especially in schools, about poverty issues and more critical thinking about consumerism.

"We need to go to the source and educate people to what the issues are through public forums and town councils"

"We need role models who will inspire us to define ourselves by who we are
– not by what we have."
(Gathering participants)

The specific Action Plans developed at the Women's Gathering informed the next stages of the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty project and the development of the strategies and tools in this Toolkit.

"The World Café was empowering
– it was good to meet others who are advocates,
good ideas, spontaneous, people with heart."
(Evaluation)

Evaluation

When we bring people together it is important to gather their feedback on what worked for them. For the Women's Gathering we developed a formal feedback tool that participants completed at the end of the day. We asked participants to rate the World Café, workshops, their progress on the goals for the day and their satisfaction with the day. We also asked for comments on what was



most helpful and least helpful. There is a copy of the feedback tool posted online as an online resource.

The positive comments from the evaluations, the high level of participation, the wealth of information and sharing over the day, and the energy and enthusiasm that grew as the day progressed demonstrated to us the value of bringing people together to tackle hard issues like poverty.

"The Celebrating Women workshop caused us to dig deeply into issues of poverty and strategies for drawing attention to issues of marginalization. It felt like we had accomplished something valuable."
(Evaluation Comment)

Additional On Line Resources

- World Café Facilitators Guide
- Women's Gathering Agenda
- Sample Media Release
- Sample Registration Form
- Key Themes from the Women's Gathering
- Sample Participant Feedback Form



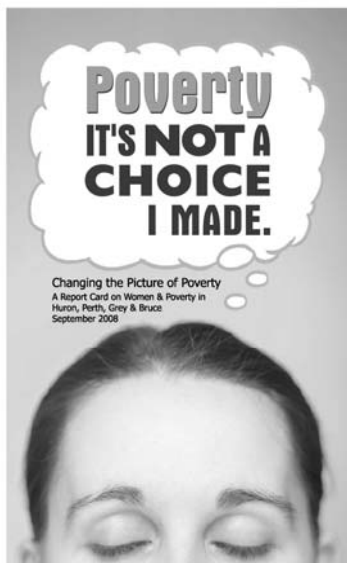
Strategy 2

Getting the Facts About Poverty: Community Report Cards

Stereotypes and negative attitudes about women and families living with poverty tend to persist and gain traction in rural communities when there isn't information about the extent of the problem and the reality of the issue. In our rural communities there were very few 'facts' or 'data' available about the realities of poverty available in the community or in the media. Poverty was an

'invisible' issue, but our initial research report opened the door and generated a great interest from community groups, agencies, organizations, faith groups and the local media. We recognized that there was an opportunity to fill an information void about the impact and reality of poverty, and the potential to influence attitudes and beliefs by providing good information.

We chose to use a Community Report Card on Poverty to provide specific local information about poverty and to engage local people in learning more about the reality of poverty, and ways to make change in the four counties.



This section outlines how to conduct a community report card, and presents some of the findings from our 2008 pilot in Grey, Bruce, Huron and Perth.

What is a Community Report Card?

A Report Card provides a snap shot on poverty in the community at a specific time. It documents the reality of poverty based upon the experience of the participants in the report card process, and from statistical sources. It provides information and perspectives that can be compared to data from other communities, or to track changes in the community over time.

A Report Card can present 'hard data' such as statistics on poverty in the community. It can also present 'soft data' about individual experiences and stories. When all of the data is put together a Report Card can indicate trends, strengths and challenges that can help communities plan and evaluate services and supports. The data from report cards can be used to develop action plans to address specific issues that are identified through the report card process.

Report Cards do have limitations. They are not very exact tools and are better at providing information on trends than high levels of detail. The findings from a report card are directly connected to the quality of the information that is collected, the people who respond, and the questions that are asked. Report Cards provide a small snapshot on the issue of poverty and do not present the whole picture.



Conducting a Community Report Card on Poverty

Step 1: Getting Started

1. Set up a working group to carry out the report card.

It helps to have some members who like to work with data, have prior research experience, and who are familiar with developing survey tools, as well as members who have expertise in poverty issues. The working group begins by deciding:

- the purpose and goals of the project,
- the scope of the report card,
- the timeline and work plan
- the resources that are needed and available

Members of the working group assist in the development of the report card process and questions. They will develop recommendations for action when the information that the report card is collated and analyzed. It is helpful when the working group looks at some examples of report cards from other communities or on other issues (Campaign 2000, Health Unit Report Cards, etc.) to start the discussion.

2. Determine what information you want to collect.

- What are the information needs for the community (What information would influence new and more positive attitudes in the community? What information would help the community develop strategies for change? What information would dispel negative myths?)
- What information would help to engage people and support action?
- What information is specific to our community and our needs and can't be found elsewhere?

- What are the broad questions that need to be answered to move forward?
- What balance do we want to have between 'hard' statistical data and 'soft' qualitative data?

3. Determine who needs to be involved in the information gathering process.

- Who do we need to collect information from?
- What perspectives are essential for balance, fairness and completeness?
- What information gathering processes would most effectively engage people in the report card and raise awareness about poverty and opportunities for change?
- What do we have to do to ensure that we involve the full diversity of our community in the information gathering process?

4. Establish what resources you need to conduct the report card, and what resources are available.

In general you will need resources for:

- the development of the information gathering tools,
- distribution of information gathering tools,
- data collation and analysis ,
- preparation of the report card report,
- report set up and printing
- distribution of the final report card product.

Volunteers can do some of the work, but hard costs for the distribution of data collection tools, research and report writing and for the printing of the report will require funding. We funded our report card with the help of a project grant from Status of

Women Canada and donations from individuals and service groups for printing costs.

Step 2: Information Gathering Tools

1. Collecting Information about Report Card Participants.

It is important to collect some information about the respondents to the report card so you will know what perspectives the data represents. We asked people to provide information about their gender, the type of community they live in (rural route, village, town, hamlet, First Nations territory), their age, sources of income (full time employment, part time employment, self employed, social assistance, pension, other), their total family income and their perspective (living with poverty, service provider working with the poor, volunteer working with the poor, person interested in poverty issues, other).

2. Establishing Benchmarks and Indicators

Benchmarks are the broad concepts that set out the standards for behaviours or actions that can (or should) be reasonably expected in the community. Benchmarks are standards that are attainable and that contribute to positive action on poverty.

The report card is used to collect information about 'how we are doing' in comparison to community benchmarks.

In our Report Card on Poverty we established four benchmarks that women told us were critical for them to get out of poverty:

- Women are Treated with Respect and Dignity
- Basic Needs for Food, Housing, Health and Safety are Met



- Women have Access to Training, Education, Information and Supports
- There is Equality of Opportunity and Status for Women

Key Indicators are established for each benchmark. Indicators determine how our community is currently responding to each benchmark. They are the signposts of change and provide clues to the direction the community is heading. They tell us if we are making progress towards our goals, and measure the conditions in our communities.

For example, our committee asked itself “How would we know if women are treated with respect and dignity?” We decided some indicators would be: how services treat women living with poverty, what people thought was the best way to demonstrate respect, and how important people felt it was to take action on poverty in their community. We brainstormed a list of indicators for each benchmark, then decided on the key indicators that would provide the best data within our resources.

3. Developing the Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools can be simple or complex. The resources and expertise available to your working group will influence the tools you use.

Here are some general guidelines and suggestions:

- Develop a questionnaire based upon your benchmarks and the key indicators for each benchmark. It is important to ask questions that will provide good data, and that can be collated easily. There may be resources in your community to help you with the design of your tools. Local health units and social planning organizations may be able to offer in kind support, review your tools, or join your working group.
- Collect information from many community perspectives. Responses from community members, service providers and people living with poverty are all critical for a balanced report

card. Questions need to be clear and in plain language. If you need help you can vet your questionnaire with your local literacy agency to be sure it is appropriate for everyone.

- Keep your questions short and to the point. Be careful not to bundle questions together.
- Use a variety of approaches to gather information with your questionnaire: internet based surveys such as Survey Monkey are very helpful (www.surveymonkey.com), hard copy survey tools for people with no access to computers, focus groups, interviews, workshops. When you use different data collection methods you will have richer and more complete answers to your questions.
- Use existing statistics and databases to complement information you collect from surveys and focus groups. There is a wealth of information available from Statistics Canada, local health units, provincial governments, and non governmental groups on income levels, employment, housing, poverty levels, social assistance, etc. that provides context and comparators for information that you collect locally.
- Try out your information gathering tools before you unleash them on your community. The committee can pre-test the tools with a small group and make revisions.



- If you have not done a community report card in your community before then organize a training workshop with the key sectors and organization you want to engage in the report card process. The workshop will provide information for the

community on why the report card is important, who will be involved, and what will happen with the information you gather. This is also an excellent way to get feedback from community groups and agencies on the tools and processes and get media coverage for the launch of the report card process.

- Be sure you know how you will collate your data and have the resources available for data analysis and the printing of the final report. In our process we developed an elaborate survey then realized we didn't have the resources to print such a detailed and lengthy report card. So we needed to rework the tools and tailor them to our capacity and resources.

Step 3: Engaging the Community & Collecting Data

- Hold a media event and invite key community leaders, organizations and advocates for the launch of the report card. This will provide information to the community about the report card, dispel concerns about the process, and train community partners so they can assist with the distribution of survey tools, and get people involved in their agencies and circles of influence.



- Use radio interviews and public broadcasters to provide information to the community on how they can participate in the report card process.

