

# A Community Discussion on Poverty 2012



## Examining Poverty in the Canmore & the Bow Valley with Recommendations

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*A Collaboration of:*

That Poverty Project  
*(Global WE Initiatives Corp.)*



The Town of Canmore



St. Michael's  
Anglican Church



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## INTRODUCTION

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**Every community has poverty.** Canmore, and the greater Bow Valley, is no exception to this fact.

**What is poverty?** There are many definitions of poverty, and within each definition there is a spectrum of severity ranging from border-line to extreme. Universally, the definition of poverty involves some form of lack or need. Poverty in its most extreme is about the inability to access basic necessities for life. In its less extreme form, poverty is the inability to fully participate in the community as might be reasonably expected due to lack of means. All forms of poverty cause suffering for those involved, and both exist in our community.

**While every community has poverty, what it looks like changes from place to place.** Similarly, the root causes of poverty in a community can vary from place to place. A key objective to be achieved in this initiative through gathering people together from Canmore and other parts of the Bow Valley<sup>1</sup> is to explore what poverty looks like in this community. Of course, poverty affects us all. Through supporting and thereby retaining families, strengthening our work force, reducing social stresses, and realizing the corresponding beneficial economic impact ... our community only gets stronger through addressing poverty.

**The primary purpose of this community discussion, which is described in the following pages, is to gather people together to talk about poverty in this community and discern where gaps exist in order to ultimately make recommendations for action that are complementary to the various initiatives already underway.** Collaboration is the key. As the result of various groups and individuals working together, more can be accomplished collectively than if each used their resources independently. Thankfully, this initiative is taking place while simultaneous efforts are underway from the Alberta provincial government to eliminate homelessness and child poverty. Therefore, this process seeks to fill some of the gaps that exist in the present and interim period until more systemic measures can be implemented. The legacy of this process will be implementation of recommendations to fill the gap; and, hopefully, being part of the solution moving towards the alleviation or even elimination of poverty within our community.

**In order to be a compassionate and caring community, addressing poverty is simply the right thing to do.**

**“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.”**

*Peter Townsend,  
British Sociologist*

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that while this discussion does stretch beyond Canmore to other parts of the Bow Valley, particularly Banff, it did not encompass the extreme poverty to the east in Morley on the Stoney Nakoda reserve. That area is deserving of a discussion and attention beyond the resources of this particular initiative.

## A COMMUNITY DISCUSSION ON POVERTY – MAY 14<sup>TH</sup> & OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2012

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### PARTICIPANTS:

The Community Discussion on Poverty that took place at St. Michael's Anglican Church Hall in two parts, on May 14<sup>th</sup> and October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012, and was attended by 70 individuals, including representation of almost 40 organizations/departments, at either or both sessions.

The organizations/departments represented were:

Action to End Poverty in Alberta  
Alberta Health Services – Addictions & Mental Health  
Anglican Church Women (St. Michael's)  
Banff Full Gospel Church  
Banff YWCA  
The Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley  
BOWDA  
Bow Valley College  
Bow Valley Food Bank  
Bow Valley Learning Council  
Bow Valley Regional Housing  
Bow Valley Victim Services  
Canadian Rockies Public Schools  
Canmore Community Housing Corporation  
Canmore Seniors Association  
Canmore Services Canada Centre  
Canmore Public Library  
Canmore Town Council  
CAUSE Canada  
Ecole Notre Dame des Monts  
FCSS - Banff  
FCSS - Canmore  
Home Connections (Canmore)  
Lawrence Grassi School  
Momentum Global (working with Canmore Business & Tourism)  
Mountain Baptist Church  
Our Lady of the Rockies Parish  
Our Lady of the Snows Catholic School  
That Poverty Project (Global WE Initiatives Corp.)  
Ralph Connor Memorial United Church  
RCMP – Canmore Detachment  
Rocky Mountain Victory Church

“A small body of  
determined  
spirits fired by an  
unquenchable  
faith in their  
mission can alter  
the course of  
history.”

*Gandhi*

St. Michael's Anglican Church  
St. Vincent de Paul Society (Catholic Church)  
Town of Canmore – Bow Valley Parent Link  
Town of Canmore – Community Enrichment  
Town of Canmore – Municipal Services  
Victory Thrift Store

In addition, the following organizations expressed interest and support for the process although were not able to attend due to other commitments:

Alberta Works (Gov't of Alberta)  
Banff Public Library  
Job Resource Centre

## FORMAT:

At its essence, the process established by this initiative is really quite simple. First, gather a bunch of people together who are interested in addressing poverty, and share with each other what they think. Second, compile all of those thoughts into a report along with additional statistical and anecdotal information. Third, based on the discussion and information, make some recommendations to transform the discussion into action.

The first part of the discussion took place on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at St. Michael's Anglican Church Hall. Invitations to the event were sent out electronically to a wide cross-section of the community, and word of mouth awareness of the event was encouraged. Further, posters were created and posted around town. Media were also contacted in order to raise public awareness of the event. A large number of those invited attended, with some sending regrets. Most importantly, quite a number of individuals and organizations not on the original invitation list made contact in order to attend.

