

# VIBRANT SURREY

## GENDER AND POVERTY PROJECT

By: Louise Hara with Colleen Reid

*A project of*

*Vibrant*  
COMMUNITIES

*Funded by*



Status of Women  
Canada

Condition féminine  
Canada

January 2004

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the vision and guiding force of Vibrant Communities and Eric Leviten-Reid of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy or the funding support of Status of Women Canada. We must also acknowledge the community volunteers who so courageously told their stories, as well as the community service workers who contributed their time, energy and expertise. In particular, we owe a debt of gratitude to Susan Keeping whose strength of vision kept this project going, even when the barriers seemed insurmountable. We must also thank United Way of the Lower Mainland for administering the contract, Newton Advocacy Group Society for providing a base of operations and Louise Hara for coordinating the activities of the working group and recording it all.

Sponsors and partners of Vibrant Surrey include:



For more information on Vibrant Surrey, please contact:

Louise Hara  
Coordinator, Vibrant Surrey  
C/O #309-1999 Suffolk Ave.  
Port Coquitlam, B.C. V3B 7X7  
Tel: 604-942-5150  
Fax: 604-942-5155  
Email: [louisehara@shaw.ca](mailto:louisehara@shaw.ca)

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# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Our Experience

Vibrant Surrey, a convening committee of Vibrant Communities, a pan-Canadian learning initiative on community-based poverty reduction, was invited by the initiative's sponsors to join in a national effort to gain a deeper understanding of poverty through gender analysis. Members of the convening committee participated in teleconferences where the proposal to do a gendered analysis of poverty on a local and a national basis was discussed with Eric Leviten-Reid of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. This proposal was developed in partnership with Tamarack - An Institute for Community Engagement. Both of these groups, with the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, are sponsors of Vibrant Communities.

A recommendation to commit two members to the project was accepted by the Vibrant Surrey convening committee in June 2003. Newton Advocacy Group Society, a local advocacy organization providing support with poverty law issues and women's empowerment programs partnered with Surrey Social Futures, a social planning and community development organization, to attend the national Gender and Poverty initiative meeting in Guelph in September 2003. These two groups would also act as leads to the working group coordinating the local Gender and Poverty project.

Several aspects of participating in this project appealed to the Vibrant Communities Surrey Steering Committee:

- Involvement in the development of current, gender specific data on poverty.
- Building contacts and sharing resources with groups and individuals nationally, community-to-community and locally.
- Experiencing collaboration and communication with diverse groups and accessing tools to facilitate that process.
- Learning about and appreciating the value of tools that apply a gender lens in community work as well as data collection.
- Learning more about gaps, community responses and community development processes.

## Makeup of the working group

A working group to guide the work of the local project was created. The Vibrant Surrey leads held three information meetings to determine community interest for the project. Open invitations were extended to individuals living on low incomes, community service providers and Vibrant Surrey members. A presentation about the meeting and the project was made at a local interagency meeting and emails went out to local groups inviting those interested to attend.

As interest built and participation grew, participants were asked to make a commitment to the project by becoming members of the working group. At this point the working group consisted of a variety of community service providers and citizens that included: four individuals living on low incomes, two being recipients of disability benefits and the other two self-identifying as working poor, as well as the high risk pregnancy task force coordinator, a contractor researching the sectoral impact of reduction in women's employment programs, an employment counsellor delivering programs to men with barriers to employment, representatives of two women's centres providing services to women living in poverty and experiencing abuse, a counsellor from a multicultural services organization and the director of a local shelter for homeless women. The Vibrant Surrey leads acted as liaisons for the working group, the convening committee, the national project coordinator and the other communities participating in this project.

The working group was responsible for:

- Establishing the goals and objectives of the local project
- Clarifying the terms of reference
- Determining how the project budget would be spent
- Hiring a coordinator/researcher, and working with that individual to ensure the research and the community workshop were completed as planned
- Supervising the production of the project report, by reviewing the material as it was written.

All but two of the working group members also attended the community workshop and assisted the facilitator throughout that day.

## What we learned

### ***i. Face-to-Face meeting, Guelph, Ontario (September 2003)***

The face-to-face meeting provided an opportunity to meet project coordinators, sponsors and people from other communities who had participated in earlier conference calls, hear what other communities were doing, and learn from their challenges and specific poverty issues. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify roles and expectations as well as to gain a deeper understanding of the project elements and objectives. The meeting also provided an opportunity to learn new skills.

The most outstanding thing at this meeting was the experience and completion of 'The Wall' as a community process tool, then to be able to assist in the presentation of this very visual tool to the Vibrant Communities Face-to-Face Forum on September 23.

- Susan Keeping, Newton  
Advocacy Group Society

## **ii. Local Research**

A review of local poverty related initiatives and statistics as well as a collection of data through focus groups and interviews was undertaken to inform the participants of the community workshop. A more complete analysis of both can be found on pages 10 to 14.

The review illustrated how rarely gender analysis is used in quantitative or qualitative research. This is likely due to the need to compare data over long periods of time and the need for consistent data collection, making it difficult to introduce new research methods. However some efforts at gender analysis have been made, mostly for projects focused on women.

<b>Surrey at a glance</b>	
Population	375,000
Growth in visible minority population	26%
Visible minorities as percentage of total population	36.7%
Aboriginal population	6,900

In general, the review indicated that Surrey, with a population of more than 375,000, is a dynamic community growing at a phenomenal rate. Some of that growth is in the visible minority community, which has expanded by 26% over four years to comprise 36.7% of the whole population.

Little is known, however, about the economic profile of immigrant and visible minority residents of Surrey. While the Aboriginal community is relatively small, at approximately 6,900 people, its average income is higher than for the Aboriginal population of B.C. in general. On the other hand, people over the age of 25 in the Aboriginal population are even less likely to finish high school than the total population in Surrey.

Surrey provides an example of what is commonly described as the growing divide between the haves and the have-nots. Despite enjoying a slightly higher average income than is true for the province, Surrey also has a higher number of people living under the Low Income Cut-Off line. Those working on poverty reduction in the area say this is reflected in the striking differences in levels of affluence from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Whalley is described as having all the issues that older inner city neighbourhoods like the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver struggle with, while Ocean Park is home to some of the most affluent people in the Lower Mainland.

Other highlights indicating gaps in Surrey include:

- Homelessness is described as 'reaching crisis proportions'
- There are too few services for the hungry and the homeless in general
- Only 10 beds are reserved for homeless women and their children
- Most substance abuse recovery services are male focused
- The most likely to be street involved are young aboriginal women.

### ***iii. Focus Groups and Interviews***

In the focus groups and interviews, we heard a great deal about the impacts that unemployment and government fiscal restraint policy are having on men and women. Their experiences closely paralleled those of the community workshop participants and put faces to the statistics detailing rising homelessness, widening gaps in the delivery of health care services and erosion of social services that would have traditionally filled the gap.

We learned that women were more vulnerable to changes to the social safety net and jobs because in their traditional role as caregivers they were more likely to be underemployed or dependent on the state. They were also more likely to internalize the loss of support, regarding it as personal, which manifested as severe health issues and led to further isolation and deterioration. Men identified themselves as workers and providers and saw themselves as part of the larger economic picture. Their experiences told them they were disposable: wages were lowered to subsistence levels, jobs reclassified from permanent, full time to casual, and pride of workmanship and longevity were no longer valued. They felt powerless to do anything and identified with other men who might turn to violence or substance abuse to cope.

Deep concerns regarding the imminent possibility of homelessness for most of those being forced off the system, coupled with the sense that no one cared, painted a bleak picture. However, all research participants said they felt valued as a result of being included in the project and several expressed a desire to “do more.” As a result, half went on to attend the community workshop.

### ***iv. Local Gender and Poverty Project Workshop***

This exercise in building a model of the local economy through the eyes of those living in poverty taught us that having a collective voice and adjusting power imbalances are critical in building community. We gave people experiencing poverty “permission” to speak up, by inviting them to share their experiences and making it financially possible



for them to do so. They acknowledged and felt empowered by the process. People showed a great deal of courage in sharing the difficulties they face on a daily basis, but it also seemed cathartic as the majority wanted to follow up with some kind of action. However, we have subsequently begun to lose momentum. There was no time in the workshop to identify next steps to any great degree. We are sending out a note of gratitude to all workshop participants, indicating

that we want to follow up, but we need a plan to continue involvement with all the people living on low income we have engaged in this project.

**v. *Materials and resources***

Consensus was that The Wall is a great tool for community development. Watching Catherine Lang facilitate helped us to understand how critical the facilitator's role is in establishing trust and leveling the power dynamics. Catherine was very skilled at using a number of tools throughout the day to engage the group. Anyone who attended the workshop could now potentially do The Wall in the community. All participants will receive a summary and they can build on it in whatever way they can.

**vi. *Local process/structure and the national working group***

Initially when we started to talk to people about the gender and poverty project it was clear that the lack of written information both at the national and local level led to confusion and contributed to the slow start up of the working group. Each community was encouraged to take the flexible parameters of the national project and translate it into a vision for their local group. While this created an opportunity for diverse approaches that could be responsive to individual community needs and cultures, it would also take more time for each community to define itself within the project, create a vision and proceed with a plan of action. Strong, committed leadership was needed from the outset in order to define a project that the community could support because the timelines for the project were so short.

Though it was unacknowledged, the lead agency also represented and held power as "The Funder" so it was understandable that the communities were conditioned to wait for specific direction. The Vibrant Surrey lead to the working group strongly feels that the ability of this project to even get off the ground was primarily due to the chair of the convening committee who had the ability to identify this need for leadership and vision and who targeted a member of the committee to take the lead. A second Vibrant Surrey member was designated to the project as support. The first lead took the initiative in developing the goals of the project with the working group, although she struggled somewhat in trying to understand the national process and its self-directed nature. As a community service provider working under closely monitored and narrowly defined government funded contracts, it was difficult to shift gears and work in a collaborative style.

Once a vision was established, it was possible to get commitment from Vibrant Surrey members and send the two leads to the meeting in Guelph. The first lead created a simple timeline and project action plan to help orient potential working group members and facilitate further commitment. By late September, a project intended to stretch over eight or nine months now had two and a half months to be completed.

Specific groups and individuals were targeted for an invitation to join in order to ensure representation of all the dimensions of the target group: men and women living in poverty. Invitations were sent through organizations serving both women and men such as: shelter providers, pre-employment programs, abuse survivor counsellors, Aboriginal cultural societies and multicultural services.

We were challenged to access individuals living on low incomes such as income assistance recipients and the working poor. Understanding the potential for a power imbalance, we ensured that invitations were posted with a variety of service providers. Some participation came from the pool of volunteers working in local agencies. This brought more learning, as they were invited not only as unpaid co-workers but also as representatives of those living in poverty. Individual time was spent with these working group members to support and empower them to enter into the process and stay with it.