- Use existing community networks, organizations, mailing lists and electronic distribution lists to get electronic survey tools out. Ask the recipients to share the survey broadly within their organizations and to service users so you get a 'scatter' effect.
- Use Survey Monkey (or similar web based survey tools) to distribute and collate electronic surveys. There is no charge for a survey of 50 people with 10 questions with Survey Monkey. There is a charge for bigger and more complex surveys, but it's reasonable. Survey Monkey also provides on line resources too help you design your survey, develop survey questions, and collate results.
- Provide hard copies of the survey tools to community agencies and ask them to distribute and collect completed surveys from service users. Data from hard copies can then be added for collation through Survey Monkey or similar web based survey tools.
- Ask community agencies to arrange and co-facilitate focus groups and workshops to collect data from community members. Use flip chart recording and notes from focus groups and workshops to collect data. If you have the resources focus groups can be taped and transcribed.
- Include food and a safe and comfortable venue for people living in poverty who participate in focus groups. Provide small tokens of appreciation for people living with poverty who complete surveys (we used Tim Horton's coupons)

Step 4: Analyzing Data, Developing Findings & Recommendations

- Survey Monkey or a similar web based program will collate data and provide a print out of comments from the electronic survey.
- Transcribe and summarize the data from focus groups and workshops

- Summarize statistical data that will appear in the report card
- Produce a preliminary report with the summarized data from survey tools, trends and findings from focus groups and workshops, and a summary of recommendations from participant comments. Include a summary of all data sources for each Benchmark, as well as the presentation of statistical data that provides context.
- Review the preliminary report with the working group and discuss what you believe to be the key findings from all data. Decide how best to present the findings to encourage and motivate action. It is important not to blame or centre out specific agencies or individuals in the report card process.
- Decide on options for presenting the findings: You may decide to do a report card rating for each Benchmark – for example 'pass' or 'fail' or a grade 'A' (excellent) 'B' (good), 'C' (fair), 'D' (poor). Another approach is to evaluate the findings under each Benchmark with 'stars' for any outstanding or exemplary findings and 'red flags' for any serious concerns. Or you may just present the findings without any kind of rating.
- Prepare the findings for each Benchmark and include a short discussion or further details from focus group information or statistical data that elaborates on the data
- Include quotes from focus group participants (don't identify individuals) or from comments on surveys with the findings so the voices and actual words of community participants are included in the report card.
- Prepare recommendations for community action from the findings of the report



card. Action items need to be realistic, time limited and engage the community in specific poverty reduction strategies.

- Complete the final report card with formatting and art work to make it visually interesting and easy to read.

Step 5: Producing & Distributing the Report Card

- It is important that the report card have a professional look. You may be able to recruit a graphic artist or person with experience with formatting and layout to volunteer or provide in kind services for the production of the report card. It is worth putting resources towards professional layout and printing, and some community groups may be willing to fund this.
- Organize a media release of the report card findings and recommendations. Include key community leaders and participants to speak to the importance of the findings and recommendations for action. This can be done in conjunction with a community workshop to discuss community plans for action on the recommendations from the report card that can then be reported by media.
- The report should be produced in a hard copy and distributed widely to community leaders, poverty groups, community organizations, participants in the report card process and be available in public locations (United Way, Food Banks, Legal Clinics, Churches, etc.).
- Send electronic versions of the report card to community leaders and organizations for distribution through their networks.



- Post the report card on local websites.
- Use the report card for presentations and public education with community service groups (Lions, Kiwanis, Zonta, Rotary, etc.), present it to local municipalities, faith communities, agricultural groups, municipal and provincial planning groups, and to provincial and federal politicians and groups.

Step 6: Evaluating the Report Card Process

- Track the number of participants in the report card process, number of media events, number of print copies distributed to establish a base line and compare this from year to year.
- Evaluate the reliability of the information tools, and the quality of the data collected, as well as any recommendations for alternative tools or processes to improve data reliability and quality.
- Track progress on recommendations for action in any future report cards or presentations on progress to address poverty issues for rural women



What We Learned

In September 2008 the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee released a report card on poverty called: Poverty – It's Not a Choice I Made. Changing the Picture of Poverty.

The report card was based on data from 2007 collected from 189 people in the four counties. One third of the participants identified as living with poverty, one third identified as service providers and one third identified as a person interested in poverty issues. 95% of the participants were female. The information gathering process included an electronic survey, a

print survey, focus groups in two communities, selected data from Statistics Canada, and findings from other reports on rural women and poverty.

1. What we learned about rural women and poverty:

- There is a deep concern throughout the four counties about poverty and its impact on our communities
- Poverty has a long term and negative impact on health, opportunities and the future of women, children and rural communities
- Rural communities need comprehensive poverty reduction strategies that work from the premise that poverty is a community issue and not the personal failure of individuals
- Agencies, communities and counties need to work in a more coordinated and collaborative way to make use of existing services and to bridge service gaps.
- An integrated federal, provincial and municipal approach to policy, services and planning is needed to address the current disconnect, contradictions and confusion between tiers of government
- Poverty reduction strategies need to recognize and accommodate the unique needs of farm women, Aboriginal women and women and families in rural areas.

2. What we learned about Community Benchmarks

The analysis of the report card data yielded a 'grade' for each of the four community benchmarks:

- Women are Treated with Respect and Dignity
(Graded D or poor)



- Basic Needs for Food, Housing, Health and Safety
(Graded D or poor)
- Access to Training, Education, Information and Supports
(Graded C or fair)
- Equality of Opportunity and Status for Women
(Graded C or fair)

The report card indicates that our counties have a great deal of work to do to reach the benchmarks.

3. Recommendations for Action from the Report Card

Action to Treat Women with Respect and Dignity



- Connect women with the services they need and follow through
- Listen in a non judgmental way and provide practical supports
- Work with her as an equal
- Advocate for poverty reduction strategies that work for rural women and communities
- Improve agency knowledge and training on

poverty and gender issues, available community resources, community advocacy and coordination strategies

Action to Meet Basic Needs

- Social assistance rates need to that cover basic needs for housing, nutritious food, healthcare and safety
- Expand the definition of basic needs in rural communities to include eye and dental care, pharmacare, transportation,

telephone, schools expenses for children, opportunities for retirement savings

- Ensure women receive child support payments without jeopardizing their safety
- Address affordable housing shortage in rural communities
- Improve access to social assistance for farm women and self employed women

Action to Improve Access to Information and Supports

- Implement a rural transportation strategy
- More affordable and accessible child care spaces
- Federal, provincial and municipal programs need to work together to support a path out of poverty for women and eliminate system incompatibilities and inconsistencies.

Action to Improve Women's Equality

- Increase minimum wage levels
- Increase supports for women dealing with abuse so they do not become poor because they leave an abusive relationship
- Ensure women who stay home to care for children have adequate pensions
- Implement a gendered approach to rural community economic development strategies to improve economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for women.

The Report Card concluded that there are four key areas for action to address poverty in rural communities:



1. Develop comprehensive poverty reduction strategies based on the premise that poverty is a community issue and not a personal failing.
2. Improve service coordination and collaboration to make better use of existing resources and bridge service gaps.
3. Federal, provincial and municipal policies and programs need to be integrated and focused on poverty reduction and supporting women out of poverty.
4. Poverty reduction strategies need to recognize and accommodate the unique needs of farmwomen, women in rural areas, and Aboriginal women.

4. What we learned about the Value of Report Cards

The Grey, Bruce, Huron, Perth report card on poverty was an extremely successful way to gather facts, comments, and recommendations for action from community service providers, community members, poverty advocates and women living in poverty.



The report card was widely distributed and garnered a great deal of media and community interest. The release of the report card findings was covered in local newspapers, radio and television. There were many invitations from community agencies, faith groups, labour groups, and service clubs for presentations on the findings and action strategies.

The report card provided our communities with current and local information that showed a consensus of opinion between service providers, community members and women living with poverty. It helped to build a shared sense of what poverty in our rural community actually looks like, and revealed some of the serious barriers and hardships that women and families living with

poverty experience. In addition the report card gathered suggestions for community action for each benchmark, and broad recommendations for change. This 'blueprint' for action has been an important resource for community agencies, planning groups such as the Grey Bruce Children's Alliance, and provided information for the province of Ontario's consultation for their Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The report card was presented outside of our community at the ETFO provincial conference in Toronto, and at the United Nations in New York City. There was a high degree of interest at both of these presentations in the findings, the action items and the voices of rural women that were evident in the document.

Additional On Line Resources

- Definitions of Poverty
- Grey, Bruce, Huron, Perth Report Card on Poverty: Poverty, it's not a choice I made (2008)
- Sample survey questionnaire
- Sample focus group guide
- Additional Report Cards for study.



Strategy 3

Celebrating Women - A Rural Community Arts Project

Community Art Projects are ways to create positive change, to teach "outside the frame". They are a way of reaching people and generating emotional and intellectual responses. Community Art Projects are also a way of creating a "participatory culture" which is important especially for people who are marginalized in our communities.

The Celebrating Women Community Arts project began with a seed, a small idea, about wanting to change community attitudes regarding women living with poverty. Attitudes such as: "women on social assistance don't work", "women living in poverty don't try hard" and "poor people don't contribute to the community" make the day to day lives of women and their families even more difficult.

We wanted to create a community arts project to change the attitudes and misconceptions that kept women living with poverty invisible, stigmatized, isolated and shamed. We also



heard women's pleas for more sensitive and considerate support from workers in social services, at food banks and other services on which poor people depend. We created a "Travel Trunk of Poverty"

The Travel Trunk of Poverty

Imagine a big old trunk, the kind that has been on many adventures and can store all kinds of treasures. The trunk is covered in stickers picked up along the way. Instead of telling stories of exotic places, these stickers speak of where one travels when living with poverty. The trunk is open and out of it spill all sorts of interesting items, most of which are tagged with shipping tags.



We see a ripped pair of pants belonging to a child,
with soft, luscious red hearts quilted over the rips.
The shipping tag reads:

My Boy's Jeans

Boy's jeans with rip in the leg.

Makes me feel blessed to have a gifted son

And also inadequate that I never learned to sew or mend.



A dream catcher has car keys caught in it.
The shipping tag reads:

My family's vehicle

We had fun traveling and laughing

with tunes and yet

Another thing to learn to let go.