The gathering on May 14<sup>th</sup> opened with a short presentation from Joe Ceci, Coordinator for Action to End Poverty in Alberta, and some introductory words from Sean Krausert, Deacon at St. Michael's and Executive Director of That Poverty Project (Global WE Initiatives Corp.). The attendees were then asked to brainstorm about all the ways poverty, in its various forms, are visible in Canmore and the Bow Valley. These observations were then clustered together into issue groups, and attendees were asked to prioritize them based upon four criteria – most foundational/root cause of poverty, most urgent, most prevalent, and most important to you. Finally, the attendees broke into five small groups, each to discuss one of the top five issues as identified as a priority.



A draft version of this report was then circulated to all attendees of the first gathering as well as interested members of the wider community. The intent of distributing the draft report was to get people thinking deeper, and starting to turn their mind to the draft recommendations.

The second part of the discussion took place on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012, at St. Michael's Anglican Church Hall. Prior to this gathering, the draft version of the report was sent to local newspapers, and a news article ran in the two weeks prior to the second gathering. The news article encouraged more people to be involved, and electronic invitations were sent to all previous attendees.

The focus of the second gathering was to discuss, refine and add recommendations found in the draft report. All attendees were asked to read the draft report in advance and come to the second gathering prepared to discuss. As with the first gathering, the session opened with a short update presentation from Joe Ceci, Coordinator for Action to End Poverty in Alberta, and some introductory words from Sean Krausert, Deacon at St. Michael's and Executive Director of That Poverty Project (Global WE Initiatives Corp.). The discussion then moved to general comments about the draft report. After a short time was spent on general comments, the remainder of the session was devoted to small group discussions about the recommendations combined with large group reporting/feedback on the small group discussions.

With the finalization of this report and its recommendations, various interested stakeholders will now work to encourage adoption and implementation of the recommendations by the various parties involved.

## FINDINGS:

### ○ Observations & Categorization of Issues

The attendees of the May 14<sup>th</sup> gathering made a number of observations with respect to poverty as it exists in Canmore and the Bow Valley. The following is a complete list of those observations, clustered after the fact into nine categories – (i) communication issues; (ii) transportation issues; (iii) need for awareness /changing attitudes; (iv) access to basics – food / necessities / child care; (v) life skills and education issues; (vi) housing issues; (vii) employment issues; (viii) moving from servicing poverty to eliminating poverty; and (ix) miscellaneous.

#### ▪ *Communication Issues*

- need greater awareness of services available
- those in need often lack connection with community
- general gap in knowledge as to how to help someone who has nothing and nowhere to go

**“Overcoming poverty is not an act of charity; it is an act of justice ... Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”**

*Nelson Mandela*

- ***Transportation Issues***
  - within the Bow Valley
  - to/from Calgary
  - affordability
  - no shelter waiting for the bus (presumably referring to the Greyhound)
  
- ***Need for Awareness / Changing Attitudes***
  - unique community – huge economic disparity exists
  - need to break down barriers and enhance inclusion/acceptance into the community
  - with high cost of living, it is really tough to “keep up with the Joneses”
  - sector of the population is leaving Canmore (esp. young families, single parents)
  - there is a changing paradigm emerging in addressing poverty
  - unequal access to social amenities (need for programs to ensure access to amenities for all)
  - small community dynamic – being seen to be poor affects one’s pride/reputation and leaves one open to gossip
  - poverty is often hidden (those struggling hide it)
  - out of sight, out of mind prevents the issues from being addressed
  - isolation can easily happen with little/no access to social amenities combined with transportation issues
  - need more information as to why people are leaving
  
- ***Access to Basics – Food, Necessities & Child Care Issues***
  - people arrive in Bow Valley without anything (transient workers, travellers, from Morley)
  - high cost of living ... especially effects unemployed, underemployed, working poor, and seniors on fixed income
  - the number of kids impacted by poverty is high and growing
  - high number of children serviced by the food bank makes the cost of each hamper high
  
- ***Life Skills & Education Issues***
  - some need help to access educational opportunities

**“The opposite of  
poverty isn’t wealth.  
The opposite of poverty  
is justice.”**

*Bryan Stevenson,  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice Initiative*

- education is not affordable to a number of people
- people in need must have access to technology in order to break free of being in need (lack of access is a huge hurdle that a person needs to overcome in order to function well in society)
- need a CALM program (career and life management) ... help with budgeting, creating resumes, filling in forms, understanding about insurance and health coverage, etc.
- school fees for kids are a huge challenge for a growing number of families (as shown by increased number defaulting or unable to pay)