Another barrier presented itself during introductions: those who had no agency affiliations sometimes wondered if they belonged in the group. This engendered an open discussion on power imbalances and the importance of a diversity of experience. As a result of this experience it was decided that none of the paid service providers attending the workshop would include their agency affiliation when introducing themselves. Everyone would simply have a nametag with their first name only and was encouraged to share their diverse experiences through each workshop topic. Having a diverse membership in the working group became one of the assets of the project as it provided connections to the focus group participants and existing research documents, and, more importantly, expertise to engage participants living on low incomes in the workshop planning itself.

Once the working group was established and a coordinator was hired the project gained momentum and community interest. An important part of this project's successful outcome was the skill and continuity that the paid coordinator/researcher position brought to it. Without this the group may not have been able to maintain itself long enough to follow the action plan and make timely decisions.

It was clear at the initial information meetings that language around gender was highly charged. When information focused on women's issues or words such as "feminism" or "women focused" were used over the first four meetings, it seemed to split the group and continued to be a concern for a couple of individuals. While no one disputed the fact that more women than men are poor, the fear was that this project would set out to blame men or belittle their experience of poverty. It was clear to the first lead and the coordinator that using clear and defined language was important and assurances were required that any research undertaken would truly be for the purposes of gaining new information, not to prove a theory. It was emphasized that information would be gathered in a variety of ways, i.e., focus groups, interviews, research review, working group discussions and most importantly, the community workshop. The discussion became so heated that one participant declared that she did not want this project to become a "Feminist, NDP, bra burning one!"

Although a great deal of effort was required to keep the group together, this discussion on language proved to be a turning point. It was recognized that the terms in question were “red flags” that polarized the group and that we needed to stay focused on the goals of the project. We also determined that it was important for us to redefine the goals and objectives for the workshop as follows:

- a) Should result in a practical and user friendly ongoing tool for use by the community and Vibrant Surrey;
- b) Not to be perceived as one thing (i.e., feminist) or another so results are actually heard for what they are (but should be woman centered);
- c) Important to continue to say why gender analysis is critical to poverty reduction, and this tool should help us do that;
- d) Look at gender differences in how poverty is experienced and what barriers each gender has to moving out of poverty;
- e) Possible outcome: anyone attending could potentially then do “The Wall” in the community;
- f) Everyone attending will receive a summary and can build on it in whatever way they can;
- g) Identify where our community can continue to engage: action plan and next steps.

This solution was not without its casualties: we lost one member to this situation, but she was able to continue her participation in other ways that felt more comfortable for her. What was interesting were the differences in beliefs and values, and how they came into conflict even though we were all working and focused on reducing poverty. Language and intent affected our ability to feel safe in contributing to a group process no matter how professional and powerful we felt in other areas. We did try very hard to find male participants for the working group but were unsuccessful, possibly due to lack of connections. We did ensure representation through organizations or programs that were male focused.

A second challenge to the group’s ability to share power equally came as a result of the suggestion that some of our budget be put towards equalizing the balance for participants living on low incomes. Those that were working poor and on income assistance felt the least empowered and had a hard time maintaining their involvement. It was felt by some that support was needed to equalize the perception of power in the room and underscore the importance of community representatives’ experience in the process. This once more precipitated a conflict of beliefs and values. There was a fear expressed that paying volunteers was not promoting volunteerism or that paying ‘token amounts’ to individuals living on low incomes to participate might set a precedent that could be a liability to some Vibrant Surrey member agencies. Those with power voiced their belief strongly while those who would benefit remained silent. The local lead and the coordinator once more had to rely on past experience, community examples and mediation skills to navigate the impasse. In the end, most favored the establishment of a “participant expense” to reimburse individuals living on low incomes for the cost of participating in the working group, research or community workshop.

As consensus could not be reached, support from the Vibrant Surrey convening committee was sought. It was felt that this would legitimize the group process and allow the group to go forward. Again this was a turning point in the dynamics of the working group and if not handled carefully might have resulted in its disbanding. We did lose three of the initial members but the remaining eight were able to build trust and come together to implement the actions of the project. The workshop was a great success and all the remaining working group members participated and supported the workshop by facilitating the breakout groups.

“I am no different from the hooker on the corner. All I want is love, acceptance and to be safe.”  
– Magdalen, interviewee

During the writing of this report, a commonality of experience among those participants who lived on low income became evident. In the working group, the focus groups, the interviews and the workshop these participants all described in various ways their sense of not being valued, using terms such as feeling invisible, unheard, and disposable. The opportunity and the support provided to voice that, and to expose the untenable position they have been placed into by the cuts to jobs and the social safety net, allowed them somehow to reclaim their humanity. This was not a goal of the project, but it certainly is one of its greatest outcomes.

### ***vii. Integration of the gender lens***

Promoting the value of using a gender lens is an important step towards a deeper understanding of the local experience. Gaining that knowledge is necessary in order to engage the community more readily in the work of Vibrant Surrey. To that end, this report and a visual representation of “The Wall” will be presented to the Vibrant Surrey convening committee and at other community tables. These can be valuable tools for developing funding proposals and new program models. They can also help to illustrate the gaps in current research as well as begin to diffuse the tension and suspicion created by women-centered language.

### ***viii. Partnerships and future collaborations***

The members of the working group feel they have all made new connections and are working together in a different way. Some believe that a trust relationship was developed and that it will grow from here. Vibrant Surrey will stay connected to the project participants by providing them with a copy of the report to the national project and inviting them to a meeting to learn of the pan-Canadian project results to which they contributed. It is also hoped that funding can be found for a follow-up meeting in March or April 2004 in order to engage workshop participants once more and channel this new energy into action.

## **What we would do differently**

Participants and working group members made several suggestions in this area:

- Clarify the goals earlier
- Allow more time for the local project
- Do the community workshop in two or even three stages to allow for planning and implementing community strategies (next steps)
- Undertake a similar project to deepen understanding of other dimensions of poverty as experienced by people with disabilities, visible minorities, immigrants, etc.
- Do group purchases of statistical data and have a process for working collaboratively on the poverty matrix
- Develop gendered dimensions for the matrix
- Allow a bigger budget to accommodate requirements.

# LOCAL RESEARCH

The national Gender and Poverty project guidelines called for a review of local research to share with the community workshop participants what was already known about poverty and its gendered dimensions in Surrey. The project also called for local examples of changes to employment and social services. Because the local project got a late start, there was very little time to do the review. Thus, the review was limited to whatever information could be gathered and analyzed over the three-week period leading up to the workshop. For the purposes of this review, we differentiated between sex and gender. The breakdown of data by sex provides us with numbers of women versus men, but gender analysis asks how this impacts their lives or why the numbers come up as they do.

We found that a limited amount of gender analysis was included in local reporting of poverty, and that very little could be learned of women's experience of poverty, in particular, or that of youth, visible minority or Aboriginal communities in general.

There were 27 reports reviewed, six from community-based projects, and 21 from government at every level. Only eight of these reports consistently included some level of gender reporting, two of these being community-based reports, five from government and one from the United Nations. Six reports had no gender breakdown at all, while the remaining eight had gender analysis content of less than 10% (See Appendix 1).

The majority of these reports drew on census information to some degree or another, but very few of them drew on the gendered census data relevant to their particular area of study.

Even though some reports provided numbers of women versus men, such as the July 1999 Human Resources Centre report titled *Poverty in Surrey, White Rock and North Delta*, only one report went beyond a basic level of analysis of the gendered dimensions of social phenomena. The BC CEDAW report to the United Nations, *British Columbia Moves Backwards on Women's Equality*, described in detail the erosion of the social safety net and its impact on women's lives, particularly in regard to human rights. There was no related research to be found on men's experience.

Studies on homelessness reported more closely on how men were faring, but not necessarily by choice. Both the GVRD and the Surrey reports on homelessness referred to the difficulty of assessing the incidence and the experience of women's homelessness. These reports relied on the most commonly used method of gauging homelessness, the "24 hour snapshot", to compare data over long periods of time. The snapshot surveys people accessing services deemed more likely to be used by those who are homeless over a 24-hour period. The large number of men in these counts may be due to the preference women have for "couch surfing," that is staying with family or friends or other temporary residence, rather than accessing homeless shelters or other emergency supports.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives published an analysis in June 2003 of the new B.C. welfare policies. Entitled *A Bad Time To be Poor*, the analysis was restricted to research comparing B.C.'s legislation to welfare reform and its outcomes in other jurisdictions. While there was some analysis of the impact on welfare recipients, it was largely gender neutral.

## About Surrey

The City of Surrey, with a population over 347,000, is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. This can be measured both ethno culturally and socio-economically.<sup>1</sup>

For example, Surrey's visible minority population, at 36.7% of the whole population,<sup>2</sup> has increased by an astounding 26 percent in four years.<sup>3</sup> As well, in 2001 more than 131,000 Surrey residents disclosed having a language other than English as a first language and approximately 6,900 people identified as Status Indian or having Aboriginal ancestry lived in the municipality. The largest visible minority population is the South Asian community at 75,680 people. The next largest is the Chinese community, followed by Filipino, Southeast Asian and Korean communities respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Surrey compares well with its neighbours in terms of average household income at \$63,959 but it also has a higher percentage of the population living under the Low Income Cut-Off than is true for the province.<sup>5</sup>

The percentage of lone-parent families in Surrey is on par with the province at 15.5%. 80% of these are female led. Statistics show that these families have more dependants, and a significantly lower income than lone-parent families led by a man. Female-led families, comprising 93% of all lone-parent families on income assistance in Surrey, made up almost one third of the caseload in 1999.<sup>6</sup>

The Surrey Homelessness plan describes homelessness in the area as "reaching crisis proportions" and reports that the "most often cited factors contributing to homelessness are addiction, conflict or family breakdown, eviction, inadequate or no income and ineligibility for government assistance."<sup>7</sup>

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1 Talbot, John, and Associates, October 2003, p. i

2 Statistics Canada, 1996 Census Profile of British Columbia's Census Subdivisions (CSD), Census of Population and Housing, p. 2

3 Statistics Canada, 2001, Community Profiles, Population Statistics for Surrey B.C., p. 3

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3

5 Statistics Canada, Profile of Income of Individuals, etc., 2001 Census.

6 Statistics Canada, 2001, Community Profiles, p. 1 and Surrey Human Resource Centre, October 1999

7 Talbot, p. 6

The increase in the number of households at risk of homelessness in Surrey was assessed at 71.4% between 1991 and 1996.<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that women and immigrants are the two largest sub-groups at-risk of homelessness, and despite the growing diversity of the homeless population itself, most emergency shelter beds target single men living on the street. In fact, there are only 10 shelter beds that can accommodate both women and their children in all of Surrey.<sup>9</sup>

Addiction is named as the primary cause of homelessness, yet there is no detox facility in the area. As well, of the 230 beds for residential treatment and recovery, 81.7% are for men only.<sup>10</sup>

There are two major food banks (Whalley & White Rock) in the region and up to 75 food related programs. The City of Surrey has only one food bank, too far for Newton residents to access reasonably.<sup>11</sup>

In 1996, 12.6% of the Surrey population had an activity limitation or a long-term disability. Women with disabilities living in Surrey have a lower level of education than men in the same category. 56% of families led by a person with a disability live in poverty. The unemployment rate for persons with a disability is 17%.<sup>12</sup>