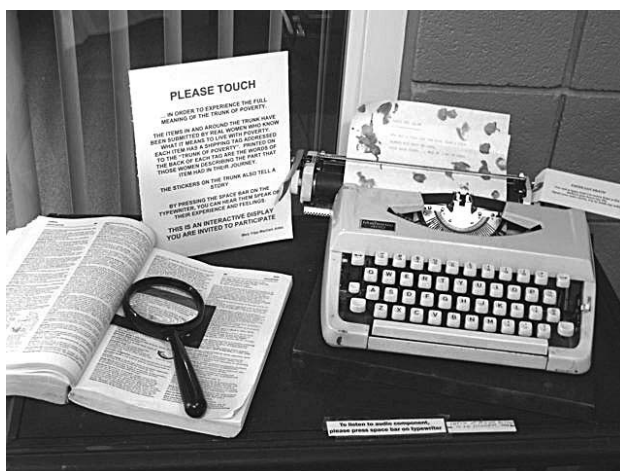
There is a typewriter, with bloodstained files
and papers sticking out and the
sheet of paper in it reads:

Paper Cut Death

I'm not a type and I'm more than a file

Before you bury my life

Open your veins... try to walk my mile.

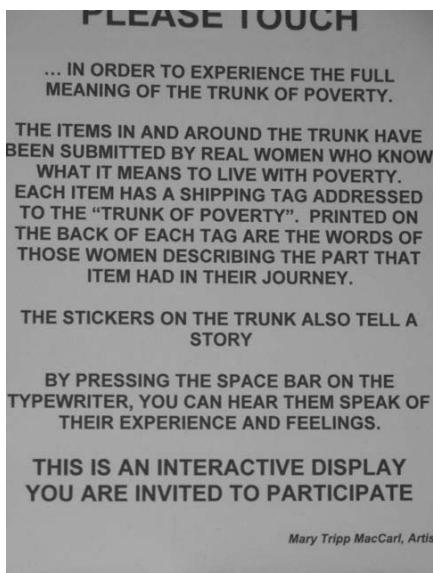


There is a sign encouraging the viewer to press the space bar on the typewriter. When this is done, gentle music and women talking about their experiences is heard from hidden speakers.

This installation requires some time and contemplation. Slowly, stories unfold of isolation, shame, stress, and hunger. There are other stories as well, in this travel trunk. Those stories are about being resourceful, courageous, and resilient. There are stories about developing new skills, intense compassion for others who struggle and learning to find joy in what is really important.

We [people living with poverty] should not all be painted with the same brush. People assume we take advantage of the government and that really hurts because it is so difficult to get help. I had to have nothing before I could get help. To assume we are all drunks, and that we smoke it away, that we go partying and we don't feed our kids... it's very wrong. I wish people would ask me instead of making assumptions. (Trunk Participant)

Creating this trunk has brought rural women living with poverty together. They talked, wrote, imagined, laughed, shared and sometimes shed some tears. They reflected on what puts a person into the "trunk", what has kept her there, what is it like to live with poverty, how does one leave it behind? They asked themselves what they accomplished in their lives in spite of living with poverty. They thought about how they have found meaning in life without material wealth. They shared stories of systems, policies and people that made their lives more difficult. They imagined a more just society where children are not excluded from school trips and women are acknowledged for all the work they do, paid and unpaid.



Creating a Rural Community Arts Project

Getting Started

- Secure funding for the project including project facilitator and artist fees, honorariums for participants, and money for materials, transportation, refreshments, and meals.
- Contract with one or two project facilitators who have a good knowledge of the issue and previous work experience with people struggling with that issue, who are great at relationship building, overseeing a project from beginning to end, know the



community and have an authentic passion for the topic.

- Through reading and discussion, figure out the broad parameters of the project, its goals, target audience, the process of creating the "product", evaluation, involving participants, etc.

Issues to Consider

It is very important to be transparent and communicate clearly through the life of the project. The different sub-groups involved

may include organizers, participants and artists. Although everyone is likely committed to and excited about the overall goal, each sub-group may have different interests.

For example, the organizers may be focused on accountability for the funds, project time-lines and project evaluation. Participants may be focused on figuring out if they can trust the group with their personal stories and how their life experience will be publicly portrayed. The artist(s) may be concerned about their artistic vision and integrity, and creating a work that is effective in communicating complex feelings and ideas.

Consider, Decide & Communicate

- How will we make decisions? Who gets to decide what?
- How can we create safety for the folks who are sharing their personal stories in order to create this project? What will we do about confidentiality?
- How can we make sure the project is accessible for participants?
- Who will own the art work(s) at the end of the project? Who will have copyright?
- Who will receive honorariums? Royalties?
- How will we respond to conflicts that may arise?
- Where will the project be shared publicly? What will be the role of media?

Explore Possible Approaches

In Community Arts work, there are various ways to achieve the goals of the project. The overall aim is to "teach outside the box" by creating an artistic presentation on a topic relevant to the community. The medium can be theatre, film, music, painting, sculpture, installation, poetry or a mix of various media. In addition to deciding on the medium, which influences how and

where it can be shown, decisions need to be made on how this work will get created. Some options to consider:

- Participants will create their own art works with coaching from professional artists through a series of workshops.
- Participants will provide the content, the story, their experiences, feelings and concerns and the artist(s) will use this narrative as the basis for their artistic creation.
- Participants will work collaboratively with artists to create a body of work.

How we came to the idea of the Trunk of Poverty

1. Lots of brainstorming at all levels of the project: the steering committee, the project facilitators and the participants. We wrote down all ideas in response to the questions: How can we celebrate the contributions of women living in poverty? How can we change community attitudes about poor people?
2. Evaluation of all ideas in terms of: Is this achievable within the parameters of the project? Is it attainable given the skills we have within our group? Will this be effective? Does it have the potential to speak powerfully to our community? Does the idea inspire us?
3. The group of participants who met monthly adopted the "Trunk of Poverty" as something they felt had the potential to express their lived experience and reach the intended audience.

Remember to be very clear on ownership and/or copyright issues from the start and give this in writing to all involved!

Finding & Involving Participants

We were able to connect with women living with poverty through the cooperation of various agencies and community groups who work with women and/or poverty issues. It is also possible to run ads, create posters etc. to recruit participants.

One of our challenges was the large, rural geographic area. We wanted women to meet once a month to develop the ideas and begin to create the "Trunk". In order to make that possible, the project facilitators provided rides for several women. Accessibility was also increased by: giving honorariums to all participants, providing food, ensuring all written communication was at a literacy level appropriate for the community, and meeting at a comfortable, private, central location.

Once we gathered a group of about 8 interested women, it was the facilitators' job to create an environment that was safe for women to both share their personal struggles and engage in the creative process.



Creating Safety

1. Develop relationships:
From the moment a participant first calls or emails the facilitator, the focus is on building trust and getting to know one another. Relationship building continues to be a goal throughout the project for all involved.
2. Provide boundaries within the group through guidelines such as: confidentiality, mutual respect, conflict resolution process etc.
3. Be aware of power dynamics: facilitators are invested with more power in the project than participants. However, this can be decreased through shared decision-making, transparent process, and efforts on the part of the facilitators to build rapport with the participants. For example, facilitators need to be conscious of joining with participants and not setting themselves apart from, or above participants. Facilitators can join through how they dress, the language they use, personal disclosure of some of their experiences, choice of food, venue etc. It is important that participants experience the facilitators as allies or advocates, not merely as people who have a job to do.
4. Many people fear they are not creative or talented. Dispel myths around art, art making and talent and help participants to free up their intuitive, creative, expressive selves. This can be done through a variety of workshops that help non-artists to begin to overcome their inner critics and fears of public exposure.



We have room in the arts for all levels of accomplishment. It is the authentic passion for the art form that is essential...
- Janet Brown

5. Provide support: do not underestimate the depth of emotion and memory that can open up when participants begin to share, express and create. Throughout the project, create an atmosphere that acknowledges emotions and encourages people to engage in self-care. Make sure participants have opportunities to debrief and can talk to the facilitator privately if needed.
6. Time: this process cannot be rushed. It takes time to build relationships, develop trust, learn to express creatively and develop the art piece. If you rush, you run the danger of re-victimizing or oppressing the participants. We all agree this would constitute a failure of the project, regardless of the product achieved.

Involving Professional Artists

Professional Artists are trained and skilled in "speaking" effectively through their medium. They are invaluable in helping to create an effective Community Arts piece. Without them, a project is in danger of lacking the finesse required to be taken seriously. This is not to say that the product needs to be "high art" worthy of galleries or the professional stage. However, we have found that a professional artist can help move a project forward and increase its power and effectiveness immensely.

Remember to clarify and communicate effectively with the artist(s) about:

- Their role in the project
- Who will "own" the piece(s)
- How the artistic creation will be used

- How the artist will be credited
- Financial compensation

I invite you to look beyond the words and the items displayed and see the real people and the real situations women have lived with and may still be living with or may be facing in the future... and recognize the bravery of their struggle.
(Mary Tripp MacCarl from the Artist Statement.
Travel Trunk of Poverty)

It is crucial to find artists from your community who can relate personally to the topic or at least have a deep understanding/sympathy for the participants' situation. It is also important that the artist has the relationship skills needed to work effectively with the participants. For example, if you have decided that the participants and artists will work together to create the work, you will need to be assured that the artist is able to let go of some of her artistic visions if they do not fit for the participants.

Putting Things Together with the Travel Trunk of Poverty

1. The project facilitators recruited and oriented a group of 8 participants.
2. Monthly meetings were held in a local church during which good group process was followed and women felt increasingly more comfortable with each other and the facilitators. The realities of living with poverty were explored in depth as well as creative ideas for the project. Each meeting included lunch.
3. A creative writing workshop was held with the women to help them access their creative voice. A local woman writer who was familiar with women's struggles taught the workshop. She had excellent skills in creating the safety necessary for women to express their feelings. The purpose

of the workshop was not necessarily to create material that could be used with the "Trunk", although some of it ended up there.

4. The women continued to meet with the facilitators and explored the kinds of items, images, phrases that could be used to communicate their accomplishments in spite of poverty and their struggles because of poverty.
5. After several meetings and the creative writing workshop, a local artist who works with found materials was given the materials gathered for the trunk as well as the ideas generated. She worked on the piece to generate a coherent whole. Women endorsed the artist to take the "raw" materials, writings and ideas and use them to create the "Trunk of Poverty".
6. One of the facilitators interviewed several women and created an auditory component of the installation: the voices of women talking about their experiences of poverty.

Community Networking

One of the goals of a Community Art project is to interface with the community, or segments of the community, in order to communicate and help generate positive change. Thinking about our audience was an important part of the process initially. The importance of teachers being sensitized to child poverty was raised many times. Also, the desire to influence community leaders and social service staff came up regularly. Lastly, women wished to reach out to other families living with poverty to help break the silence and isolation.