▪ ***Housing Issues***

- hidden homeless ... segment of the population that “couch surfs” and/or lives in the bush
- lack of affordable housing options
- need for quality, affordable rental property (esp. for families)
- lack of options for temporary refuge/shelter (in the instance of family violence there is sometimes no option but to stay because no money and no affordable housing/shelter)
- special needs ... mental health, addiction sufferers
- if tenant has problems with landlord, he/she has difficulties if it is an illegal suite or can't afford legal advice
- income support insufficient to cover high cost of housing
- lack of local foster home/program for children in need

▪ ***Employment Issues***

- low level of wages compared to cost of living (“working poor”)
- discrimination against older workers, single parent, and “too high” qualifications
- abuse of part-time workers (lack of respect that workers have other jobs, short notice makes it tough to coordinate child care)
- need for multiple jobs
- high proportion of seasonal workers and temporary foreign workers live in poverty
- work permit/bureaucracy (long security check process) represent barriers to trade/business development
- lack of diversity of jobs

**“If everyone who wants to see an end to poverty, hunger and suffering speaks out, then the noise will be deafening.”**

*Archbishop  
Desmond Tutu*



- *Moving from Servicing Poverty to Eliminating Poverty*
  - claw backs from supported income/government programs effectively keep people in poverty
  
- *Miscellaneous*
  - lack of free tax help
  - tax treatment with respect to child support results in lower income than is recognized by government support programs
  - poverty results in considerable stress for those affected
  - isolation and barriers of those in poverty affect the overall sense of community, not only for those who are lacking resources but everyone

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**“Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.”**

*Benjamin Franklin*

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○ **Prioritization**

- *Most Foundational/Root Causes (% of votes)* ... the following are the issues identified by attendees as being the biggest root causes or most foundational with respect to overcoming poverty in the community (the biggest two in CAPS):

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES.....	28%
NEED for AWARENESS / CHANGING ATTITUDES.....	26%
Housing Issues.....	16%
Moving from Servicing Poverty to Eliminating Poverty.....	12%
Communication Issues.....	10%
Life Skills & Education Issues.....	8%
Access to Basics – Food, Necessities & Child Care.....	0%
Transportation Issues.....	0%

- ***Most Urgent (% of votes)***... the following are the issues identified by attendees as being the most urgently in need of resolution (with the biggest three in CAPS):

HOUSING ISSUES.....	24%
EMPLOYMENT ISSUES.....	21%
COMMUNICATION ISSUES.....	21%
Access to Basics – Food, Necessities & Child Care.....	16%
Need for Awareness/Changing Attitudes.....	8%
Moving from Servicing Poverty to Eliminating Poverty.....	6%
Transportation Issues.....	3%
Life Skills & Education Issues.....	0%

- ***Most Prevalent (% of votes)***... the following are the issues identified by attendees as being the most prevalent problems in the community (the biggest two in CAPS):

HOUSING ISSUES.....	31%
EMPLOYMENT ISSUES.....	25%
Communication Issues.....	15%
Need for Awareness/Changing Attitudes.....	15%
Transportation Issues.....	7%
Access to Basics – Food, Necessities & Child Care.....	4%
Life Skills & Education Issues.....	4%
Moving from Servicing Poverty to Eliminating Poverty.....	0%

- ***Most Important to You (% of votes)***... the following are the issues identified by attendees as being the most important to each of them personally (the biggest three in CAPS):

COMMUNICATION ISSUES.....	25%
NEED for AWARENESS / CHANGING ATTITUDES.....	19%
EMPLOYMENT ISSUES.....	18%
Access to Basics – Food, Necessities & Child Care.....	14%
Moving from Servicing Poverty to Eliminating Poverty.....	12%
Housing Issues.....	9%
Transportation Issues.....	2%
Life Skills & Education Issues.....	2%

○ **Small Group Discussions (May 14, 2012)**

The attendees split into five small groups, each to discuss one of the five areas identified as being the highest overall priority. The five priority areas are – (i) employment issues; (ii) housing issues; (iii) communication issues; (iv) need for awareness / changing of attitudes; and (v) access to basics – food / necessities / child care.

▪ ***Re Employment Issues***

- It was discussed how the care and well-being of service level workers goes to the sustainability of the community.
- There are a large number of people who must hold multiple jobs to get by, which makes for scheduling difficulties and the actions of one employer can impact the business of another employer.
- Not enough middle level jobs in the Bow Valley.
- It would be a good initiative to determine what the “living wage” is in Canmore.
- The municipality should be encouraged to adopt a living wage policy for its employees, and encourage employers to adopt living wage by making the business case for such and, perhaps, offering tax incentives.
- Creative solutions should be encouraged, e.g. an employer can pay less than living wage by providing other benefits such as day care.
- Recognizes the benefits of paying sufficient wages are good for business throughout the community. “What is earned in the community is spent 7 times” (... plus retention of employees and lower training costs, increased relational business).
- An employment audit in the Bow Valley could provide useful information with respect to wages, number of jobs held by individuals, level of employment, employer practices, etc.
- It would be interesting to determine whether there are any “volunteers” filling what could be or should be paid positions.
- In order to encourage good employer practices, it would be a good initiative to have social and traditional media highlight and acknowledge employers who are implementing good practices.