Research indicates that there is a direct link between education and poverty. A higher proportion of residents are not completing high school or going on to university, compared to Greater Vancouver. As is true for the whole province, more women than men are completing university in Surrey. Women are also more likely to attain a college certificate or diploma. Only 14.8% of men attain a post secondary degree, as compared to 20.8% in the province. Overall, men are more likely to drop out before completing high school, but they also are more likely to get a trades certificate or diploma.<sup>13</sup>

People over 25 in the Aboriginal population are even less likely to finish high school than the total population in Surrey (11.3% compared with 35.8%). As is true for the larger population, more Aboriginal women than men are completing post secondary schooling. However, the most recent census data indicates that the average income level in the Aboriginal population is higher than the Aboriginal provincial average (\$25,570 compared to \$21,403) and that women earn less than men, on average.<sup>14</sup>

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8 *Ibid.*, p. 7

9 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

11 Landucci, Margret, July 2003, pp. 4-5.

12 Surrey Human Resource Centre, 1999.

13 Statistics Canada, 2001, Education Statistics for Surrey, B.C.

14 Statistics Canada, 2001, Aboriginal Population Profile, Population Statistics for Surrey, B.C.

## Some changes to employment and the social safety net

- Big drop in those eligible for Employment Insurance (EI), due to tightening of eligibility requirements:
  - 1990 – 83% were eligible
  - 1998 – 36% were eligible<sup>15</sup>
- Between 1995 and September 2003, welfare rolls in B.C. were reduced by 54.2%, almost 34% of which occurred in the last three years, mainly due to restrictions in eligibility. These restrictions include a three-week waiting period before applications will be reviewed during which proof of job search must be established. There have also been numerous cuts to supports and earnings exemptions, as well as medical and dental benefits and new restrictions on eligibility for disability benefits. A further restriction that limits eligibility to two years in five will come into force in the spring of 2004.<sup>16</sup>
- A partial list of changes to the health care system includes an increase in Medical Services Plan premiums and cuts to services covered by MSP, long term care facility closures, up to 2,000 hospital bed closures and the loss of related jobs for both, restrictions in eligibility for pharmacare programs as well as cuts to eligible services under that plan, long waiting lists for surgery and other therapies and privatization of hospital and laboratory services.<sup>17</sup>
- Cuts to provincial program funding have resulted in the closure of numerous local government offices including: Legal Aid, Native law, Human Resources, Landlord and Tenancy, and Children and Family. Elimination of core funding in the spring of 2004 may also mean closure of over 30 women's centres.<sup>18</sup>
- Changes to the Employment Standards Act include a drop of the legal working age from 15 to 12, a new 'training' rate of \$6.00 per hour for the first 500 hours worked, the reduction of minimum shift requirements from four hours to two and the elimination of the 40 hour standard work week.<sup>19</sup>
- The Dieticians of Canada, B.C. Region, released a report in October 2002 stating that the new social assistance rates in B.C. are not adequate to ensure food security.<sup>20</sup>
- The government of British Columbia repealed the sections of the B.C. Human Rights Code that prohibited paying women less than men for work of equal value

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15 Doerge, Suzanne and Beverley Burke, 2000, p. 87.

16 Ministry of Human Resources, Sept. 2003 and B.C. CEDAW January 2003.

17 B.C. CEDAW January 2003

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 Dieticians of Canada, October 2003.

(commonly know as pay equity). As well, the Human Rights Commission and numerous other avenues of redress in every ministry of the provincial government have been abolished.<sup>21</sup>

- Cuts to programs and funding for childcare services are making it very difficult for women to access affordable, reliable, quality day care services.<sup>22</sup>
- Cuts to public transit are making it very difficult for people without vehicles to get around.<sup>23</sup>
- Increased reliance on food banks, shelters and transition houses is straining already taxed resources.<sup>24</sup>
- A 30% decrease in total Employment Insurance and Income Assistance recipients in the Surrey area between 1993 and 1998 combined with a marked increase in usage of poverty related services led researchers to believe in 1999 that people were already “falling through the cracks.”<sup>25</sup>

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21 B.C. CEDAW

22 Ibid

23 Gender and Poverty Working Group, Nov. 28. 2003.

24 Ibid

25 Labour Market Information Services, July 1999, pp 13-14.

# FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

Following is a summary of results from interviews and focus groups held leading up to the Gender and Poverty community workshop. The purpose of the data collection was to begin to build a picture of how men and women might experience poverty differently. It was expected that the information would be useful to the workshop participants in building a gendered economic model of the City of Surrey, as seen through the eyes of those living in poverty. The information was also to be included in the report to the national Vibrant Communities Gender and Poverty project coordinators and funders.

## Research Methods

### Focus groups:

- One each for men and women
- 1½ hours in length each

### Interviews:

- two
- one by telephone for 1½ hours
- one in writing, 10 pages

### Number and gender of participants:

- Sheena's Place: four women
- Phoenix Employment Services: six men

### Number and Gender of participants:

- two women

One interview was completed by telephone while the other was completed by written communication. Neither woman could participate in the focus groups, but wanted to participate in some way. There were two focus groups, the first was at a homeless women's shelter, the second was at an employment service agency that serves men with barriers to employment. The same five questions were asked in each session, as well as in the interviews:

1. How have recent changes to jobs affected you?
2. How have recent changes to the social safety net affected you? In your home, your community, your job, if you are working?
3. Why do you think that is?
4. Do you think that men and women experience this differently? What made you think this? Can you give me an example?
5. What changes to social services/jobs/community services would help you?

These same questions formed the basis of the community workshop process. The telephone interview was also structured around these questions but the participant responding in writing chose to provide an overview of her life experiences as they related to poverty before answering the questions, hence the length of her response.

## **Confidentiality and Privacy**

Confidentiality and privacy were discussed with focus group and interview participants before every session. Each participant was offered a range of options from retaining total anonymity to being referred to by name. Two participants chose to use pseudonyms. No quote would be used without the participant's permission, and use of a participant's name (or pseudonym) would again be confirmed at the time of inserting quotes in the report. The focus groups were recorded with permission from all participants and transcribed with reference to participant's first names only. Notes were taken during the telephone interview, again with the participant's permission.

### ***i. Analysis***

The findings were analyzed by theme, as well as by difference in response between females and males. While participants were made aware at the time of selection and again at the beginning of their sessions that a comparison of experience by gender was being undertaken, individuals did not generally respond with comparisons to the other gender unless prompted to do so.

### ***ii. Participant expense***

It was decided that focus group and interview participants should be provided with a nominal participant expense to mitigate the loss of income that could have been earned during their session. Transportation and childcare costs were also covered.

### ***iii. About the participants***

The Gender and Poverty working group members identified interview and focus group participants and the sessions themselves were undertaken by the working group coordinator/researcher. Apart from gender, criteria for being in the group were limited to identifying as living or having recently lived "in poverty" and having a willingness to discuss how men and women might experience poverty differently. The definition of poverty was left up to participants. In total, there were six men and six women who participated. They ranged in age from late teens to middle age. Several disclosed moderate to severe health issues. Two women identified as Aboriginal and one as Status Indian. No participant identified as representing a visible minority or as a recent immigrant. A wide range of educational backgrounds was represented, from less than high school to post secondary diplomas and certificates, including trades certification. Two women disclosed having been raised in a household supported through social assistance.

## How people can become invisible

While it is recognized that this is a very small sample from which to draw broad conclusions, it can be very useful in helping us to identify gaps and next steps. Qualitative research can also provide context/findings that are difficult or impossible to capture in statistical analyses. It should be noted that most of the points raised by the participants in the interviews and focus groups also came up in the community workshop.

Betty's story (at right) was striking in its illustration of how building a complete picture of poverty must include personal communications. The only time that Betty's economic struggles would have shown up in statistical reporting was when she was drawing Employment Insurance benefits. The years that she struggled to raise her young children, as well as her periods of illness, are not measured or accounted for since she was not on social assistance or other government benefits. As well, because she was self-employed for long periods, she did not benefit from extended health insurance or a private pension. Betty's story is a common one for women, and illustrates the number of ways that women are left vulnerable to economic marginalization by family breakdown, illness and economic downturn.

### Betty's Story

Betty experienced deep poverty as a child due to her father's long-term illness. With the help of friends, her mother struggled to feed and house her family. Betty went on to educate herself, find employment and start her own family. When her children were still quite young, two events changed her life: her mother became very ill and needed constant care for months before she died, and Betty's marriage broke down as a consequence.

Betty soon found herself struggling to raise a young family on her own. Being very resourceful, she started her own home-based business and was hired by a large corporation for a position that grew to encompass a lot of responsibility.

Too much work and meager resources because of corporate cost cutting led to burn out. Betty left to undertake another job, but the new position ended earlier than anticipated so she applied for Employment Insurance. Through an EI training program she once more started her own business, but shortly became very ill.

As a self-employed person, she no longer qualified for EI, so she was without income for nine months. Betty is now working part-time from her home, but is feeling ready to go back to full-time work if the opportunity arises.

Betty has always been determined to make it on her own, but without the support of family and friends, once she became ill, she is not sure she would have made it this far.

## Research Findings

These research findings are organized according to the questions asked in the interviews and focus groups. The following is a gender analysis; the men's responses and the women's responses are compared and contrasted.

## **Question #1: How have recent changes to jobs affected you?**

Men and women both said they are feeling pressured by changes to jobs and employment services but they described their experience and the impacts of the changes differently.

Both the women and men spoke of fewer job opportunities, lower pay for more work, higher incidence of part-time/casual work, difficulty finding "career jobs" and a quickly eroding support system that no longer "cares." However, women expressed the impact in personal terms such as the detriment to their health, a lower sense of well-being and self-esteem as well as an inability to care for their families. Men saw themselves as part of the larger picture of a changing economy and described the impact in terms of an erosion of their relationship with the employer as well as their value to the community.

B. (focus group member): *"I think that I get discriminated against because...I was sitting on assistance...they don't seem too impressed by that."*

While women could name many of the factors that have contributed to high unemployment in their community, they saw their own dependence on family or social assistance, as well as their children's dependence on them as the main factor in not being able to find work. They expressed fear and despair that the system that was supposed to help them was forcing them into inappropriate and sometimes dangerous situations. Their sense of powerlessness obviously had an impact on their health as depression and stress were mentioned more often than any other health issue.

The men, calling on their history as paid workers, were clear that their joblessness was mostly due to external factors unrelated to their suitability for work. They were confident of finding work eventually, even if the pay was too low to meet their basic needs. Their sense of value to the company or the community was eroded however by the increased "disposability" of workers and the significant drop in wages for work they had been doing all their lives.

Murray: *"When getting paid \$8.50 an hour, you only have enough for one meal a day and to pay rent. The hole just keeps getting deeper and deeper."*

The perception that different rules applied to those in power added to a general loss of fairness and a fear that things could only get worse. Hence there was a general sense of hopelessness among the men as well. A fear was expressed that men had little ability to deal with this and so would attempt to externalize their feelings through violence or increased substance abuse.