The media are very important in spreading the word. Even if someone does not see your art project, a good newspaper story can convey many important aspects of your project. Especially in rural areas, it is not difficult to get the newspapers or the radio stations to take an interest. A community art project is particularly interesting if there are opportunities for media to speak with participants.

If you have an installation or something physical (as opposed to a performance piece), you may want to consider the following:



- How much space do you need?
- Does it need to be in a secure place? Does it need an interpreter?
- Is the work vulnerable to vandalism? Theft? Accidental damage?
- Is it appropriate for children?
- Do you have or need insurance for the work?

When you approach possible venues or host locations, it is helpful to have a one-page write-up that describes your project and addresses some of the questions above. When thinking about places to display or perform your work, think about the audience you wish to influence. Also consider places where one may not normally encounter art such as: at a conference, in a mall, at a parade, at city hall, etc. Be creative as you figure all this out and especially ask your participants for their ideas!!

Travels with the Travel Trunk of Poverty

1. Once the Trunk was assembled complete with items women had donated, poems, stickers and a 13-minute audio piece that could be activated through the typewriter space bar, many possible venues were approached.

2. The Trunk was on display at the Goderich Library, the Ontario Elementary Teachers Federation Conference in Toronto, the Owen Sound Library and the Bruce County Municipal Building. Each time it "opened" somewhere, it was an opportunity to invite media, hold a celebration and especially honour the participants.

My wish or dream is that we could all see each other through a different lens, one that values everyone and takes the time to hear, to really hear, the voices of the forgotten, the overlooked and even those that talk softly, gently and quietly or do not speak at all. That to me is the beginning of change.
(Barb, Trunk Participant)

Challenges

One of the challenges we encountered was that our participants had trouble attending consistently or at all. If a woman had an opportunity to work an extra shift, a sick child or felt too tired or stressed to go out, then she would miss the monthly meeting. We found we had to be creative and flexible to make it possible for women to participate. Some of the strategies we used were: reminder calls, follow up calls, facilitate women giving each other rides, sending out notes about the project by email or snail mail, encouraging women to contribute their ideas, stories and items even if they could not attend the meetings.

Another challenge for us was the large geographic area in which we were working. This was difficult when bringing women together both for meetings and for the openings in different places. The result was that women did not meet one another as often as they would have liked. It also meant that the artist did not meet many of the women and hear their feedback to the finished piece.



Evaluation

Your evaluation measures if you met your outcome goals. In order to know what to evaluate, you need to identify at the beginning of the project what you hope to achieve, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Some outcomes are easier to measure than others. For example, if you intend to involve 10 participants in the creation of your Community Arts project, then a simple count tells you if you achieved that goal. On the other hand, if one goal is to change community attitudes, a more complex tool is needed to evaluate that.

Some of the ways a Community Arts project can be evaluated

Quantitatively:

- Number of participants
- Number of showings
- Number of locations
- Number of viewers
- Length of time project is shown
- Number of media interviews, articles

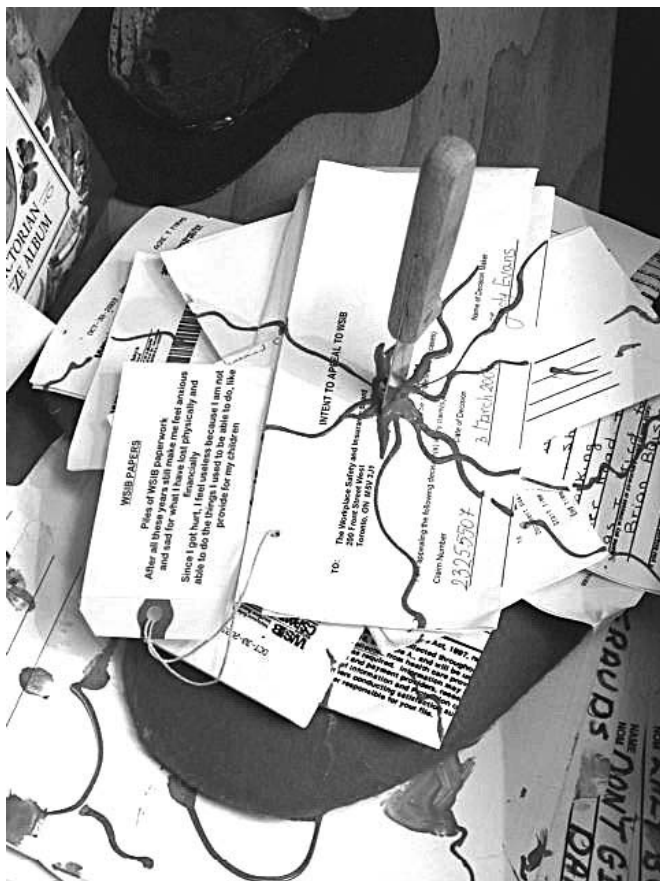
Qualitatively:

- Satisfaction of participants: accessibility, safety, impact of project on participant's life, learning, support etc.
- Impact of project on viewers: what was learned, realized, shift in attitude.
- Impact on community at large: change in attitude, change in practices, policies?
- Process analysis of project: did we achieve our goals and work within the values of the project? How could we have improved?

For further reference: www.communityarts.net

Additional On Line Resources

- Photos of the Travel Trunk of Poverty
- Sample Media Release



Strategy 4

Engaging Municipal Decision Makers

Poverty in rural communities is increasing and is a powerful contributor to the overall decline of rural and remote communities throughout Canada. The 2008 federal senate report *Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty* noted “the seemingly unstoppable trend of rural decline and poverty that so often is its cause and consequence”.³

Poverty has a multilayered effect on the life of a community... When one person lives in poverty it has implications for all of us.
(Report Card 2008)



Rural poverty has a devastating impact on women, their children and their rural communities. The current cycle of rural decline and poverty hits women and their

families particularly hard. Equal access to employment opportunities, training and upgrading, affordable childcare, health and social services, and decent wages are huge challenges to the economic self sufficiency of women, even when times are good. When rural communities decline, the precarious balancing act that women are caught in is tipped. Women are more likely to be plunged into poverty when community supports and opportunities are eroded or disappear. The result is downward spiral for women and their families, as they become

more vulnerable to deep poverty, and increased decline in rural communities.

How can local governments and communities interrupt and change current patterns of poverty and rural decline? What changes are needed in rural communities to protect and support women and their families from situational and deep poverty? How can individuals, community groups, municipalities, and County Councils work together to take action on rural poverty?

‘Local government is the level of government closest to the citizens. Therefore, it is in the best position both to involve women in the making of decisions concerning their living conditions and to make use of their knowledge and capacities in the promotion of sustainable development.’
(IULA Declaration on Women in Local Government)

This section presents some of the findings from an action research project completed by Rural Women Making Change at the University of Guelph and the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee from January 2008 until June 2009 (There is more information about this partnership in Section Five).

It reports on what we learned from interviews with municipal politicians and staff about where they think poverty fits in the municipal landscape. It looks at the critical role that municipal and county government, politicians and staff can play in addressing poverty in our rural communities. It provides information and tools for women, advocates, and community



groups to engage municipal government to change the picture of rural poverty.

Findings from our Research with Municipal Politicians & Staff

- Municipal politicians may be unaware of the specific and damaging impact of poverty on women and their families and the subsequent cost to rural communities.
- They may not know where poverty issues fit in the municipal agenda or what municipalities can do about it.
- They may not have the connections or relationships they need to have with community groups and poverty advocates that would provide them with information and community support to take action in their rural communities.
- They may fail to take leadership on an issue that is complex and multi-faceted, and they may be reluctant to consider women and their unique needs as different from men.

Municipal and county governments, like their provincial and federal counterparts, are dominated by men (currently only 21% of municipal councillors in Canada are female). It can be difficult for women to find a voice in local government, or to get their issues on the municipal planning and action table. Local government in rural communities tends to focus on traditional



'male' domains such as infrastructure (roads, water and sewers) and economic development that favours traditional 'male' jobs (manufacturing, construction, industry). Although local governments are involved in the delivery of 'soft services' like public health, social assistance, childcare, recreation, and affordable housing, these services may not have a high profile. Provincial and federal governments have off-loaded many of the costs for community services to municipalities, without adequate or secure funding, creating additional pressures and frustration for local governments or funding may be cut to keep local taxes in check.

"Traditionally municipalities did not get involved with 'soft services'.
We do sewers, roads and snowplows"
(municipal councillor)

Women and children are more dependent on 'soft services' and suffer when there are cutbacks or when services are lost. They are also the dominant gender employed in these services, and can become unemployed when there are municipal cutbacks.

The Need for Municipal Leadership

Municipal and county politicians and councils are closest to the people, easiest for citizens to access, and directly responsible for the quality of life in rural communities. Municipal and County Councils have a critical leadership role to play to make rural communities good places to live for women and their families, regardless of their economic status. They have a leadership role to play in order to dispel myths about poverty, to plan for poverty reduction in partnership with provincial, federal and private sectors, and to ensure community services are adequate,

respectful and helpful for women and their families. Local government and rural communities are more effective and richer when they address poverty and work with women, community groups and service providers to stop the current cycle of poverty and rural decline.

"Women make up half the population and should not be forced to live in poverty simply because they are women. Currently and historically, our society is set up to ensure that women do not have access to money and assets. Pay equity, access to loans and lines of credit, for example would make it possible for women to have and maintain a standard of living that most women can only dream of today. (Report Card 2008)

Where poverty issues fit in municipal government

Here is a list of programs and services that may be provided by municipal or county government that are important for women and families dealing with poverty:

- Ontario Works and employment supports for OW recipients
- Municipal Housing and subsidies
- Long Term Care Homes and subsidies
- Libraries
- Museums
- Ambulance Services
- Childcare Services and subsidies
- Municipal Recreation Programs and Facilities
- Municipal Transportation services (public transportation, transportation supports)

- Donation of land for affordable housing
- Waiving of fees for social projects
- Donation of municipal staff time for social projects
- Economic development planning
- Social Planning
- Other

What municipal councillors told us about where poverty fits in the municipal landscape?