“Without deviation  
from the norm,  
progress is not  
possible.”

*Frank Zappa*

▪ *Re Housing Issues*

- There are lots of gaps in housing needs ... affordable for working families, seniors, disabilities, mental health, long-term care, and temporary refuge.
- It's recognized that change is happening, but progress is slow. Some patience is required.
- Discussed initiatives that can help "the home" ... a local "re-use it" center, a "treasure" exchange, and renovation parties.
- There should be requirements re employee housing and explore the possibility for mobile home parks.
- Entry level housing in Canmore is really not entry level.
- Must address housing because the community is losing people.

▪ *Re Communication Issues*

- An electoral forum should be held to raise awareness of social issues.  
*(Editor Note ... a very successful Social Forum was held prior to the Canmore municipal by-election in June 2012.)*
- Communication is important as it creates awareness of services available while avoiding duplication of efforts.
- Communication should not only be between services but to the public, especially with an on-line presence.
- FCSS can be the "one-stop shop" (at least being able to do referrals where they cannot help) but only available during business hours.
- "Bow Valley Affordability Guide" will be released in November '12.
- An needed initiative is a "Bow Valley Help Hub" ... an on-line point of access that includes social media broadcast and two-way communication; not just representing service providers but also accessible for people to list the "help needed" (i.e. gaps); not attached to the municipality but residing in the community; promotion of this hub would be required.

**"No kind action ever stops with itself. One kind action leads to another. Good example is followed. A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees. The greatest work that kindness does to others is that it makes them kind themselves."**

*Amelia Earhart*

- *Re Need for Awareness/Changing Attitudes*
  - There are lots of “silos” within the Valley (i.e. distinct groups/spheres of influence) ... the question is how to bring groups together?
  - The valley is a tough place to live from the perspective of affordable housing, and that children often don't have opportunity to stay.
  - The community is supportive when asked for help ... just have to get the issue(s) in front of people.
  - Encourage “re-creating community” ... meeting neighbours, being a friend to those around you, supporting programs like Food for Learning.
  - Welcome package to new arrivals to help set expectations, referral to points of contact for available services, and how to connect with social media.
  
- *Re Access to Food, Necessities & Child Care*
  - With respect to access to Food, ideas include ... Soup Kitchen a few nights per week (can relieve the strain on grocery budgets and provide for socialization), a delivery component for the Food Bank (as transportation is sometimes an issue), a Community Kitchen where families can cook together, and more “10% Tuesdays”.
  - The above points of interaction could also be opportunities for food education (i.e. economical food purchase and preparation tips, balanced diet, etc.).
  - At every point of contact with respect to food, there should be awareness building with respect to the full scope of availability of services in the community, including trained personnel to deal with addiction and mental health issues.
  - Grocery stores can be better utilized to (i) create awareness with the general public as to what sorts of products are needed by the Food Bank; and (ii) awareness of services available in the community.
  - Much “hidden poverty” in Canmore ... people living hand to mouth, nothing available for emergencies, grasping to stay afloat.
  - Transportation is an issue in accessing food, necessities, and child care for those who live in “affordable” housing in Three Sisters area.

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**“The measure of a society is found in  
how they treat their weakest and most helpless citizens.”**

*Jimmy Carter*

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## ADDITIONAL / SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

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Following the gathering on May 14<sup>th</sup>, a number of participants forwarded additional information with respect to the status of poverty in the Bow Valley. These included:

• Canmore Community Monitoring Report 2010.....	13
• Banff Community Social Assessment Report 2008.....	15
• Canmore Public Library Statistics.....	16
• KidSport Statistics.....	17
• Bow Valley Learning Council Statistics.....	17
• Bow Valley Food Bank.....	17
• Job Resource Centre's – Fall 2012 Labour Market Review.....	18
• References for Additional Sources.....	18

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### Canmore Community Monitoring Report 2010

(Prepared and Written by the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley)

Flowing from the 1995 Growth Management Strategy Report, the Canmore Community Monitoring Program was established to monitor and evaluate trends in the community. The report covers topics that include: Identity (population information), Economic Sustainability, Social Fabric, Environmental Stewardship, and Civic Engagement and Leadership.