While powerlessness was a common response to changes to jobs, women living in poverty experienced this personally while men in the same situation saw themselves as part of the whole economic picture. These findings also indicate that women's health was adversely affected as a result, while men had a tendency to look to external agents to gain relief from fear and despair. It appeared that the new economic order was

having an impact on both men and women that could have far reaching consequences regarding their ability to navigate this new economic reality.

**Question #2: How have recent changes to the social safety net affected you? In your home, your community, your job (if you are working)?**

There was a note of desperation in most of the responses to this question. Both men and women described in detail the myriad ways that cuts to social services made it more difficult to address their most basic needs. But foremost on everyone's mind was the possibility of being a victim of the new social assistance eligibility rule that limits access to social assistance to two years out of five. For the majority of social assistance recipients who fall under the employable category, this will mean that they will either be cut off in the spring of 2004, or have their benefits reduced (See Appendix 1).

Women related to the changes in terms of their own dependency, as well as that of others. They felt that the changes might turn out to be a life-threatening situation, as all of the focus group participants were in a women's homeless shelter at the time and had qualified or were trying to qualify for assistance. Most had been dependent on the system for most of their lives and had no work experience to draw on. All of them had barriers to employment that could not be addressed over the short-term, yet they were being forced to conduct a job search anyway to meet or continue to meet eligibility criteria. They couldn't provide shelter or adequate nutrition for themselves or their children and had no idea how they would fare once their two years were up. This situation is likely to repeat itself across the province, as most social assistance recipients are women, over 80% of whom are lone parents.

B. (Focus group member):  
*"The Ministry said I had  
enough schooling and they  
halted me."*

BC's new social assistance programs seem to be geared more toward getting these women off the system rather than helping recipients to find sustainable employment that will meet their individual needs. An example is the change in eligibility, which seems to have invalidated some efforts towards employability made under the previous system.

For example, one middle-aged mother of four who had struggled for years under the old system and had only recently qualified for her GED found that she would now be barred from the additional training necessary for her to become employable. Because her children were getting older, she would soon fall under the two-year eligibility rule without employment skills to fall back on. Others were affected by the changes in eligibility for young people who have been on their own less than two years. Two young homeless women who would have previously qualified for support in gaining their high school diplomas were now told that they must find work to support them and pay for their schooling. Given the high unemployment rate for youth and their current homelessness both women despaired of ever achieving that goal. Without any other prospects, they may soon become part of the disproportionate number of young Aboriginal women who are involved in the drug and prostitution trade in Surrey.

While some of the male research participants were struggling with health issues and others were dependent on social assistance, they did not relate the impact in personal terms but rather in how other individuals and the community would be impacted. Similar to the responses to the first question, the men identified as workers and defined the problem in those terms. This was also reflected in the fact that most of their frustration was expressed as having difficulties accessing Employment Insurance services.

Bill: *"If you're not getting a paycheque and if you don't have 6 months wages banked, you're in crisis, whether you know it or not. You're in trouble. You're this far away from living in a cardboard box and if you don't know it, think about it because it's that far away."*

Stories of how cuts to medical services and benefits were impacting both genders were also striking. One woman spoke of the probability of losing sight in one eye because she did not have the money to pay for the eye test required before an operation could be done; another related that her 18 month old child was losing her teeth to decay because she, as the mother, could not afford the surcharges for the specialist who would address the hereditary condition causing the problem. One man described how he was unable to write the final exams for his EI sponsored training program because his benefits only covered replacing the lenses on his broken glasses, not the frames that held them.

Again, because of their dependence on social assistance, it was unlikely that the women would be able to address their health concerns before they became chronic or had a long-term impact on their lives. While two of the men spoke of major health barriers to finding employment, none disclosed gaps in the care being provided to address those. On the contrary, one man without any form of health insurance described receiving "the best" hospital care after being on the street for a length of time.

Resilience was a common trait among the women. One woman told of living in a tent in a local park for two weeks with her infant daughter before entering the homeless shelter, while another described the creativity of some folks in furnishing riverbanks and park bushes with touches of home.

Magdalen (interviewee):  
*"When life gets busy, you are the first to be dropped."*

Women spoke of the added burden to families and friends, who were generally female, in trying to fill the gap created by the cuts. Some are very clear that this was all that stood between them and absolute homelessness. But it was feared that their own pressures could overwhelm even the most caring of supporters.

And then there were those women and men who had no friends or family, and who were powerless to help themselves. Several situations were related regarding those who would previously have been supported in their homes by the health system being increasingly left on their own to cope as the health and community services

B.: *"I know a lady that's almost completely blind and now she gets no home care workers and she's in a wheelchair."*

eroded. They also described a growing incidence of people panhandling for food rather than drugs or alcohol, as would have previously been the case.

Men spoke of a rising crime rate due to hunger and the threat of homelessness, while women framed the impact in terms of increased separation and isolation leading to depression and its most serious consequences.

Bill: *"It's like going to a lawyer to get your appendix out. There's somebody calling the shots there that has no idea what's going on in the real world."*

Overall, it appears that the changes to social services may be seen as more life threatening to women since they were more dependent on the system and had fewer resources for gaining independence than the men. It also seemed that a breakdown of communities, through crime, prostitution and increased violence might, in part, be an outcome of these changes.

### **Question #3 – Why do you think that is?**

Female participants saw rising unemployment and the erosion of the social safety net as a reflection of changing social values, while men linked it directly to a new economic order.

Magdalen: *"You brush someone off, it spreads..."*

Women spoke of a new value system that condoned providing less support to the most vulnerable because there was a growing sense that there wouldn't be enough otherwise to maintain the current standard of living. One woman described this as "epidemic." She also described it as a new class system wherein those who don't look or smell as good as others have a lesser value and fewer rights.

Women were also concerned that the population was growing and the proportion of those in need was growing with it. They sensed that no one knew what to do about it so the response was to cut loose those that are perceived as weighing down the system. There was also a growing sense that it has always been this way and that women's dependence has always made them particularly dispensable.

Men, on the other hand, described the changes as part of an experiment gone wrong. Again, men saw the changes as work-related. They saw people sacrificed to the bottom line as well as CEO's rewarded for instituting policies that cut costs (and eliminated jobs) even if that resulted in the closing of the company. Some saw a growing despondence and were experiencing a loss of hope - they believed there was no vision for the future, at least not a future that included them. Others felt that even if times were tough, our social systems were still better than those of other countries.

Bill: *"We're trying to say that the economy and society are the same thing, and they're not."*

These findings indicate that men and women living in poverty believed they have become expendable, due to a growing population, changing social values and a new economic imperative. Interestingly, the female participants saw rising unemployment and the erosion of the social safety net as a reflection of changing social values, while the men linked rising unemployment directly to a new economic order.

**Question #4 – Do you think that men and women experience this differently? What made you think this? Can you give me an example?**

Magdalen: *“When you are very poor, your basic needs become less ‘gendered’.”*

Although both groups were prepared to say that the other group probably had it harder, they also acknowledged that women faced significant challenges because, on average, women had less economic stability than men. Women believed that there were more programs for them than there were for men, while men thought that women, as mothers, had a more difficult time providing the necessities for their families. Both believed, however, that depth of poverty was an equalizer: you are just another number when your hand is out.

While some women acknowledged that they were likely to earn less than men and that they were more likely to be the caregivers, they were quick to point out that single fathers, while smaller in numbers, did not get the range of support that single mothers did. In their opinion it was also harder for single men to get or stay on social assistance.

Other women spoke of their own struggles to care for children without financial support from the fathers, or in caring for aging parents without additional resources. They saw women’s vulnerability to homelessness as being harder to measure, as they were more likely to stay with family or friends than to seek out a homeless shelter. As a result, they felt that there were fewer shelters (for women) than the situation warranted.

Male participants referred to spousal assault, lower paying jobs and caring for children as the main barriers women faced in achieving economic stability. They said this was why more women were poor and why they were more reliant on social services. Both genders felt everyone was being pushed to work around the system to get what they needed as the cuts made it more and more difficult to get food and shelter.

Brenden: *“All these cuts lead to people scamming the system which leads to government cuts because people are cheating.”*

Each group saw the other as equally vulnerable to changes in jobs and social services, but neither measured the depth of that vulnerability. It would appear though, that both groups believe women would be most deeply impacted because of their traditional caregiver role and the dependency it engenders.

### **Question #5 – What changes to social services/jobs/community services would help you?**

In this last question, the patterns we saw in the different ways women and men experienced their poverty held true. Women's requests were personal, meant to enhance health and well being, and meet the practical everyday needs for their charges and themselves as well as their community. Men asked that we address the larger picture, change how government views its responsibility to the most vulnerable, pull everyone together, and reduce taxes to give everyone more peace of mind.

#### **Women's Wish list**

- "I am no different from the hooker on the corner. All I want is love, acceptance and to be safe."
- Management support for addressing stress at work.
- "Human beings should be comfortable enough to look each other in the eye and be flexible."
- Community where everyone just helped each other: house builder, car repairs, etc.
- Would like to be able to say: "I am really good at this, have a passion..." and people could just trust that.
- Practical stuff: instead of think tanks, hand out coats, pay attention to your neighbours, etc.
- Grants/Scholarship program for secondary education for two years.
- Dental care and eye care for low-income diabetics.
- Better public transit within Surrey: can take up to two hours to travel between two points in Surrey.
- Legislation that requires companies to pay equal pay for equal work, whether private or unionized as well as the infrastructure to enforce it.
- A fair and equitable social services system. A databank or other information source that you can access through their Website, for resources and support in negotiating the social services system.
- "Paying for high school education and supporting me so I can go fulltime, so I can be who I want to instead of on assistance for the rest of my life."
- "For them to tell me that I AM on assistance. And get a place to live and have the eye surgery I need. And then get a job."

#### **Men's wish list:**

- Government to care more about people, build shelters, create affordable housing and more detox services.
- "I feel like for an hour every day I'm taken to the top of a building and being held over the edge and some guy is saying we might drop you, we might not. Get rid of panic. Give people peace of mind."

- Intense study into local planning boards to study these social problems and get everybody working together
- One month a year where government doesn't charge GST or PST, to bring up incentive to spend.
- Things to slow down. Turn off the T.V., stop and take a look at things.
- More communication between parts of government.
- Job security and retraining when required for mature workers
- "People need to take a stand, apathy never helped anyone."

# WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The Vibrant Surrey presentation of The Wall workshop was held at the local library on Tuesday, December 9, 2003 from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. 34 people registered ahead of time, of which two were unable to attend. Three people who had not registered came on the invitation of working group members to make for a total of 35 participants. The group was very diverse, with representation from the immigrant, visible minority and aboriginal communities. An attempt was made to achieve the same ratio of men and women as were considered representative of the gendered experience of poverty in Surrey.

Twenty-six women and nine men of all ages attended, two of whom had mobility barriers.



There were eight community agency service providers, one federal government representative and one person from the local community college present. Two agency board members also attended. The balance was made up of residents of Surrey with a personal experience of poverty. Several people affiliated with an agency also described themselves as fitting into this category. Following is a transcript of The Wall, as it was built in Surrey, as well as some added comments that were recorded through the day but did not make it onto a brick in The Wall. For a sample of some of the tools used to engage participants, see appendices eight through ten.