- A majority of municipal councillors from small rural communities said that they do not see poverty, or poverty reduction as a municipal issue.



- Councillors said they don't know very much about poverty and how it affects women. Some had knowledge about specific people, but lacked an overview of how big the problem is, and the impact on the community.

"Poverty is not in our jurisdiction"
(municipal councillor)

- Several said that there is no direct role in poverty reduction for municipal government or councillors. It is a County, Provincial, Federal responsibility.
- Municipal councillors said they pass along any complaints or issues brought to them by people living in poverty to social services staff.

- Decisions about poverty issues are made at the County Council, which oversees social services (Ontario Works, Daycare, Long Term Care, Affordable Housing). These programs are often influenced by decisions made by provincial and federal funding partners.
- Municipalities send representatives to County Council, who then sit on a County committee. Poverty issues would generally be dealt with by the Social Services Committee, which makes recommendations to County Council. If the municipality does not have a member sitting on the social services committee they have little input and may not receive direct information.
- Social Services in some Counties are at the bottom of interest and importance in County decision-making.

"We do not have a handle on poverty in our municipality. Services are divided, the needs are divided, and issues are divided by topic. I can't even say how many people in our municipality are on welfare, live in subsidized housing, get subsidized daycare, or even how many CMHC units are in our municipality."
(municipal councillor)



- Some County governments do not have any formal structures, such as Social Planning Councils, to look at the bigger picture of poverty in their communities, or to engage the public in consultation.
- Poverty issues come to the municipal table when there is a councillor who is interested in them, and when the community brings these issues to the attention of the municipality.
- Some Counties and municipalities are more progressive around social issues than others, depending on the engagement of the politicians and staff and the amount of public pressure.
- Some municipalities get involved in poverty issues to help individuals in the community. Some examples are: the municipality donates land to Habitat for Humanity to support affordable housing, the municipality debentures the cost of new water and sewer charges for low income families so they don't lose their homes.

Strategies to Engage Municipal Governments in Poverty Issues

Our interviews and discussions with municipal councillors and staff provided some suggested strategies to engage municipal governments in poverty issues:

- Provide councillors with more information and raise awareness about the realities of poverty and the need for municipal poverty reduction strategies.
- Work to change attitudes so 'soft services' have an equal place with 'hard services', and poverty reduction is considered as part of economic development at the municipal and county tables.
- Recruit and elect more women and supportive men who will champion poverty issues on council.

- Communicate effectively with municipal politicians who sit on County Council to get poverty issues recognized and heard at the County level.
- Develop strategic community campaigns to bring local poverty issues and initiatives to the attention of municipal and County policy makers.
- Increase informal and formal partnerships and collaboration between municipal and County politicians and councils and community groups to develop and implement local poverty initiatives.
- Build community support to address local poverty issues and mobilize municipal, County and community members who will work together to educate and influence Provincial and Federal policy makers and funders about the reality of rural poverty.

Changing Attitudes About Women & Poverty

Municipal politicians and staff may need information and education on the real picture of poverty, and may need to embrace more inclusive and informed attitudes before they will be open to addressing poverty issues. The following chart sets out some of the common myths about rural women and poverty that we encountered in this project. It is important to address these myths if municipal councillors and/or staff articulate them, by providing information about the realities for women in rural communities that you see on the right side. You may have more detailed local information to add to this chart.



| Myths | Realities |
|---|---|
| People are poor because they don't want to work. | Over half of women living in poverty are working at low wage jobs or part-time. Women on social assistance want to work. |
| Women are poor because they would rather live on welfare with their children than work. | Women in our study did not want to be on welfare. The Ontario Works system makes it difficult for women to get off the system. |
| Social assistance is generous and meets basic needs for women and families. | Social assistance rates do not cover the cost of housing, food, or health care for women or children. |
| Women have the same opportunities in rural communities as men. | Women are less likely to qualify for EI and more likely to be employed in low wage jobs. They said "the good jobs are reserved for men". |
| Women make less money than men because they choose to work in low paid or part time jobs, or they chose to stay home and care for their children. | Women earn less money than men because wages for women's work are much lower. Women have higher education levels but still make less money than men. Women may be forced to stay home because they cannot access quality, affordable daycare. |
| Poverty is gender neutral and the impact is the same on women/girls as for men/boys. | Women are usually the primary caretakers for children and have responsibilities for their care. Men are more flexible and have access to higher paying work. |
| Homelessness is not a problem in rural communities. | Homelessness is a hidden issue in rural communities. Women and their children live with friends or relatives, they 'couch surf', the live in substandard housing, or they leave their rural communities. |
| Women who are stuck in poverty are simply not trying hard enough to get a job. | Women face barriers to employment that are real: no childcare, no transportation, low wages, lack of access to education and skills training, disabilities, health issues. |

| Myths | Realities |
|---|--|
| Poverty is an individual failure (because people make bad choices), not a community issue. | Most women in our study were poor because of an event that they had little control over (loss of employment, partner's loss of employment, illness, disability, abuse, death of wage earning partner, divorce or separation). |
| If government provides too much support to the poor it makes them more dependent and less likely to go out get a job. | Cutbacks to services and lack of access to information and services make it more difficult to get out of poverty. Low social assistance rates cause extreme hardship for women and children, and make them more dependent and less able to move forward. |
| There are community services and supports that ensure women and their children do not experience hunger, homelessness or poor health. | There are large gaps in services and women and children are experiencing hunger, homelessness and poor health because of their poverty. |

How do Municipalities Work?

The Municipal Act (2003) sets out how municipalities can operate. Councils are small groups of individuals with big responsibilities. Their staff is paid by your tax dollars, and is there to inform and assist residents. Not all municipal governments will operate through e-government, but most will have a website and important information online about who does

what, committees, and how to contact the clerk.



There are some myths and misconceptions in the public about what municipal government can and can't do. We've created the chart below to set out some myths and realities about municipal government:

| Myths about municipal government | Realities |
|--|--|
| Municipal Councils are powerless to deal with issues of importance. | Municipalities have been off-loaded responsibilities from federal and provincial governments and have control over delivery of many services, and over plans and policies that guide local development. |
| Councils are all powerful and make the decisions on everything local. | Local government actions are constrained by federal and provincial policies, laws and procedures. Councils have the power to act like a corporation, form partnerships and enter into agreements. |
| Local politicians are not interested in hearing from ordinary citizens. | Anyone can appear at council. The city clerk puts your name on the agenda to speak about an item already on the agenda or make a presentation on an issue. |
| Councils make decisions in the back room and the decision is made before they get to the public meeting. | Working with staff and councilors in preparation for public meetings is good practice. In some areas, the pre-public meeting is public. By law, Councils have to give fair hearing to those who get on the agenda for the public meeting. An informative delegation or presentation at council can make a difference to decisions. |

A few elected officials do it all.



Council doesn't do it all. Staff is active in interpreting federal, provincial and municipal laws, policies and regulations, and in advising councilors on options, budgets, implementations and so on.

We have created three maps to help individuals and community groups understand:

- how municipalities do their work;
- how to bring information forward to your local government;
- how to bring proposals to council;
- how councils make decisions; and
- where county councils and municipalities fit within the context of federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions.

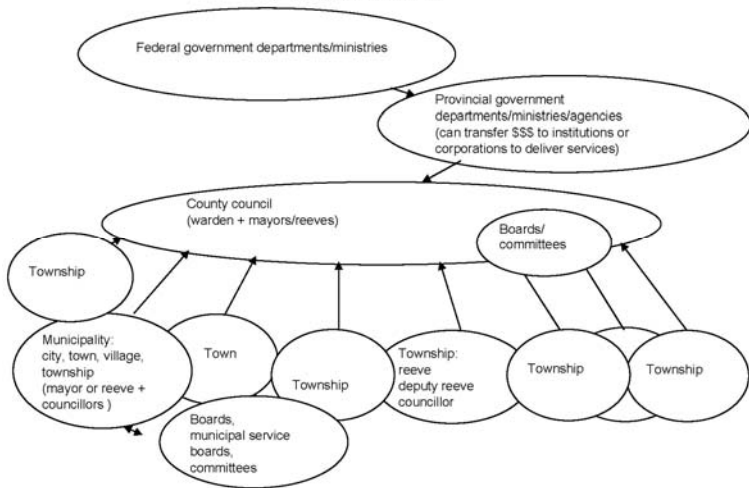
Map 1: The “big picture - Local Government in context

Municipalities in Ontario used to be called simply “creatures of the Province” to mean that they didn’t have much power. Recently, two federal frameworks – the 2000 Voluntary Sector Initiative and the 2004 New Deal for Cities and Communities – gave federal departments the responsibility for programs to ‘build’ communities (e.g. the Social Development Partnership Program of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC)) and ‘empower’ municipalities (e.g. Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the Municipal Rural Fund and the Green Municipal Fund (administered by Federation of Canadian Municipalities)).

The big picture is the context for how things work locally. Within this context, county-municipal relations and the division of tasks is important.



1. Municipal-county relations



1. Municipalities organize their operations differently. County structure and processes also vary.
2. In the North, districts are administered by the province through area and service boards.
3. Many responsibilities of municipalities and a county are joint, for example, economic development and growth management. Increasingly, service delivery is through partnerships.

The above maps simply the basic form of municipal-county organization and relations. maps simplify the basic form of municipal-county organization and relations.

A rural councillor describes the municipal-county decision relation this way: "[Our] by-laws don't necessarily get held up at county. Some things we can do [by] municipal amendments. [County approval] is more like a rubber stamp process when the municipal process is well documented and there's a decision made. County can block some of the stuff we do and does. County will send back lots of decisions. And other times they'll tell us "Defer," but we want to get things going because we have the players at the table. It is democratic and it gets done. It doesn't go to the back burner as long as we have the vibrancy of this council."

Map 1 presents a basic picture of municipal-county organization and relations. Local governments organize their operations differently and can vary greatly across a province. Municipal positions and committees may have different names and will reflect the priorities of the local governments. It is important to find out from your municipal clerk or website:

- 'who does what' in your community.
- who sits on what committee
- what the committee's mandate is (What can they actually do? Do they have a short-term goal or plan?)