This edition of the report contains the following:

- “Population turnover and migration are natural occurrences, however they could be considered a concern if people cannot establish themselves or their families in a community due to the cost of living or other factors. In Canmore, the high cost of living in general, and housing in particular, can be important factors in the decision to leave the community. This is likely one of the major factors influencing the dynamics of the permanent population.” (p. 21)
- “Canmore’s permanent population has shifted towards an older demographic. The most rapid growth has been in the 45-54, and 55-64 year old age brackets. The proportion of children aged 0-14 and adults aged 25-44 are generally stagnant and/or in decline. The result of this has been a relative decline in the number of families with school aged children. A combination of housing affordability and employment opportunities in Canmore, have likely been key drivers of this demographic shift. If this trend continues, then the erosion of families and children from Canmore will have significant impacts on the social fabric and sense of community.” (p. 23)
- “The proportion of single parent households with children in school increased from 12.6% in 1995, peaking at 21.0% in 2006. In 2009 it was 18.1%.” ... “It is important to note that across Canada, lone parent families headed by women comprise a disproportionate share of all children living in a low-income situation in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006).” (p. 27)

- “The affordability and availability of housing remains a major limiting factor for recruitment and staffing positions in Canmore and is identified as a limiting factor by the 2010 Sustainable Economic Development & Tourism Strategy (Western Management Consultants, 2010). The recent addition of PAH units to the housing market is an important start that provides additional options in the housing market.” (p. 34)
- “The higher median individual incomes may be partly a reflection of the need to meet the high cost of living in Canmore. This may be due in large part to the high participation rates in the labour force and/or working multiple jobs to afford the high cost of living. In an analysis of income and poverty in Alberta, The Parkland Institute concluded that it is “not the benefits of the boom we are seeing, but families working harder to maintain their standard of living” (Parkland Institute, 2007).” (p. 40)
- “For Canmore, the all-commodities index was higher than the baseline for Edmonton in all survey years. In 2010, for the first time, it was highest all-commodities index value (111.9) of all the communities surveyed. In most other survey years, Canmore has ranked as the 2nd or 3rd highest all commodities index (Fort McMurray is often in the top spot). The main contributing factor to the high index value was shelter costs (which includes both rental and purchase prices).” ... “Prices of goods and services, and in particular of housing, have had a significant influence on shaping Canmore’s demographic profile and community fabric. Beginning in 2003, and coinciding with rapidly increasing real estate values, there was a substantial decline in the number of children and youth (ages 0-14), likely due to the out-migration of a number of families with children. This decline reduced the proportion of children and youth in the community, and reduced the total number of children and youth (ages 0-14) in 2009 back to 1995 levels.” (pp. 53-54)
- “The participation rates in these food assistance programs (Christmas Hampers, Food Bank, Food for Learning, Meals on Wheels) indicates that there are individuals and families in the community who are struggling to meet their basic needs. They also suggest a disconnect between perception and reality, as some people think of Canmore as an affluent community where everyone has substantial financial resources.” (pp. 68-69)
- “Many social assistance programs are not keeping pace with the increasing cost of living, make it more difficult for people on social assistance to live not only in Canmore, but in other communities as well. This makes it very difficult for people who are living at or near the affordability threshold to remain in the community.” (p. 71)
- “While police presence and the apprehension of offenders are important components of law enforcement and public safety, the police cannot be everywhere at all times. The citizens themselves are the ones who help to make their community a safe place to live. Developing a sense of community, neighbourhood, and a strong social fabric are all important to maintaining a peaceful and safe community.” (p. 73)
- The median resale housing price in 2008 was \$529,000, which was out of reach for any of the median income categories. For example, a couple family with a median income of \$93,490 and enough money (\$104,651) for a 25% down payment would qualify for a mortgage on a \$418,608 home, well below the median price of \$529,000. The affordability issue becomes more challenging for most lone parent families and non-family persons as they have significantly lower

median incomes than couple families.” ... “To meet the affordability threshold for the average rental accommodation in Canmore a renter (or renters) would require an hourly wage of \$20.15 for a one-bedroom apartment, or \$29.66 for a two bedroom apartment. The threshold for shared accommodation would be an hourly wage of \$11.87 (affordability is defined by CMHC as 30% of gross income and based on the average rental prices for February to July 2008).” ... “Although the upward trend in real estate values has moderated since the peak in 2008, purchasing market-priced housing is beyond the average level of wages for many workers in town. This gap between wages and housing prices creates challenges for both people who would like to remain in the community and for employers who would like to recruit and retain long-term staff. The recent construction of PAH and other affordable housing units is an important step towards providing suitable housing options for many residents.” (pp. 89-91)

At present, the 2012 version of the report is being prepared and will be released in early 2013.

A copy of the report can be accessed at:

[http://www.biosphereinstitute.org/?page\\_id=442](http://www.biosphereinstitute.org/?page_id=442)

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### **Banff Community Social Assessment Report 2006 & Updated in 2008**

(Town of Banff FCSS with support of the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley)

Created to be a baseline for future planning, the report “aims to create a comprehensive picture of current social well-being and vitality” in Banff. The original report was written in 2006, with the statistics updated in 2008.

The statistics from 2008 include:

- Total reported median income in 2006 was \$29,000, lower than that in Alberta (\$31,400), and higher than that reported for Canada (\$26,500).
- 836 people or 13.8% of Banff’s residents (in private households) were living below the low income cut-off level (LICO) in 2005. Compared to 15.3% in Canada, and 12.2% in Alberta. Eighty-four “economic families” (or 5.8% of the total) were below the LICO, and a total of 609 unattached individuals were below the LICO.
- The median monthly payment for rented dwellings in 2006 was \$931 in Banff, compared to \$731 in Alberta and \$825 in Calgary.