## Changes to Jobs and Social Programs?

### *i. Changes to social programs*

Of major concern were the deep cuts to social assistance and the increased restrictions on eligibility, particularly the two-year time limit that will come into effect on March 31, 2004. Participants spoke of decisions that were based on inaccuracies and misconceptions about people. It was understood that the goal was to have less people on the system so government can then move to the next phase and close down more ministry offices, thereby meeting the budgetary targets. The cost to human lives was not relevant to this process, as government now has a business mentality. As an illustration of how little connection some policy decisions have to promoting health, one woman described how she was told she must wait until all her teeth are gone before

accessing dental benefits. Her comment: “If they are so concerned about dental costs, then they should focus on nutrition.”

- Labeling “poor” is no longer a social barrier
- Privatization of Public Services
- Service providers do not treat people with dignity, courtesy and respect
- Fewer EI Benefits
- Social Services (Income Assistance) Medical Benefit cuts
- Any extra income must be claimed
- Eye tests are not free, not covered by BC Medical
- Focus shift from ‘back to work’ to ‘off of welfare’ no matter how
- Services don’t meet people’s real needs, inefficient use of resources that are available
- Cuts to Education and Day Care
- Reduction of Services
- Fees for services, higher need for no cost services
- Downloading to municipalities
- Weakened Health and Safety legislation and regulations
- Cuts to Public Health Care
- Higher Income on Assistance, higher costs, 100% tax
- They won’t provide extra funds for home care but they will take my child into custody and pay someone to take care of him
- Housing Costs up
- User Fees
- Cuts to Social Programs –dental and medical
- Increased cuts to services and community organizations
- We are not tapping the capacity of the people in our community (Elders, immigrants, workers)
- Cuts to Legal Aid



## **ii. Changes to jobs**

Participants expressed the view that changes in the workplace were a result of a value trend for increased profits over human cost.

- Public Sector jobs moved to private sector
- Increased workload
- New jobs are highly skilled or low paying



- Downsizing = loss of jobs
- Increased Self-Employment or Home work
- Training Programs – not enough access
- Less job security
- More part-time work and contracts
- Farm workers no longer covered by Employment Standards
- New Jobs require more skills or pay less
- Minimum working age lowered from 15 to 12

## How are these changes being experienced (in the community, home, workplace)?

### i. *Changes experienced in the community*



Participants spoke of the invisibility of certain people to the system: homeless or near-homeless folks, particularly those without children, the working poor, people with hidden disabilities or mental health issues, migrants without legal status, etc. Pervasive through this discussion was the lack of dignity afforded to those who relied on services for survival. There was a belief expressed that the system makes people disappear.

They are forced off welfare or refused support for reasons unrelated to their capacity to secure food and shelter. Some also spoke of how Surrey attracts more new immigrants because of the lower cost of living. Cultural differences in family structure were of particular note, as the system is not likely to acknowledge that one member may be supporting the entire family, or the impact cultural differences may have on the community as more disposable income is likely to be put into savings rather than consumable goods.

- *Cycle of Despair*: demeaning treatment leads to diminished self-esteem, poor self care and self-destructive acts. These in turn cause increased health costs and lead to the message, “You’re a burden.” This fosters demeaning treatment and the cycle is perpetuated.
- More emphasis on ‘deserving’ poor and ‘undeserving’ poor
- Centralized services have turned services into businesses. Stress to service providers, stress to clients, hard to get to.
- More women coming for hot lunch and for counselling – less staff, more volunteers
- High crime rate = fear
- Services that already exist are tapped: doing more for those who get less
- Theft has increased, lack of personal security
- Communities aren’t holistic – services should be local, need to reflect needs of community

- Decimating the middle class, economy suffers because people can't get access and contribute. Student Loans, Mortgages, can't get same rate as not-for-profits.

## **ii. Changes experienced at home**

People spoke of increased domestic violence due to high stress, as well as the erosion of personal safety in general, resulting in a constant atmosphere of fear. Not only was personal security at risk due to unsafe or insecure housing, but increased crime and prostitution in some neighbourhoods make it unsafe for children to be outside. Some described the deep frustration and fear when faced with the possibility of child apprehension because social assistance does not provide enough for food and shelter. A choice must be made between eating or having shelter, leading to the potential for charges of child neglect. Given that income of any kind must be declared and deducted from support allowances, people describe with great distress how they are being forced to lie or cheat in order to survive. It was said that this only supports the underlying justification for pushing people off welfare in the first place, so the system perpetuates its own myths.



Given that income of any kind must be declared and deducted from support allowances, people describe with great distress how they are being forced to lie or cheat in order to survive. It was said that this only supports the underlying justification for pushing people off welfare in the first place, so the system perpetuates its own myths.

- Government sanctioned child abuse and neglect, foster care for no reason
- Social service ministries do not work together, affecting people in the home
- Food: forced to tell on family, choose between bills and food, difference in eating habits (fresh vs. processed)
- Housing: higher costs for gas, hydro, rent. Safe, secure then will be able to find work, budget, focus on goals.
- Funding support for disabled family members to be able to stay in the home
- Dignity issues around home care
- High cost of education – no job security
- Isolation issues: disability, depression, and no money to get out!
- Health care erosion issues: dental, disability, vision care

## **iii. Changes experienced in the workplace**

There was a recognition that downsized business as well as government and community service staff were overwhelmed by cuts to staffing and other resources, trying to function in an atmosphere where being of service was replaced by meeting

expected outcomes. They also spoke of the growing gap between rich and poor and the decimation of the middle class.

- Stress related illness, burnout.
- Pay based on outcome, not performance
- Competition for jobs, hours, pay
- Increased homelessness and property crime = less pleasant work and business environment (robbery, panhandling etc.)
- Decreasing working conditions: no minimum wage for farm workers, increasing child labour in farming etc.
- Increased harassment and insecurity in the workplace
- Increased stress in the workplace
- Less pay for the same work = less disposable income, widening gap between rich and poor
- No accountability of corporations to community
- Self-employed at risk: not eligible for E.I. or assistance
- Skills retraining at own cost without resources

## **How are these changes being experienced by men and women differently?**

### ***Men:***

- Harder for men to ask for help/services
- Men are more often the visible homeless
- Men feel disposable
- Men get less services than women with children
- Services aren't geared for single dads. Don't fit criteria. No support in jobs.
- Idea that men are strong, they don't need help. Shame.
- No local jobs. Man gets job out of town/province. Wife left without social safety net at home
- Western culture, women are supported, men thrust out. Cultural differences: men supported, women less valued
- Man leaves, income goes up. Woman leaves, income goes down.
- Men: paying child support, loss of jobs, stress, age barriers
- Losing jobs in industry and manufacturing

### ***Women:***

- Older women live in poverty due to becoming a widow or just living alone
- Women are responsible for childcare in addition to other responsibilities. Too much to handle.

- Women have fewer options to well paid work, manual labour, trades etc. Women's work is undervalued.
- Single women with kids on assistance: abused, lost jobs, lack of childcare
- Aboriginal people won't have pension because Indian Act says they don't pay tax.
- Women are losing jobs in the government sector.
- Gender Pay equity issues. Women are paid less and men are paid more.
- More likely to be single mom's
- Women living in poverty are often fleeing abusive relationships
- Emotional instability in marriage
- Caregiver role traditionally female – sandwich generation
- Not being able to get jobs in the labour industry because we are women
- Woman: fear due to lack of resources, disability due to stress, lie in order to live.

Both women and men were very generous and respectful in bringing their differences forward. This was consistent with the dignity that everyone was given throughout the day when expressing their opinions. There was no blaming, just a need to describe their individual realities.

## Root Causes

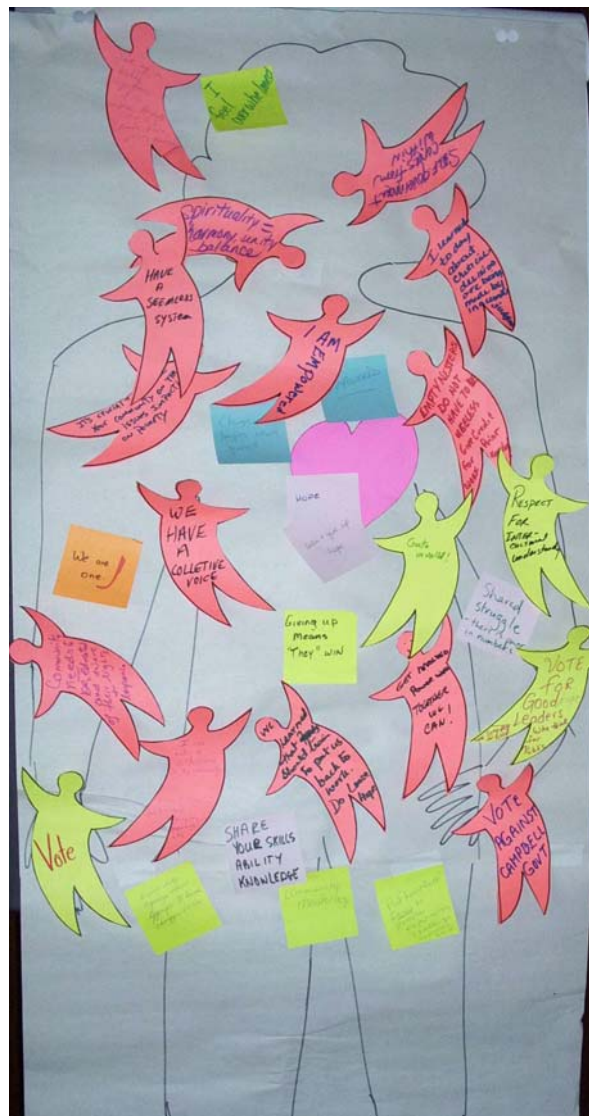
- Socialized by society
- Welfare gives single employable men a really hard time. Often they are forced to be homeless and starving before they get any help.
- Society may be male-dominated, but men are taught to ignore emotional needs. They must learn to do this through media, school family
- Emulation to society and your perceived place in it. Self image.
- Idea that men should support women. Why don't you get married?
- Government policies fiscally driven, short term
- Ignorance: government doesn't see the long-term impact; community doesn't see the manifestation of poverty.
- Greed: only X amount of \$. For some to be rich, many have to be poor
- Family support breakdown
- Lack of understanding: judgments based on lack of education
- Technology replacing people
- Society's stereotypes contribute to misdiagnosis and a lack of awareness around our realities.
- Gender stereotyping: societal expectations. Men are providers, women are nurturers,
- Conservative political party values create policies that are not based on people's needs
- Because we are smaller, weaker, more emotional, too busy with family, home, kids...