Generally, mayors, deputy mayors, reeves and occasionally a councillor will represent the village, township or city on county council. In some jurisdictions, such as northern Ontario, service boards and committees do the work councils do in other regions.

Maps 2 & 3: The 'nuts and bolts' - Internal Workings of Municipal Decision Making

Maps 2 and 3 set out a different layer of the picture of how municipalities do their work. This layer is the 'nuts and bolts' of municipal decision-making and where residents can have a say in what happens locally. Map 2 tracks a simplified outline of the process by which different proposals come to council for public consideration and decision. Map 3 focuses on the council meeting and the documents that councillors use there.

The decision making process is made up of people's activities with texts (documents) such as the agenda, the package, and various items on the agenda with specific wordings of resolutions in them – that are produced for council:

- To discuss,
- To respond to, and
- To act on.

Keep in mind the big picture. It will include specific current federal and provincial priorities and programs that influence, shape or restrict how councils make decisions.

Map 2 – A process for getting poverty issues on the municipal agenda

Engaging your local government around poverty issues means getting their attention by providing good information.

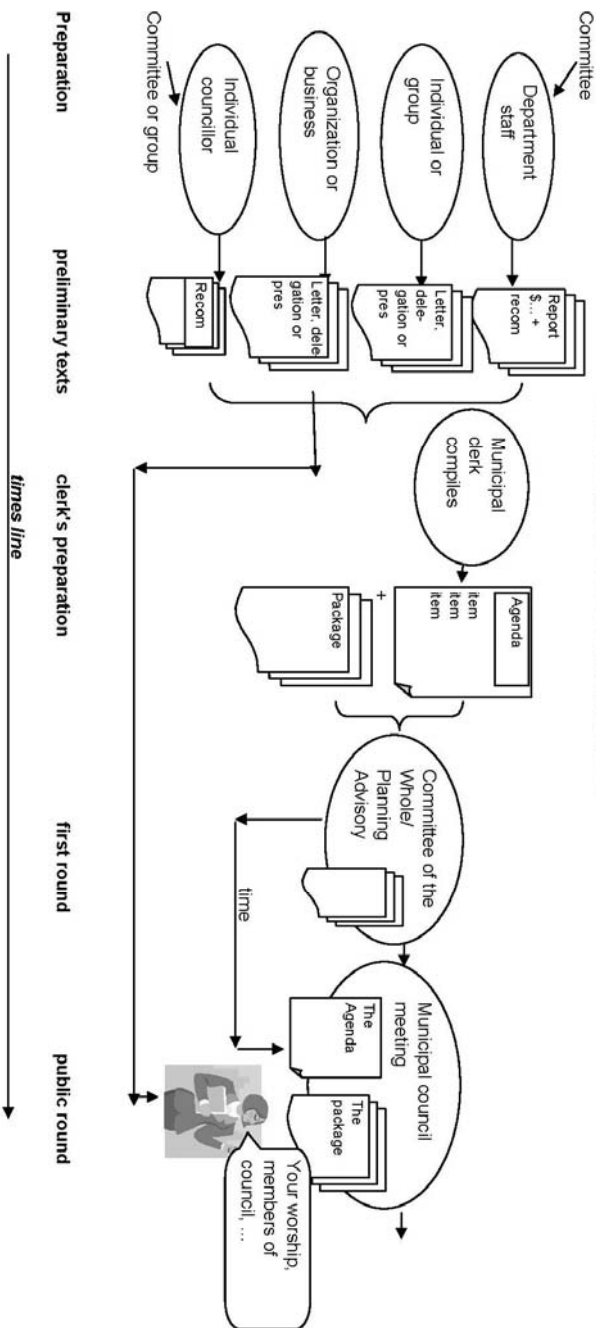
When a municipal department or committee advises council on a policy or action, it prepares a report that goes before them. The report will have background information, options for action, including projected costs based on consultation with relevant staff, and clear recommendations for action – a preferred option. This kind of report orients to the task of council in making a decision. The format is familiar to councilors and thus efficient. This is the kind of report to aim for when you want to present to council.

The preliminary texts (map 2) are those sent ahead of the meeting. They may be considered by individual councilors or at a pre-council meeting (committee of the whole) where discussion takes place. The municipal clerk's prepares the package, compiles letters, memoranda, reports and so on for the package that councilors will have in hand at the meeting and on which they will base their discussion and decisions. The first round of consideration by council can be a public meeting or not.

Media may or may not be invited. The public round – the council meeting – is required by law. How it proceeds is governed by provincial rules of order and fair hearing.



2. How Proposals come to municipal councils



The above is a basic outline of the process by which different proposals come to council for decision there.

Put yourself in the picture as an individual or representative of a group or organization with a concern or issue.

Map 3: How councils make decisions and what happens in council meetings

Map 3 tracks how councils make decisions and what happens in the council meeting. It highlights:

- the agenda,
- the package,
- council's options,
- what happens at the meeting, and
- what happens after the meeting.

Effective participation from individuals and groups comes to council in the form of a presentation, delegation and request. Council gives residents, groups and items on the agenda 'fair hearing' in the public setting.

"Under the law, councils exist and have authority only when their members convene as bodies to do business." (Communities and Local Government Working Together, A resource manual. The Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition. 2003)

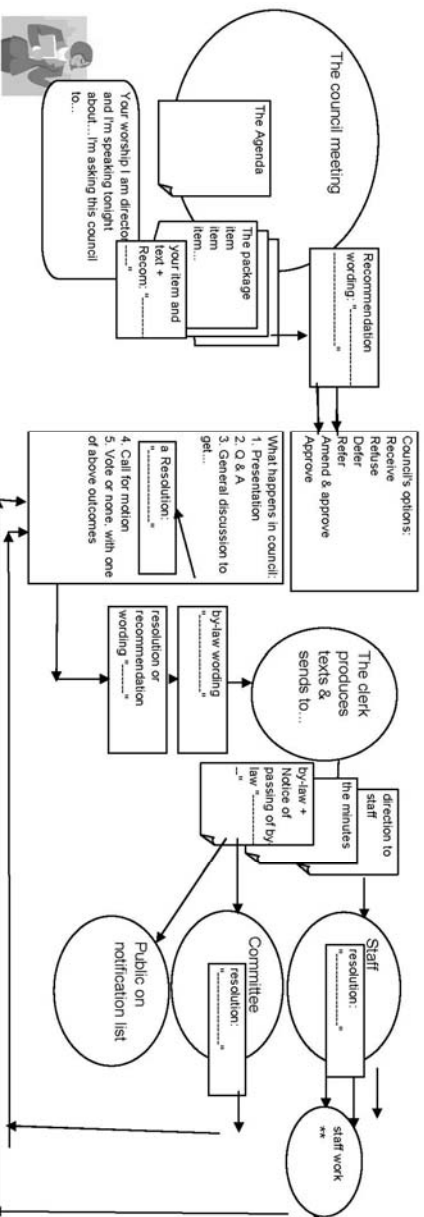
Council can only act as a council by:

- having in front of them at the meeting a clearly worded motion that authorizes them to do something,
- discussing the motion, and then,
- by voting to approve, refuse, amend and approve a motion.

Council may also:

- defer making a decision and/or
- refer a matter to a committee or for staff input.

Council's actions are formalized as the passing of a by-law or a resolution. Council may pass by-laws (numbered) in a batch at the end of a meeting.



Map 3. How councils make decisions

The presentation, delegation and request

“Under the law, councils exist and have authority only when their members convene as bodies to do business.”
 From: Communities and Local Government, Working Together, A resource manual, The Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition.

“What staff can do depends on the direction from council, resources, budget, regulatory jurisdictions, and their networks and knowledge of the policy area including at the provincial level. Organizations who build working relationships with staff and provide them with relevant information are most likely to see follow up actions and success in meeting policy and program goals.”

May, 2003

What happens after the public meeting?

The ongoing staff administrative work is crucial to how policies and decisions can affect people locally and be successful or not.

What staff can do depends on:

- the direction from council,
- resources,
- budget,
- regulatory jurisdictions, and
- staff networks and knowledge of the policy area, including the provincial and federal levels.

Organizations that build working relationships with staff and provide them with relevant information are most likely to see follow up actions and success in meeting policy and program goals.

Prior to appearing in council, you'd want to know:

- Does the municipality have the staff resources to carry out the task?
- What resources does staff have?
- What kinds of relations with other governments are operating?

When you or your group knows about staff resources and other issues that impact on your request (for example involvement by provincial government, etc.) you can include in a proposal specific kinds of municipal action – such as asking council to also designate specific staff or resources to the project you are proposing.

It is important to remember:

You work from understanding how your municipality works to the public council meeting.

Working with Local Government - Representing Your Organization to Council

Many organizations and groups think governments need to change their policies. Success at making change depends on working with your local government to improve what they do.



Local governments increasingly work with private businesses, other levels of government and non-profit groups to develop strategies, deal with issues and deliver programs and services.

To work with local governments you need to 'get on their radar' as a viable group and potential partner.

You can go to council any time, describe what your group contributes to the community, give facts about current community issues, offer information and make a request. To be effective, it helps to understand how municipal governments work, tailor your presentation to what councils do and need to know, and to understand the language and work of government.

Your organization should provide a short handout for councillors to the town clerk and be able to do the following when going to council:

1. Describe your organization and its importance to the community.

Council members may be interested in the main services you offer, the number of clients you serve, the number of years you've operated, changes you are seeing, number of staff or volunteers, and so on.

2. State what you are bringing to the table.

What is your mission? How is your organization set up to deal with issues? How many staff members does your organization have? What is their expertise?

3. State what skills you can deliver and evidence that you have them.

What are your stories of proven success? Statistics to support success stories would help. How has your organization benefited the community?

4. State your 'core competencies' .

What is different about your organization from previous or similar organizations? How does your organization ensure success? What are your strengths?

5. State how this issue affects the community.

What statistics do you have to support your position? Local governments need information to work with.

6. State why local government should invest in or work with your organization.

What does your organization accomplish? What indicators demonstrate that the issue can be addressed and to do so is for the community's well being?