Statistics from 2008 (updating 2006 report) can be accessed at:

<http://www.banff.ca/Assets/PDFs/Locals+PDF/Services+PDF/2008-social-assessment-update.pdf>

2006 Community Social Assessment Report can be accessed at:

<http://www.banff.ca/Assets/PDFs/Locals+PDF/Services+PDF/Community+Social+Assessment+2006.pdf>

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## Canmore Public Library Statistics

*Free Memberships...* 120 – 150 per year through a variety of programs.

- 14 patrons listed as receiving a free library membership because they are AISH recipients.
- A small handful of free memberships on a hardship basis, but records of that information are not kept. (*Note – These are rare because people have to (i) be aware they can ask for free services; and (ii) be prepared to ask for the help.*)
- This year, we provided 27 free memberships to the Bow Valley Literacy Program (see below).
- The Canmore Public Library runs the Step up to Reading program, in which a free book bag with vouchers for a free family membership and free books are provided to each family with a new baby (provided through the Health Unit). In 2010, 107 free memberships were provided through this program; and, in 2011, 86 free memberships were provided.

*Free Internet Access...* in 2011, 42,550 free internet appointments were provided.

- Canmore Public Library provides free access to the internet, which is a service that is heavily utilised for job searching, preparing resumes, searching for accommodation and handling government applications like work permits and residency applications. However, it is not possible to provide anything other than anecdotal data on how much of that time related to the above activities. It could be loosely estimated that something like half those appointments relate to the sort of activities identified above. In shoulder season, when the seasonal workforce is changing over, it is closer to nine out of ten.

### *Access to Information*

- Through reference questions, Canmore Public Library staff assists patrons to locate and utilize information relating to accommodation, landlord and tenant law, work permits and immigration, English as a second language support and learning, medical services, etc.
- Bow Valley Literacy operates through Canmore Public Library and Banff Public Library. They currently have 27 students assisted with English as a second language one-on-one with volunteer tutors. This is a free service, and those students are each provided with a free library membership in their first year in Canmore as a permanent resident. However, they also run an open conversation group for any in need of language assistance, whether permanent or temporary, with the purpose to provide assistance without barriers.

### *Resource*

- Canmore Public Library is front line in either providing these direct services, or in directing people to other services within our community where they can access assistance such as food and accommodation.

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## KidSport – Fast Facts

KidSport™ is a Children's Charity dedicated to assisting children of families facing financial obstacles to participate in community sport programs.

- In 2011, KidSport Bow Valley funded 79 unique children (10 that were funded for more than one sport).
- In 2011, 22 sport organizations had KidSport funded athletes, representing 13 different sports; football, volleyball, basketball, skiing, hockey, gymnastics, karate, soccer, figure skating, dance, bowling, and snowboarding.
- In 2011, KidSport Bow Valley distributed \$19,821.50 to approved kids.

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## Bow Valley Learning Council

The following is information with respect to bursaries and waiver of fees in 2011 and 2012:

- 2011
  - 72 bursaries of \$50 approved – applied for by learners towards taking community classes (including English Language, French, First Aid, Computer courses, etc);
  - \$5,387 in full fee waivers approved – co-applied for by learner and course provider to cover full course/class fees (27 individuals) – generally Computer, English Language, Office/Admin skills, Accounting (i.e. employment skills).
- 2012 (to date, includes Winter & Spring sessions, Fall session still to come)
  - 84 bursaries of \$50 approved – applied for by learners towards classes (including English Language, first aid, computer/admin programs, etc);
  - \$5,975 in full fee waivers approved – co-applied for by learner and course provider to cover full course/class fees (30 individuals) – generally Computer, English Language, Office/Admin skills, Accounting (i.e. employment skills).

As shown above, there is a higher demand this year for bursaries and waivers. This is partly due to increased awareness and improved ease of the application process starting this year. It would be difficult to assess how much of the increase is due to harder economic times for our residents, although the sense is that economic hardship is a significant factor.

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## Bow Valley Food Bank

The Bow Valley Food Bank provides an emergency source of food in crisis situations. Recent statistics include:

- In the operating year of 2011/12, the Bow Valley Food Bank (Canmore) provided 469 hampers serving 797 people, including 199 children.
- The average number of hampers provided over 5 year periods is growing:

- April '97 – March '02 Average                    362 hampers/year
- April '02 – March '07 Average                    457 hampers/year
- April '07 – March '12 Average                    507 hampers/year
- The highest years of service were 2002/2003 (957 people served) and 2009/2010 (892 people served).