## Seeds of hope or opportunities for action

- PovNet
- Gender and Poverty Workshop
- Report to United Nations by CEDAW
- Linking People to Food Project
- Homelessness Task Force
- Vibrant Surrey
- Federated Anti-poverty Groups of B.C.
- Community Action Network

## Head, Heart, Hands and Feet: What have I learned, what changed for me, what action will I take?

- Set up a 'buddy' system for lone parents on social assistance (trade time, jobs, knowledge)
- I feel overwhelmed
- Self-government comes from within
- I learned today about critical decisions being made by inaccurate judgments
- Spirituality = harmony, unity, balance
- Have a seamless system
- It's critical to educate your community on the issues impacting poverty
- I am empowered
- Empowered
- Change begins inside yourself
- Hope
- Won't give up hope
- Empty nesters do not have to be useless, give credit for prior work, knowledge
- Respect for intercultural understanding
- Gate invalid!
- Shared struggle: there is power in numbers
- We have a collective voice
- We are one
- Giving up means 'they' win
- Community needs to be more educated and aware of their rights



and responsibilities

- We learned that they should train to put us back to work. Do not lose hope.
- Share your skills, ability, knowledge
- Vote
- I will help organize other groups to become a bigger voice
- Community Mentoring
- Put 'heartfelt' faces to people experiencing challenges so people get it!
- Vote against Campbell government
- Vote for good/right leaders who have sympathy for the public, who think for the public

# WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

Over 80% of the participants took the time to evaluate their experience in this workshop. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with the majority rating the workshop, the facilitation and the supports as excellent, and the tools used in the workshop as very good. Responses to the financial supports ranged from surprising (that their input was valued to that degree) to confusing (do I report this as income?). When asked what they liked best about the workshop, they said it was the sense of being valued, of being part of a group. The overall sense was that things really are bad out there...but we are not alone.



## 1. How would you rate this Workshop?

Excellent – 23

Good – 6

Poor – 0

Other Comments:

- Should have had more time for 'solutions'
- Race, mental health issues, addictions was rarely mentioned, which are also a huge part of poverty
- Vibrant Community should be held through communities all over the world with politicians (sic), 'heads of state' everywhere
- This is great it is what our group is writing on
- Highlighted the importance of gender based analysis in terms of economy and community growth
- I got a lot of info I wasn't aware of
- Content and tasks were interesting and informative. Participation was great.
- Very good actually (rated as 'good')
- Perhaps could be shorter – too rushed
- Very positive, I came away with a sense of hope. Pro-active solutions
- Very interesting, good people
- This information takes my life out of the personal into the impersonal and to see what is really happening in our society
- Very informative, loved participating

## 2. How would you rate the facilitation?

Excellent - 23

Good - 5

Poor

No rating - 1

Other Comments:

- Lively, supportive, respectful
- Very well organized and knowledgeable
- Thanks all especially Susan for inviting me and all your hard work
- Very less time to do the job
- I hope the information that was given can make a difference
- I appreciate the flow of facilitation and the use of humour. It made a serious subject more palatable
- I liked the interactive nature of the format
- The leaders were warm, friendly, outgoing and supportive
- Not long enough – a lot of work, too little time but longer wouldn't work either
- Not enough breaks
- I liked how the respect of people came through
- Very knowledgeable workers

## 3. How would you rate the handouts?

Excellent -14

Good - 14

Poor

No rating - 1

Other Comments:

- The expression you learn something new everyday applies here, I'll come out knowing so much more
- Short and to the point
- I would like to read the overall summary of what took place today
- Not everyone received evaluation forms
- Redundant

**4. How would you rate the supports such as participation expense, transportation and childcare reimbursement that enabled or encouraged you to attend?**

Excellent - 24

Good - 5

Poor

Other Comments:

- It's nice to know others take such things to mind
- Didn't need help, thank you, but great for others
- Good
- According to expectations
- They were most useful and most grateful
- I was just happy with participating and being asked to help. I really appreciate the extra support
- Without the financial incentives my voice would never be heard
- Pleasantly surprised
- I have never been paid like this before. I thought it would be done as a volunteer. This has opened myself up to how I have not valued myself in the past.
- Because I got cash, don't know if I would claim it or not. Feel like lying, like someone said in class, will get deducted if I claim it

**5. What was the most useful information you received at this workshop?**

- Interactive workshops – women and men both need support in a different way
- Getting a better understanding of what the deal is if you are on social security
- Model for building wall, hearing people's experiences
- There are more people like me, that's encouraging
- How others came together from morning to close with a common bond due to problems
- I like this things
- The group discussions/participation has been lot of good points/ideas about poverty
- Somebody gives a damn
- Cuts on community services in last 4 years
- The differences between men/women
- All the information was useful
- Good list of identified causes of poverty
- Surrey has a vast multicultural society
- Gender issues
- How bad the situation is becoming, although we can empower ourselves
- Connections
- Seeing the different faces and experiences, seeing the threads that link
- I AM NOT ALONE
- Sense of community – hope – feel 'a part' of the process instead of apart from the process

- Resource information
- Discussion groups – the stones
- Stats and facts, hearing and seeing dif. kinds of power
- How to help, and ‘being here’ (workshop) is a start
- Nothing everything was good. That I am not alone.

**6. Please add any additional comments on the back of this form**

- Very well organized
- Keep the spirit up
- I wish to get involved on a bigger level. If you need help please call me

**7. If you would like to receive information on poverty reduction and Vibrant Surrey please write your name below, include how you wish to be contacted or have information sent to you by.**

A contact list was created from this response.

# POVERTY MATRIX FOR MUNICIPALITY OF SURREY

The Poverty Matrix is “designed to assist a convenor group to complete a map of poverty in its community that will allow it to gain a more thorough understanding of the extent and scope of poverty and, ultimately, make a more strategic assessment of the groups of residents and/or neighborhoods upon which it may wish to focus its efforts.” (Cabaj, 2003)

This tool was developed by Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement as part of a group of tools being made available to communities engaged in poverty reduction. The original model for the poverty matrix was not gendered; other than to identify women as a demographic group thought to be at risk of poverty.

Building a matrix reflecting the incidence of poverty in the City Surrey was not in the original action plan for the Gender and Poverty project. As the project neared completion and it was realized that there was project money left over, Vibrant Surrey applied to the lead agency for permission to apply those funds to pulling together some of the information required for the matrix. It was agreed that the matrix would be completed to the degree that resources allowed. It was also recognized that this would be an opportunity to evaluate the ease with which it could be completed, as well as the potential for adding a gendered dimension in keeping with the focus of this project.

The first hurdle was in deciding which definition of poverty would be used as a baseline. As time and resources were limited, it was decided to build on the model produced by the Victoria, B.C. Vibrant Communities convenor group and described in the report titled *Dynamics of Need in BC's Capital Region* (Quality of Life Challenge, 2003). This report uses the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) as the measure of poverty for individuals and families (see Appendix 3: Definitions). It also breaks the demographic data down by sex and introduces some gendered information, such as the poverty experience of male- and female-led lone parent families.

We attempted to expand on that by breaking down the overall experience of women and men of the various depths of poverty (i.e., working poor, temporarily unemployed, etc.) as well as the gendered experience of each demographic group by level of poverty (i.e., number of Aboriginal females who might be persistently unemployed). It is obvious that we were not successful in doing that, mainly because time and money ran out. This report is offered as an example of what could be accomplished if the resources were in place.

## **Barriers to accessing data for the matrix**

The most common problem in accessing data was lack of resources: only the most basic information for each municipality is available without charge for the 2001 census. A much richer pool of information could be found without charge for the previous census (1996), both because more time had elapsed so more analysis of data had been undertaken and because the latest census data was much more in demand. However, the 1996 data is outdated in several respects, as the City of Surrey has grown tremendously and the economic picture has changed dramatically for the whole province since then.

A great deal of time was consumed in reviewing local and national reports in the hope of finding current data that would fit the particular categories in the matrix, or that could be used to extrapolate without too much variance. Nothing could be found of that nature that drew on the 2001 census. Our next task was to try accessing raw data through local agencies mandated to share what they had purchased from Statistics Canada. While some agencies were willing to share, the data they had purchased was not comprehensive enough for our purposes, and there were concerns about maintaining the security of the databases.

We were fortunate in that some basic LICO information that we would normally have to purchase was shared with us by Statistics Canada. This allowed us to establish that 62,990 people in Surrey were currently living in poverty. It would prove impossible, however, to go any further without buying as many as four ready-made tables from StatsCan at a price of \$278.50 each that would tabulate income data by age, sex and family type, as well as the particular demographic groups we had identified for the matrix as being at risk. Even so, we risked not being able to complete the whole picture if some of the tabulations could not be made: i.e., identifying incidence of working poor in recently immigrated families. The alternative would be to have custom tables designed, at a cost starting at \$1,000. Neither of these options was viable given the lack of time and resources.

## **Building a gendered matrix**

There were two challenges in considering how to build a gendered dimension into the poverty matrix.

The first was a lack of gendered statistical analysis in current data sources. For example:

- Nowhere could we find information on the number of female-led lone-parent families living in poverty in Surrey. We do know that most of the women dependent on income assistance are single mothers (HRDC, October 1999), and that single mothers have a much lower average income than single fathers

(\$33,954 as opposed to \$45,407) (StatsCan, 2001), so it is puzzling that the LICO information is not readily available.

- The only comprehensive source for establishing the numbers of ‘persistently unemployed’ and ‘dependent poor’ is the provincial Ministry of Human Resources reporting of income assistance support cases by client or family type. Unfortunately, neither of these charts breaks down couples or two parent families by gender. As the BC Employment and Assistance Act includes a person of the same gender in the definition of spouse, we must assume that some couples or parents in those families are of the same sex, so cannot accurately determine the number of women or men currently receiving income assistance. For that matter, none of the poverty related reports we reviewed contained data on the experience of poverty in the gay community.
- The analysis of census data by Statistics Canada has a wealth of information concerning both men and women, but this is only marginally reported in the Community Highlights of the Community Profiles. As a result, most community based or regional government reports on which we might base the Matrix are failing to include gender analysis in their findings as they may not have the means to purchase the additional information. This is the main reason we could not complete a major portion of the matrix and may prove to be the largest stumbling block in encouraging community partners to learn more about poverty by using a gender lens.

The second challenge was in the very nature of statistical reporting: it cannot flesh out the story behind the numbers, nor can it capture what is not being counted. This is where the division lies between sex and gender. Sex, as reported in statistics, differentiates between men and women. Gender analysis, on the other hand, asks us to go beyond the numbers to understand how individuals’ lives are impacted by their gender and the roles attributed to them by their culture or the society they live in.

A good example of the importance of gender analysis is the current gap in research on homelessness in B.C. As was related in another section of this report, very little is known about women’s homelessness. This is principally because homeless women don’t behave the same way that men do. They don’t stay on the streets and they don’t use shelters with nearly the same consistency as men do. They “couch surf” (i.e. stay with friends or family, or men with whom they wouldn’t normally associate). The reasons for this are complex, but the net result is that they do not get counted when the 24-hour snapshot is done annually. As a result, they are significantly underrepresented in the measure of homelessness, and services to homeless women are therefore under funded.