7. State specifically what you want council to do tonight/now.

Show that you know how council can act, and what actions are going on.

Working with Local Government - Taking an Issue to Council

Local governments are constrained by policies at other levels of government, by policy procedures and mandates. Creating local solutions means working together, especially in tough economic times. Before taking your issues to council, know who you're talking to and be able to provide the appropriate background to

your issue. It may seem that advocates are outside government work. Partnerships can ensure the effective delivery of appropriate services and good policy decisions. Local governments often rely on well-informed groups to identify priority problems in the community and recommend strategies for addressing them. Local governments are made up of people of varying experience and interests, and councils change every four years. Organizations and groups can bring practical and expert knowledge to councils on issues that need to be addressed.

Engage your local government before & during policy processes to ensure that their policy decisions reflect the interests and needs of those who are affected by them.

1. Learn the structure of your local government – township, two-tier county or region, etc.

Get information from the local municipal clerk or website.

Does your issue fall within the county or municipal domain?

What committees does the county or municipality have?

Does the issue fall under the domain of one of these committees?

Present to the right people – a presentation at the wrong level or branch of government can put you on the wrong track and not successfully raise the profile of the issue.

2. Clearly state what the issue is, and what you know about it

How does the issue affect the people in the community/county?

How prevalent is the issue in the community i.e. what groups are affected?

Is this a recent issue? What policies, programs, legislation are involved and how?

Statistical information would provide helpful support.

3. Clearly state why local government should be interested in the issue.

What is the community or specific group's need?

What has been done historically to address the issue – local or provincial or other?

How would council's present action benefit the community?

4. State how addressing the issue will alleviate other challenges local government faces.

Why should local government be involved? How does this problem pose a serious threat to the community? What do you expect from local government?

5. Clearly state the options you see to resolving the issues.

State your preferred option and the time, expertise and resource commitment your group offers. Clearly propose a course of action and a specific request.



Working with Local Government - Constraints and Opportunities

We found examples of constraints and opportunities in our research and discussions with municipal politicians and staff. The opportunities show that partnerships with municipal governments can provide effective supports and responses for women and families living with poverty.

| Constraints | Opportunities |
|--|--|
| Political will to make municipal services and support available in the community. Too few municipal politicians work for change and poverty reduction. | One stop model: providing municipal social services, and community based services (Ontario Works, employment services, training) in one central location, with transportation support available. |
| Poor levels of information about services, poor understanding of poverty issues, and poor media relationship | Social services work closely with media to get information out about services, supports and poverty issues. |
| Turf and personality issues that stand in the way of coordination and collaboration between municipalities/counties. | Innovative partnerships between counties and community services to deliver provincially funded programs such as Early Years that work for rural communities. |
| Changes in federal and/or provincial policies that leave municipalities without the funds they need for programs and services. | Municipal collaboration with federal and provincial funders, and community organizations to deliver co-funded services. |
| Planning issues, opposition within council, or from the community, that prevent innovative approaches. | Municipal partnerships with community organizations to create needed affordable housing. |
| Lack of coordination between municipality and community creates barriers. | Providing free space for a food bank, or space sharing with community groups. |

2 Case Studies of Work with Municipalities

1. Municipal Partnership with “Friends of the Community”

A faith-based group commenced anti-poverty activities in the community such as starting a food bank, and was quite well organized by the time they approached the municipal council with their idea for a youth homeless shelter. They came to a council meeting prepared with existing reports prepared by the United Way, which revealed poverty-related issues including lack of shelter for youth, as well as with their own publications describing the group's current projects and long-term goals. The group aimed to purchase a house to convert to a youth shelter and needed a zoning change to locate this service in a residential area. Councillors and staff had little direct knowledge of the issues facing youth, and the legislation and standards associated with working with minors, but they accepted assurances from the group that the shelter would be “monitored and mentored”. Municipal council then delegated the associated county planning department staff to prepare the necessary documents and furthered the initiative by listening and responding to the concerns of community members and, within their ability, ensuring that the proposed shelter met the standards required by the laws and policies that govern such ventures. The shelter is now operating, and the group has plans to start a group home for girls and young women (12-18) with mental health issues.

The main reason that the municipal council facilitated this process was the presence of a strong advocate on the council itself. In addition, the project was deemed worth supporting because of evidence presented that revealed that youth who needed shelter had to travel to the city to find it. A link was made to youth out-migration as a result of this evidence. Finally, the group prepared the necessary

information and was able to demonstrate previous success in the community. In essence, both preparation and credibility were key to the success of this initiative.

2. Municipal Partnership with a Private Developer

A private developer contacted a council member with respect to his desire to purchase a building on the main street of a small, rural community. His stated interest was preserving the historical streetscape and financing some of the necessary renovations by developing rental units. The developer planned to lease the retail portion of the building to the Salvation Army for their Thrift Store thereby filling one of the empty retail buildings on the main section of the street). Council addressed some of the developer's concerns (such as unclaimed property adjacent to the building that was required to meet parking standards) while, in turn, the developer addressed the need for affordable housing by renovating the second story apartments. It is important to note that while these units were deemed 'affordable', they are not rent-geared-to-income units, which would more readily address poverty issues faced in rural communities. However, this municipal council directed its associated staff, including their designated planner, to work toward the fruition of this project because of the overall benefit to the community.

This partnership was furthered with the municipality by a "Habitat for Humanity" project that was being proposed concurrently. Habitat has extensive experience negotiating with municipalities, and it is clear that the initiative undertaken by a private developer benefited from the information provided to council by Habitat about the housing issues in this rural community. It is also clear that prior knowledge of poverty issues with respect to housing (a municipal responsibility) played a crucial role in this partnership.

Additional On Line Resources

- Tool for Mapping Municipal Decision Making (Prepared by Dr. Susan Turner)
- Sample Community Presentation to Council
- Sample Brief to Council
- Annotated Bibliography of references and resources, Rural Municipalities and Gender Analysis (prepared for the Rural Women Making Change Municipal Project by Kristie O'Neill)



Strategy 5

Partnerships

In this toolkit the four preceding strategies involved short or longer-term partnerships between organizations, individuals, and community groups. These partnerships enriched the work in many ways – bringing new ideas forward, building new relationships between people and groups, pulling together expertise and funding to defray costs, mobilizing the community in new ways, and expanding the scope and possibilities for the work.

This final section of the toolkit provides some general information on different types of partnerships, a framework for partnership work, and steps to build partnerships. It presents three short case studies that describe specific partnership work and outcomes that came about over the past three years of the project.

We are indebted to the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Rural Women Making Change (University of Guelph), and the Grey Bruce Peace and Justice Coalition for the energy, ideas, and resources they contributed to address poverty issues in our local communities, and for their support of this toolkit.

Types of Partnerships⁵

There are many ways that people, groups, organizations and communities can work together in partnership. It can be helpful to see these different ways of working as a broad continuum from informal to formal.

All of the different ways of working together have value, and often groups use more than one way of working to accomplish their shared goals. At the heart of all partnerships, whether

formal or informal, are relationships between diverse, and usually quite passionate people. Relationships are strengthened when there is transparency and clarity about expectations, responsibilities and decision-making. It is helpful when the members of the partnership understand the kind of partnership work that they are involved in, and can acknowledge the work that is being done at one place on the continuum, or in different ways across the continuum.

The Partnership Continuum:

- **Informal Partnerships:** Networking, shared events, celebrations, lobby and advocacy activities, providing feedback, participation, mentoring, needs identification
- **Formal Partnerships:** Joint projects, Community Development, Community Planning, Formal Committees, Coalitions, Protocols, Policy Development, Research
- **Legal Partnerships:** Service Agreements, Governance (Boards), Contracts, Memorandums of Understanding, Funding Partnerships, Legislated Agreements



Key Elements for Partnership Work⁶

Agreement on Purpose, Values, Principles and Structure for the Partnership

Partners need to discuss and find mutual agreement on:

- The purpose and objectives of the partnership
- Central values to support the partnership
- Principles to guide the work

Agreement on the Ground Rules & Structure for the Partnership

There are many ways to work together in partnership. It is important that the structures and rules that support the partnership are clearly articulated and agreed upon:

- Type of partnership (informal or formal)
- Ground rules for carrying out the work
- Committee structure and lines of authority
- Limitations
- Membership and representation
- Communication process
- Decision-making process



Agreement on the Goals & Objectives for the Work

Partners need to clearly define the nature of the work they undertake together, as well as their respective roles and responsibilities, and agree on the:

- Description of the work or project
- Roles and responsibilities of partners
- Process for carrying out the work
- Time frame and work plan
- Standards for work
- Outcomes and evaluation

Commitment to Collaborative & Respectful Work Together

Partners bring different perspectives, needs and priorities to the table. Successful partnerships require a commitment to:

- Inclusive processes
- Collaborative approaches to decision making
- Full discussion and respectful debate
- Focus on issues and common ground, not people and differences
- Skilful conflict resolution
- Focus on building common ground and finding win-win solutions
- Zero tolerance for racism, sexism

Resources to Support the Partnership & Carry Out the Work

Successful partnerships are only possible when they have the resources they need to accomplish the work.

Resources required are:

- Support from leadership for the partnership and the work
- Adequate funding resources for the work
- The right people and skill sets for the tasks
- Fair distribution of resources
- Dedicated project staff
- Time to attend meetings and fair distribution of work



Steps to Build Partnerships⁷

Step 1: Identify common understandings and ground rules for working together

- The process is open, clear and inclusive
- Recognition of research (community-based knowledge and academic)
- Activities, materials and forms of communication are accessible
- Accountability

Step 2: Laying the Groundwork

- Roles and responsibilities
- Address power imbalances

Step 3: Identify and Access Information and Resource Needs

- Appropriate resources are in place for full participation by all parties
- Partners prepare their own departments, community or research group
- Linkages are made with other groups/sectors needed to support the work

Step 4: Build Strategies and Work Plans

- Ensure standards are in place
- Possibilities and constraints are considered
- Strategies are researched and developed
- Allies identified

Step 5: Put Strategies and Processes into Action

- System of shared decision making is put in place
- Community input

- Communication and network strategies for keeping sectors well informed

Step 6: Evaluate Joint Processes and Outcomes

- Jointly designed evaluation on process and outcomes is conducted
- Evaluation results are shared and monitored
- Documentation of action, work planned, agreements, etc.