Recent and historical statistics from the Bow Valley Food Bank can be accessed at:

<http://www.bowvalleyfoodbank.ca/index.html>

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### Job Resource Centre's – Fall 2012 Labour Market Review

The job resource has kept excellent statistics about the job posting and clientele that come through its doors. It has also calculated some statistics that speak to the broader conditions in the Bow Valley, including average rental rates:

- Canmore – \$934/mo for a 1-bedroom unit; \$1,315/mo for a 2-bedroom unit; \$1,643/mo for a 3-bedroom-unit; \$752/mo for a bachelor suite; and \$586/mo for a roommate/shared.
- Banff – \$1,051/mo for a 1-bedroom unit; \$1,364/mo for a 2-bedroom unit; \$1,986/mo for a 3-bedroom-unit; \$912/mo for a bachelor suite; and \$646/mo for a roommate/shared.

A copy of the full document can be found at:

<http://jobresourcecentre.com/>

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### References for Additional Resources

- *Poverty Costs Report* – Prepared by Vibrant Communities Calgary and Action to End Poverty In Alberta, the report outlines the billions of dollars in annual costs that could be saved by adopting a poverty reduction strategy in Alberta. The report can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.actiontoendpovertyinalberta.org/index.php/poverty-in-alberta/poverty-reduction-strategy-report>
- *Literacy Report re the Wild Rose Constituency* – Indicates (i) there is a low level of high literacy jobs in this region ... which should be raised; and (ii) while level of illiteracy low, affecting literacy will produce economic dividends. The report can be accessed at the following link: [http://www.dataangel.ca/\\_public/EDLiteracyReports.php](http://www.dataangel.ca/_public/EDLiteracyReports.php)
- *An Explanation of "Living Wage"* ... contained within the article at the following link: [http://thetyee.ca/News/2012/05/14/Living-Wage-Enough/?utm\\_source=mondayheadlines&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=140512](http://thetyee.ca/News/2012/05/14/Living-Wage-Enough/?utm_source=mondayheadlines&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=140512)

- *How to Understand the Cost of Living in Your Community* - A January 2010 guide to determining living wage put out by the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC). The report can be accessed at the following link:  
[http://www.thatpovertyproject.com/pdf/How%20to%20Understand%20the%20Cost%20of%20Living%20in%20Your%20Community%20\(SPARC%20BC\).pdf](http://www.thatpovertyproject.com/pdf/How%20to%20Understand%20the%20Cost%20of%20Living%20in%20Your%20Community%20(SPARC%20BC).pdf)
- *A New Deal for Families* - Fact Sheet 2011 summarizing a proposal that would increase the well-being of young families in Canada. It can be accessed at the following link:  
[http://blogs.ubc.ca/newdealforfamilies/files/2011/11/New-Deal-for-Families\\_summary-of-3-policy-recommendations.pdf](http://blogs.ubc.ca/newdealforfamilies/files/2011/11/New-Deal-for-Families_summary-of-3-policy-recommendations.pdf)

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“I don't believe in charity. I believe in solidarity.  
Charity is so vertical. It goes from the top to the bottom.  
Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person.  
I have a lot to learn from other people.”

*Eduardo Hughes Galeano*

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## SUMMARY

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There are those who are in need in Canmore and the Bow Valley. And, the number of people in need is not insignificant.

A variety of initiatives are currently underway in Canmore and the Bow Valley that will positively impact residents who are struggling to get by. Just to name a few, these initiatives include planning for additional seniors' housing, new regional transportation, expanding affordable housing options, interagency work, and the efforts of a number of churches. However, many of these initiatives take time to fully develop. Meanwhile, not all needs are being addressed.

Housing and employment are seen as the most urgent and most prevalent issues that must be addressed by the community. This is supported by both anecdotal and statistical data provided by the attendees of the community discussion.

Another urgent issue, and seen as most important by many attendees of the community discussion related to communication. Even greater energy is required, building upon considerable efforts to date, to create public awareness of the programs and services that are already available in the community to help those in need.

Employment issues and the need for changing attitudes with respect to poverty were seen by attendees of the community discussion as both foundational /root causes of poverty in Canmore, and as being personally important matters to be addressed. It is hoped that by addressing employment issues, and changing attitudes with respect to poverty, less people will find themselves in need; or, if in need, will seek the help that is available to them.

Not to be forgotten amidst these issues of highest priority, there are other related issues visible in the community. There are transportation issues, access to basic necessity issues and child care, access to life skills and education, and a perceived need to move from simply servicing poverty to eliminating it. It's no simple task to address all of these challenges.

Perhaps the greatest asset towards overcoming these challenges is the sheer volume and expertise of the people and organizations in the community who (a) recognize there is a problem and (b) are willing to be part of the solution. Community working together has the ability to greatly alleviate, if not eliminate, a vast majority of the challenges faced by many people in the lower economic brackets in Canmore and the Bow Valley.

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**“Poverty is a scandal of our times because it CAN be changed.”**

*Katherine Marshall,  
Georgetown University*

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Based upon the Community Discussion on Poverty as well as additional resources and information, the following recommendations are put forth:

### NOTE TO READER

The following recommendations are made in full recognition of the great work already being done in the Bow Valley to assist those in need, and is intended to build upon and be complementary to this work.