A great deal of effort is currently being made in the area of health research to understand the role of gender. Lorraine Greaves, Director of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in Women’s Health, describes the complexity of gendered research as follows:

Investigating gender is complicated due to the dynamic and changeable nature of the social and cultural systems in which we live. The forces of cultural norms and values determine gender. Such norms and values are both different from place to place as well as evolving over time. As a consequence, our gendered experiences of health, illness, and healthcare are a complex blend of our maleness or femaleness mixed in with our cultural identity and social and generational locations. In short, gender is an evolving and relational variable, which often reflects power differences between groups of people.

(Greaves, 1999)

So if gender analysis calls on us to understand what we are learning in the context of people's lives, then it follows that gendered research should also be done through hearing individual's stories. In this way, we can better understand, for instance, why it is that young Aboriginal women are the most likely to be street involved in Surrey, and what we can do about that locally. This would best be done in conjunction with the development of the statistical information that the matrix is designed to provide.

### **A gap in the picture presented by the matrix**

We recognize that the matrix, as a tool designed to provide a 'snapshot' of the community, is limited in its ability to cover every aspect of poverty. However, it may be that an important aspect has been missed.

It is widely reported that unattached individuals of any gender are more likely to be poor, and even more so if they are unattached and substance involved men, men and women with mental health issues, or middle aged or elderly women. Kevin Lee, in *Urban Poverty in Canada*, finds that those communities who focus on the needs of unattached individuals in urban centres are most likely to achieve a significant drop in the overall poverty rate for that community (Lee, 2000). But there is no measure of the incidence of poverty for unattached individuals or families, other than lone parent families, in the matrix.

Another potential gap is that most of the data for the matrix is based on information captured by government statistical reports, most of which are income related. It is possible that a significant number of people have "fallen off the map." We know that the welfare rolls have been reduced by a total of 54.2% in B.C. since 1995, over one third of that since the year of the last census taking (2000) upon which the matrix is based (MHR, 2003). While the provincial government is making attempts to confirm that those people are now working, the response rate from welfare leavers in the first three surveys conducted is only 33 percent or less. The main problem: the people they are trying to reach have no telephone (Klein, 2003).

# POVERTY MATRIX

for  
Municipality of Surrey

	HIGH RISK GROUP							
	Overall Experience of Poverty	Youth (15-24)	Mature Workers (55+)	Aboriginal People	Recent Immigrants Since 1991	Visible Minority Status	People with Disabilities	Lone Parents
<b>Living below LICO</b>	<b>62,990</b>	<b>11471</b>	n/a	<b>3310</b>	<b>20227</b>	<b>38105</b>	<b>9449</b>	<b>9430</b>
Female	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Male	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Working Poor</b>	<b>20500**</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Female	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Male	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Temporarily Unemployed</b>	<b>22901</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Receiving employment insurance or not in any other category</i>								
Female	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
male	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Persistently Unemployed</b>	<b>2525</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>811</b>
<i>Receiving income assistance, but expected to work</i>								
Female	<b>566</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>754</b>
Male	<b>782</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>57</b>
<b>Dependent Poor</b>	<b>17064</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>4376</b>	<b>1580</b>
<i>Receiving income assistance and classified as temporarily excused from work, or receiving disability or pension benefits</i>								
Female	<b>9560</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>2231</b>	<b>1469</b>
Male	<b>7504</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>2146</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>At-risk of Homelessness</b>	<b>24,110**</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Absolutely homeless</b>	<b>200+</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

n/a=not available

\*\*based on 1996 Census data

## Sources for poverty matrix data

As stated earlier, it was not possible to access sufficient data from the 2001 census to build a current picture of Surrey. **Therefore poverty rates for 1996, as reported in *Urban Poverty in Canada, A Statistical Profile*, have been used to provide an estimate.** Population figures, however, are based on 2001 census data for Surrey, with the exception of the estimate of working poor, which is drawn from 1996 data.

### **High Risk Groups**

Total Population living below LICO: Profile of Income Individuals, Families and Households, Social and Economic Characteristics of Individuals, Families and Households, Housing Costs, and Religion, for Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Divisions and Census Subdivisions, 2001 Census, Statistics Canada

- Total Working Poor: actual figures for 1996, as reported in *Urban Poverty in Canada*, table B4.39, p.217
- Temporarily Unemployed: Total Below LICO – (Waged Poor+ Persistently Unemployed + Dependent Poor) = temporarily unemployed
- Persistently unemployed: BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov 2003 caseload numbers, Expected to work category
- Dependent Poor: BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov 2003 caseload numbers, Continuous assistance and Temporarily Excused Categories, plus HRDC Pension recipient figures
- At risk of Homelessness: Surrey Homelessness Plan, October 2003
- Homeless: Surrey Homelessness Plan, October 2003

### **Youth:**

- Youth population 15-24 living under LICO: 2001 Census reported Surrey population as 24,745\*24% (1996 youth poverty rate).

**Mature workers:** no available data from 2001 Census

### **Aboriginal People:**

- Aboriginal population living under LICO: 2001 Census reported population as 6895\*48% (1996 Poverty rate)

### **Recent Immigrants:**

- Recent Immigrants Since 1999 living under LICO: 2001 Census reported population as 47,040\*43% (1996 recent immigrant poverty rate)

### ***Visible Minorities:***

- Visible Minority population living under LICO: 2001 Census reported population as  $127,015 * 30\%$  (1996 visible minority poverty rate)

### ***People with Disabilities:***

- People with disabilities living under LICO: total population living under LICO,  $62,990 * 15\%$  (1996 incidence of people with disabilities as percentage of population living under LICO)
- Dependent Poor: BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov 2003 caseload numbers for Persons with Disabilities receiving Continuous Assistance
- Dependent Poor, female: estimate based on BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov 2003 caseload numbers for females with disabilities, plus one half numbers for couples and 2 parent families. N.B. may be slight overestimate as couples and families may include people of same gender
- Dependent Poor, male: estimate based on BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov 2003 caseload numbers for males with disabilities, plus one half numbers for couples and 2 parent families. N.B. may be slight overestimate as couples and families may include people of same gender

### ***Lone Parents:***

- Lone Parents living under LICO: 2001 Census reported population as  $15,210 * 62\%$  (1996 lone parent poverty rate)
- Persistently Unemployed: BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov. 2003 caseload numbers for lone parents receiving income assistance but expected to work
- Persistently Unemployed, female: BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov. 2003 caseload numbers for lone parents receiving income assistance but expected to work,  $811 * 93\%$  (1999 rate of female lone parents in Surrey on income assistance)=754
- Persistently Unemployed, male: Total Lone Parents Persistently Unemployed – Persistently unemployed, female=persistently unemployed, male. ( $811-754=57$ )
- Dependent Poor: BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov 2003 caseload numbers, Continuous assistance and Temporarily Excused Categories for lone parents
- Dependent Poor, female: BC Ministry of Human Resources Nov 2003 caseload numbers, Continuous assistance and Temporarily Excused Categories,  $1580 * 93\%$  (1999 rate of female lone parents in Surrey on income assistance)=1469
- Dependent Poor, male: Total Lone Parents Dependent Poor – Dependent Poor, female = Dependent Poor, male. ( $1580-1469=111$ )

## Appendix 1

### **WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

The Gender and Poverty Project Working membership included:

- Denise Darrell, South Fraser Women's Services Society
- Lynne Fletcher, Elizabeth Fry Society
- Sandra Folster, Community Representative
- Sharon Goldberg, Surrey Women's Centre
- Eleanor Herd, Community Representative
- Susan Keeping, Newton Advocacy Group Society
- Monika Laul Verma, Progressive Inter Cultural Society
- Annie McKittrick, Surrey Social Futures
- Jodie Tonita, Community Representative
- Margaret Yeo, Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society

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## Appendix 3

### GLOSSARY

**FHA: The Low income Rate** (the proportion of the population with incomes below the Statistics Canada low-income cut-off) is a consistent and well-defined method that identifies those who are substantially worse off than the average. Low income cut-offs (LICOs) represent levels of income where people spend too much of their money for food, shelter and clothing, based on their family size and where they live. (18)

**Absolute homelessness** refers to people who are living with no physical shelter – i.e. on the street, in doorways, in parkades, in parks and on beaches, as well as those living temporarily in emergency shelters, safe houses and transition houses (17)

**At-risk of homelessness** refers to people who are living in spaces or situations that do not meet basic health and safety standards, do not provide for security of tenure or personal safety and are not affordable. This also includes people considered to be the invisible homeless, such as individuals who couch surf or stay temporarily with family and friends. (17)

#### **Statistics Canada:**

**Median Income of Census Families and Non-Family Persons 15 years of Age and over** is that amount which divides their income size distribution into two halves. The incomes of the first half of the families or non-family persons are below the median and those of the second half are above the median.

**Census Family Total Income** – the total income of a census family is the sum of the incomes of all members of that family.

**Total income** – refers to the total money income received from the following sources in calendar year 2000 by persons 15 years of age and over:

- Wages and salaries (total)
- Net farm income
- Net non-farm income from unincorporated business and /or professional practices
- Canada child tax benefits
- Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement
- Benefits from Canada or Quebec Pension Plan
- Benefits from Employment Insurance
- Other income from government sources
- Dividends, interest on bonds, deposits and savings certificates, and other investment income
- Retirement pensions, superannuation and annuities, including those from RRSPs and RRIFs
- Other money income

## Appendix 4

# BC Employment and Assistance Manual

January 2004

### 3.3 - Legislation - **EMPLOYMENT AND ASSISTANCE REGULATION**

#### **Division 5 – Amount and Duration of Income Assistance**

##### **Time limits for income assistance**

**27** (1) The eligibility of a family unit for income assistance in any calendar month is subject to the following limitations:

(a) when income assistance has been provided to or for a family unit that includes only 1 person for a total of 24 of the previous 60 calendar months, the family unit is not eligible for income assistance;

(b) when income assistance has been provided to or for a family unit that includes 2 persons, neither of whom is a dependent child,

(i) on account of each recipient for a total of 24 of the previous 60 calendar months, the family unit is not eligible for income assistance, and

(ii) on account of one recipient for a total of 24 of the previous 60 calendar months and on account of the other recipient for less than 24 of the previous 60 calendar months, the income assistance provided to or for the family unit for a calendar month must be reduced by \$300;

(c) when income assistance has been provided to or for a family unit that includes at least 2 persons, at least one of whom is a dependent child, on account of at least one recipient for a total of 24 of the previous 60 calendar months, the income assistance provided to or for the family unit for a calendar month must be reduced by \$100 for each recipient in the family unit to or for whom income assistance has been provided for a total of 24 of the previous 60 calendar months.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to the following categories of family units:

(a) family units in which all recipients

(i) have reached 65 years of age,

(ii) have persistent multiple barriers to employment, or

(iii) are receiving accommodation and care in a special care facility or a private hospital, other

## Appendix 4

than an alcohol or drug treatment centre, or who are admitted to a hospital because they require extended care;  
(B.C Reg 116/2003)

(b) children in the homes of relatives.