Three Partnership Case Studies

Case Study -

Poverty & Municipal Governments

In the fall of 2007 Rural Women Making Change, a think tank based at the University of Guelph), and the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty project formed a partnership to research where the issue of poverty fits in the municipal landscape.

Rural Women Making Change is a five-year program funded federally by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Dr. Susan Turner, RWMC Coordinator, and Kristie O'Neill, a Guelph graduate were involved in a larger study that looked at municipal decision making and wished to focus on municipal decision making in regards to poverty issues. Rural Women Take Action on Poverty, represented by Colleen Purdon and Pam Hanington, wanted to learn how rural citizens could engage municipal politicians and governments in poverty issues as part of the Counting Women In project.

The two groups met and developed a framework for their partnership that met the research and project needs for each partner. The central shared question for the partners was: What can rural municipalities do about poverty?

The information gathering process explored:

- How do municipal governments work (who makes decisions, areas of responsibility, communication, structure and processes)
- What is possible for municipal governments to do about poverty (constraints and possibilities) and what are they already doing?
- What are the processes to engage/access municipal government (best practices, effective advocacy, building relationships) in order to address poverty issues?

In 2008 the partners developed: a research plan and key questions, interview guides, a bibliography, conducted and transcribed interviews, reviewed the data and developed findings. Data was collected through:

- Interviews and meetings with municipal councillors and mayors in Bruce, Oxford and Huron, municipal and county staff in Bruce, Oxford and Huron and staff from women's organizations in Oxford and Huron
- Reports and tool kits on municipal government, poverty issues and poverty reduction plans
- Consultation with women living with poverty and concerned citizens living in Grey, Bruce, Huron and Perth who attended the Women's Gathering in June 2007
- Input from women living with poverty, community service providers and concerned citizens living in the counties of Grey,



Bruce, Huron and Perth who participated in the Report Card on Poverty 2008

- A review of relevant literature.

In 2009 the partners developed findings and a preliminary report for the Counting Women In Toolkit, and looked at next steps.

Accomplishments

- In October 2008 Rural Women Making Change was invited to present at the United Nations to an international audience to mark the International Day of Rural Women (October 15th) and to help launch the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Rural Women Making Change and Rural Women Take Action on Poverty presented at the UN and brought international attention to gender equality and economic issues facing Canadian women in rural communities, as well as the plight of migrant women working in Ontario.
- The partners developed the strategies and tools in the Counting Women In Toolkit and accompanying web based resource kit.
- (University of Guelph) and The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) provided funding that allowed Rural Women Take Action on Poverty to complete its municipal research and assistance with the printing costs for the Toolkit.
- Rural Women Take Action on Poverty participated in the annual meeting of Rural Women Making Change and presented on findings from the research.
- Pam Hanington and Colleen Purdon joined RWMC as community researchers.
- Completion of a report on Engaging Municipal Decision Makers in Rural Poverty Issues.

For more information about the work of Rural Women Making Change and to receive their e-newsletter check their website: www.rwmc.uoguelph.ca

Case Study - Poverty & Public Education

In the spring of 2007 the Rural Women Take Action on Poverty Committee began a two-year partnership with the Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario (ETFO). It began with an invitation from ETFO to present a workshop on poverty issues in schools for the Regional ETFO/Bluewater conference called "Honouring Differences with an Understanding Heart". Francesca Dobbyn, RWTAP member and Executive Director of the Bruce Grey United Way and Colleen Purdon, RWTACP coordinator developed a hands-on workshop for educators, but there was insufficient registration and the workshop was cancelled. This was a disappointment for the partners, but did point out the need for increased awareness on poverty issues for rural schools. ETFO was embarking on a comprehensive provincial project on Education and Poverty and Jim Giles, ETFO project coordinator, saw opportunities for work together and made them happen:

- RWTAP participated in an educational DVD for the teachers of Ontario. The DVD had focused on poverty issues for urban, immigrant, and Aboriginal, and the disabled communities. The partnership with RWTAP was an opportunity to include issues facing rural communities and women's poverty. The film crew travelled to Owen Sound and area and interviewed Francesca Dobbyn who told her personal story of poverty, and Colleen Purdon who spoke about the findings from our research and dialogue with women. The



DVD, called “One in Six” and a study guide was distributed to all elementary schools in Ontario, and RWTAP was invited to the DVD launch at the NFB and took part in a panel presentation.

- ETFO was impressed with the concept of the How We Count Handbook produced by RWTAP. The Handbook pulled together key information for women and providers about poverty related services and supports in the four counties. ETFO used this concept and produced large posters for each school district in Ontario with local poverty information. These posters went to every school within each of the regions and are a resource for students, their parents, school staff and anyone visiting the school.
- ETFO provided funding for selected schools to design and implement their own “poverty project”. They asked the RWTAP coordinator to collaborate on the development of a Facilitator’s Guide for school administrators and ETFO staff to support the development of their school poverty projects. We were able to use the learning from the RWTAP “Women’s Gathering” and information from the Report Card on Poverty to inform this work.
- The culmination of the ETFO poverty project was a provincial conference focusing on Education and Poverty in November 2008. Schools showcased their projects and RWTAP was invited to present as part of the keynote panel presentation. In addition, the Travel Trunk of Poverty arts project was displayed for the two days of the conference, and the Report Card on poverty was distributed to conference participants.
- In December 2008 the ETFO publication VOICE featured an article by RWTAP coordinator Colleen Purdon and local teacher Marsha McLean called “The Hidden Poverty of Rural Ontario” that provided information on how rural poverty impacts on women, children, schools and communities.

The partnership between ETFO and Rural Women Take Action on Poverty effectively included the experiences and voices of rural women and children in a provincial project aimed at educators. It allowed for increased awareness about rural poverty issues, as well as a broader distribution of research and innovations from the RWTAP project. The partners benefited from sharing expertise and from the energy and enthusiasm that the partnership created, and educators in Ontario benefited from new information and resources that included the perspective of women in rural communities.

Case Study - Community Planning Forums on Poverty

Rural Women Take Action on Poverty partnered with the Grey Bruce Coalition for Peace and Justice, with the support of many community organizations and networks, to organize Community Planning Forums on Poverty in November 2008 and February 2009. The Grey Bruce Coalition for Peace and Justice was founded in 2005 and keeps interested people informed of local Peace and Justice issues in the Grey and Bruce region. They have an email list with over 250 people, provide speakers and organize gatherings. The coalition shows movies and provides film and magazine resources on peace and justice at the local library.

In the fall of 2008 the Coalition contacted RWTAP and offered to help organize a Community Forum on Poverty. The Coalition prepared a poster and press release, rented the library auditorium, and provided refreshments.

RWTAP and Coalition members organized a community panel presentation with local poverty advocates. RWTAP coordinator



Colleen Purdon facilitated small and large group discussions on Strategies and Action to address poverty issues. Eighty people attended the Community Forum. The Coalition circulated information from the Forum to all participants and sent out notes on action, strategies and next steps to the 250 people on their email list. There were five key themes and critical issues identified at the first community forum: Change Attitudes, Plan and Take Action, Connect and Coordinate, Provide Better Supports and More Money, Evaluate Success and Make Change.

Participants requested a follow up Community Forum. The Coalition and RWTAP organized the location, circulated posters and information, prepared a media release, and held a World Café in February 2009. Over sixty people attended the Second Community Forum on Poverty. They identified and developed action plans for six priority action issues: Affordable Housing, Transportation and Access Issues, Action to Address Systemic Issues, Hunger and Food, Networking and Communication, Collective Voice for Advocacy and Lobby.

In June 2009 the first meeting of an Affordable Housing Coalition took place with a broad range of county, municipal, agency and community stakeholders. This group will work on a plan for more affordable housing in Grey and Bruce Counties.

Accomplishments:

- The partnership between RWTAP and the Coalition was focused on “gathering community”. It successfully provided practical supports, facilitation, and a communication network that supported the identification of community needs, planning, and broad community supported agreement on priorities for action.
- The two Community Forums on Poverty successfully engaged a broad range of stakeholders in discussion and planning on poverty. The participants included: people living with poverty, not for profit groups, advocacy groups, municipal politicians,

private citizens with an interest in poverty, educators, and students from local high schools.

- The Grey Bruce Coalition on Peace and Justice played an invaluable role in linking and connecting people in the community around the issue of poverty. The RWTAP was able to offer information from the Report Card on Poverty, as well as facilitation based on the successes of the Women's Gathering and World Café model. Other partnering organizations such as the Bruce Grey United Way, the Grey Bruce Legal Clinic SHARE and community agencies and groups supported the Poverty Forums by attending and helping out with next steps.
- There was extensive media coverage by the local newspaper at both Community Forums, which raised awareness about poverty issues and the way in which our rural community can respond and act.
- The Community Forums resulted in the formation of an Affordable Housing working group for Grey & Bruce counties.

Additional On Line Resources

- Poster for the Community Forum on Poverty
- World Café Outline for the Community Forum on Poverty
- Report and Action Items

References

Haberman, M. (1995). Star Teachers of Children in Poverty. West Lafayette, IN: Kappa Delta Pi. In Flessa, J.J., Poverty and Education: Towards Effective Action – A Review of Literature. Prepared for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Appendix

Appendix One: Where to Find Counting Women In On Line Resources

The online resources that are a companion to this Toolkit can be accessed at the following websites:

www.unitedwaybrucegrey.com

www.endabusenow.ca

The Counting Women In Toolkit and online resources can be downloaded at the above sites. Please credit Rural Women Take Action on Poverty when you use these materials.

Footnotes

1. For more information about the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy see "Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy at www.growingstronger.ca
2. Brown, J with Isaacs, D. The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations that Matter. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005.
3. Ibid (p. 122)
4. Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty Final Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, June 2008 Page 1.
5. Federation of Canadian Municipalities www.fcm.ca
6. Purdon, Colleen, Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Decision Making: Strategies for More Inclusive Communities – A Resource Kit, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2004. www.fcm.ca
7. Ibid (p. 41-42)
8. Ibid (p. 42-43)