(2.1) If a family unit is subject to a reduction or becomes ineligible under subsection (1), the portion of the reduction or ineligibility that is attributable to the circumstances of one of the recipients ends when that recipient reaches 65 years of age,  
(B.C. Reg116/2003)

(3) For the purpose of calculating whether income assistance has been provided to or for a recipient for a total of 24 out of the previous 60 calendar months the following calendar months must be excluded:

(a) during which the recipient qualifies as a recipient in a category described in section 29 (4) (b) to (g) and (i) to (k). (B.C. Reg 374/2003)

(a.1) during which the recipient, regardless of the status of other recipients in the family unit, is a person described in section 29 (4) (h) (i) to (iii), (v) and (vi);

(b) during which the recipient participates in the following portions of a training for jobs program approved by the minister:

- (i) acceptance into the program,
- (ii) training,
- (iii) job placement; (B.C. Reg 116/2003)

(c) during which the income assistance provided to the family unit was reduced on account of the recipient under subsection (1) (b) (ii) or (c);

(d) during which the recipient was pregnant;

(e) during which the recipient was under 19 years of age. (B.C. Reg 116/2003)

(4) For the purposes of subsection (1), a person in the family unit who is not a person described in section 7 (2) [*citizenship requirements*] must not be included in the family unit.

## Appendix 5

# Getting the Whole Story on Poverty in Surrey

*In order to end poverty, you have to understand it.*

That is why a group called Vibrant Surrey is inviting you to join them in a full day workshop.

**Date:** Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003  
**Time:** 9:30 am to 4:30 pm  
**Place:** Newton Library, 13795 - 70<sup>th</sup> ave., Surrey, 604-596-7401  
**Parking:** on site, free  
**Bus:** stops within one block

### *Why a workshop?*

Vibrant Surrey is part of a national project called Vibrant Communities that is looking at what needs to happen in order to reduce poverty across Canada ([www.vibrantcommunities.com](http://www.vibrantcommunities.com)). One of the things we need to understand is how men and women might experience poverty differently and what gets in the way when they try to leave it.

For example, we already know that more women and children than men live in poverty in Surrey. The statistics gathered by government and community groups tell us that. These same reports tell us that, unlike other regions, Surrey has almost as many homeless women as there are men. It is thought that this might be because of the higher number of homeless youth in the area. But that doesn't tell the whole story. The statistics can't tell us about real people and their everyday lives. And that's why we need to hear from you.

This workshop is for women and men who have a first hand experience of being poor. There will also be some people who work in community agencies and government ministries, who are working to reduce poverty through Vibrant Surrey. Together, we will help build a picture of poverty in Surrey, and start talking about what to do next.

**Refreshments will be provided and we will be able to cover any childcare, transportation and other costs you may have so that everyone interested can participate.**

**To register or for more information call Louise Hara at 604-942-5150, or Susan Keeping at 604-596-2311, or e-mail at [louisehara@shaw.ca](mailto:louisehara@shaw.ca)**

## Appendix 6

# Getting the whole story on poverty in Surrey

In order to end poverty, you have to understand it. That is why a group called Vibrant Surrey is inviting you to be part of a small group of people talking about how men and women might experience poverty differently and what gets in the way when they try to leave it.

For example, they already know that more women and children than men live in poverty in Surrey. The statistics gathered by government and community groups tell us that. These same reports tell us that, unlike other regions, Surrey has almost as many homeless women as there are men. It is thought that this might be because of the higher number of homeless youth in the area. But that doesn't tell the whole story. The statistics can't tell us about real people and their everyday lives. And that's why we need to hear from you.

In this focus group, there will be a small number of people who have a first hand experience of being poor. Before we start talking, we will discuss your privacy and your right to only share what you are comfortable in sharing. The facilitator, Louise Hara, will have a tape recorder and she will ask some questions to get things going. You can chose to have your comments deleted later, if you are uncomfortable with anything you said.

There are two groups being organized, one for men and one for women. You will only have people of the same gender as you in your group. You can use a name other than your own to protect your privacy, if you wish.

We will provide snacks to eat while we talk. If childcare or transportation is an issue, let us know and we will see if we can help with that

## Appendix 7

# Gender and Poverty Project Workshop

## Registration Form

Name:

Mailing Address:

Telephone:

e-mail:

Organization you come from (if any):

What do you need to be able to come to the workshop? *We will have bus tickets/gas vouchers to distribute on the day of the workshop, but can make sure you get them ahead of time if its necessary. There is also a possibility of reimbursing you for participating in this workshop, if you are losing income or the opportunity of looking for work in order to participate.*

Participation expense (yes/no):

Bus tickets (yes/no):

Gas Voucher (yes/no):

Childcare (yes/no):

If yes, how many children?

What else should we know to help make you comfortable? *(i.e. do you have food allergies, are you vegetarian, do you need hearing assistance or other kinds of translation, etc ?)*

## Appendix 8

### ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS (The Wall)

1. You are a dad driving your child and a neighbour's child to a dance class. Your boss calls you on your cell phone and needs you back at work immediately to finalize a change in the presentation for tomorrow's meeting. You are having trouble hearing him because the children start fighting.

You find yourself:

- Trying to avoid an accident,
- Convincing your boss that the change is not necessary
- Asking your child to behave

2. You are a single mom working at Tim Horton's. On your lunch break you rush out to the foodbank to pick up some groceries, especially with Christmas coming you are really short money. An old acquaintance stops you as you hurry out of the foodbank and wants information on the housing Co-op that you are in.

You find yourself:

- Balancing your load of groceries
- Trying to quickly answer questions
- Running back to work.

3. You are cooking lunch for your children coming home from school, while your two year-old is pulling on your leg and crying. You had decided to make a quick call to the Ministry of Human Resources to see who you could talk to about getting financial assistance to go back to school. You are very discouraged with part-time minimum wage jobs and want something that you will enjoy and could provide more money to live on. You are having trouble finding out who to talk to.

You find yourself:

- Being frustrated with your situation and not knowing who to talk to
- Stirring the pot to prevent the food from burning
- Consoling your two year- old child

Adapted from: *Starting with Women's Lives*

## Appendix 9

### ***SOLIDARITY BINGO***

#### **Rules of the Game**

- the object is to fill as many squares as possible in the time you have.
- each participant can only sign your card twice.
- to get a signature, you must approach a person with a square in mind. If she/he doesn't fit that square, you have a second chance to pose another question. If you strike out twice, share hands and move on to the next person.

<b>B</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>O</b>
Has been laid off in the last 5 years	Born and raised on a farm.	Has an accent different from yours	Speaks more than one language	Looked after an aging parent
Has grandchildren	Lived in more than one Canadian province.	Lived in more than one country.	Born in a different decade from you.	Has/had a pet
Can do three things at once (name them)	Born in a country other than Canada.	<b>X</b>	Has walked a picket line	Has children
Is a member of a religious institution or community group	Has voted in a recent election	Needs dental work	Does volunteer work in the community	Writes with a different hand (left/right) than you.
Has been paid less than another person for doing the same job	Has experienced racial harassment.	Has paid more than 50% of budget to rent a place to live	Lost time from work due to injury.	Owens a purple shirt

Adapted from: *Starting with Women's Lives*

## Appendix 10

### Surrey Power Line-up

- Invisible person
- Blueberry farm worker
- Single Male Parent Working at minimum wage
- Single person on income assistance
- Single Female Parent returning to school
- Home Support Worker
- Self Employed individual in the (City Market-or farmer's market or other kind of open market in Surrey)
- Ministry of Human Resources EAW/Training consultant
- E.D. of community agency
- Family physician
- Minister of State for Women's Equality, Lynn Stephens
- Mayor Doug MacCallum
- Owner of Tim Horton Franchises
- Teen in a teen program at TREES, a school program for youth who are at risk (Tim Horton's son)
- Premier Gordon Campbell

Adapted from: *Starting with Women's Lives*

## Appendix 11

### Review of statistics related to gender and poverty in Surrey BC

Documents Reviewed		
Document	Level of Analysis	Sex/Gender?
Fraser health Authority Health Profile 2001	Fraser Health Authority	No
A Profile of Aboriginal People in the Fraser Health Authority 2002	Fraser Health Authority	Some
Urban Poverty in Canada 2000	Canada, broken down by regional	no
Community Impact Profile for Surrey/White Rock May 2000	City of Surrey	p.2
GVRD Regional Project on Homelessness in Greater Vancouver 2002	GVRD	yes
City of Surrey – Surrey Population Estimates and Projections ( <a href="http://www.city.surrey.bc.ca">www.city.surrey.bc.ca</a> )	City of Surrey	p. 2-4
HRCC Surrey Labour Market Review ( <a href="http://www.bc.hrdc.drhc.gc.ca">www.bc.hrdc.drhc.gc.ca</a> )	Surrey HRCC area	no
Statistics Canada 2001 Community Profile – Surrey ( <a href="http://www12.statcan.ca/English/profil01/">www12.statcan.ca/English/profil01/</a> )	Surrey City	Yes
BC Ministry of Human Resources Research and Statistics Employment and Assistance Statistics ( <a href="http://www.mhr.bov.bc.ca/research/keyfacts.htm">www.mhr.bov.bc.ca/research/keyfacts.htm</a> )	BC	some
BC Ministry of Advanced Education Labour Force Statistics April 2002 ( <a href="http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/labourmarketinfo/">www.aved.gov.bc.ca/labourmarketinfo/</a> )	BC	yes
Ministry of Management Services BC Labour Force Statistics June 2003		
BC STATS Infoline	BC – general/overview	p. 2
BC STATS Surrey City	Surrey	Some
Statistics Canada Surrey City Aboriginal Population Profile 2001	Surrey	yes
British Columbia Moves Backwards on Women’s Equality, B.C. CEDAW Group – January 23, 2003	British Columbia	yes
Ministry Offices Region 3, Fraser ( <a href="http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/contacts/region3.htm">www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/contacts/region3.htm</a> )	Background document	n/a - no
GVRD 2001 Census Profile of BC’s Regions 2003	GVRD – background only	some
Feature Article: Migration Benefits Women Less Than Men – Population Section BC STATS 1994	BC – background only	yes
BC Monthly Statistics – Support Cases by Family Type – September 2003	BC – background only	some
Linking People To Food: Accessing low or no cost food in Surrey and White Rock	Surrey & White Rock	some

## Appendix 11

Surrey Homelessness Plan - 2003	Surrey	some
A Bad Time To Be Poor, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Social Planning and Research Council of BC June 2003	British Columbia	no
HRDC Lone Parent Profile – Oct. 1999	Surrey, White Rock and North Delta	yes
HRDC Poverty in Surrey, White Rock and North Delta – July 1999	Surrey, White Rock and North Delta	some
HRDC Disabilities profile	Surrey, White Rock and North Delta	some
Fraser Valley Regional District 2001 Census Profile of BC's Regions	Fraser Valley	Some
United Nations Committee On The Elimination of Discrimination Against Women – 28 <sup>th</sup> Session Draft Report, 13-31 January, 2003	British Columbia	Yes
Surrey: The Hidden Opportunities, Community Economic Development, Ground Works March 7,2003	Surrey	No