### Re Employment Issues

1. To the Town of Canmore ... engage either Administration or perhaps the Biosphere Institute to determine the “Living Wage” in the Bow Valley.
2. To the Town of Canmore, the Town of Banff, and the MD of Bighorn ... adopt a “Living Wage” policy for municipal employees to set the example for businesses in the Bow Valley.
3. To That Poverty Project ... to pull together a committee to adapt Vibrant Communities Calgary materials for Bow Valley businesses in order to make the business case for adopting a “Living Wage”.
4. To Canmore Business & Tourism (Canmore Business Hub) and Local Newspapers ... adopt a regular article or section in the newspaper educating about healthy employment practices and celebrating businesses with good employment practices.
5. To the Biosphere Institute ... as part of future Community Monitoring Reports, include an employment audit to provide information with respect to wages, number of jobs held by individuals, level of employment, employer practices, etc. (perhaps gathering this information in conjunction with Canmore Business & Tourism, Downtown Canmore BRZ, BOWDA, and others organizations).
6. To the Town of Canmore ... bolster census questions to obtain more information to support an employment audit (wage levels, number of jobs held by individuals, level of employment, etc.).

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

## Re Housing Issues

7. To YWCA... consider establishing a regional hotline to support YWCA's availability as a shelter for abusive situations being accessed by those in need in both Banff and Canmore .
8. To the Town of Canmore and Canmore Community Housing Corporation (CCHC)... encourage exploration of creative ways to increase the pool of quality, affordable rental units on the market, including but not limited to bringing "illegal suites" within regulatory scrutiny and possibly greatly enlarging the pool of rental units controlled by CCHC (not owned, but controlled).
9. To FCSS, Local Churches, Victory Thrift Store, the Hostel Bear, Canmore Rotary House, and YWCA... formally discuss and establish a policy/process whereby a person in emergency need of shelter can access a room temporarily 24/7, and how awareness of such can be communicated to those who may have need of such. The policy might use Banff process as a model, and should ensure some responsibility/onus on the recipient.
10. To Local Churches, Businesses and Schools... meet with each other to assess interest in collectively creating a body of people who could participate in being part of a "swarm" that assists in renovations, outfitting homes, or meeting emergencies where need is determined, perhaps by FCSS.

**“Unless someone like  
you cares a whole  
awful lot, nothing is  
going to get better.  
It's not.”**

*Dr. Seuss,  
The Lorax*

## Re Communication Issues

11. To InterAgency Service Providers... identify several points of "first contact" (i.e. public library, food bank, churches, thrift store, FCSS, hostels, RCMP, etc.) and create "Help Boards" that provide current information with respect to services available to those in need.
12. To InterAgency Service Providers... embark on a "Need Help?" campaign using traditional media, social media, an on-line website, posters, and word of mouth to create awareness of where people can go if they need help or where other people can be directed if help is needed. *(NOTE – since the October 15<sup>th</sup> gathering, this item is now in progress.)*
13. To InterAgency Service Providers... meet to make a plan to move forward with a "Bow Valley Help Hub" initiative, being an on-line point of access with respect to services available for those in need, which includes two-way communication whereby people can list the "help needed" (i.e. gaps).

14. To FCSS... create a plan using realtors, schools, and other points of initial contact for new residents to get information about services available in the community and how to access them, i.e. variation on the Welcome Wagon program.

### Re Need for Awareness/Changing of Attitudes

15. To Local Churches and Network of All Attendees... embark on a “Good Neighbour” Campaign to define what it is to be a good neighbour and to encourage positive helping interaction between neighbours.
16. To That Poverty Project and Local Media... develop a regular presence in papers and on radio, as well in social media, that creates awareness of poverty in the Bow Valley and highlights new initiatives and studies that recognize the benefits to all of us in alleviating poverty.

“There is no Them.  
There are only facets  
of Us.”

*John Green,  
American Author*

### Re Access to Basics – Food, Necessities & Child Care

17. To Bow Valley Food Bank... coordinate with local grocery stores to clearly identify with signage those products needed by the food bank; ensure availability of a drop box in each grocery store; and work with grocery store to publicize the program. (*NOTE – since the May 14<sup>th</sup> gathering steps have been taken in this regard, but feedback and suggestions with respect to the new system may be helpful.*)
18. To Local Churches... meet to evaluate interest and resources with respect to providing a weekly “Soup & Bun Night” (i.e. soup kitchen) as well as having a presence by helping agencies in order to connect people with sources of assistance. (*NOTE – since the October 15<sup>th</sup> gathering steps have been taken to start this discussion and make it a reality. In progress.*)
19. To FCSS/Bow Valley Parent Link and Local Churches... meet to evaluate interest and resources with respect to providing more child care options.

### Re Transportation Issues

20. To Network of All Attendees... spread the word that FCSS in Banff and Canmore is the location for persons in need to receive passes on the new ROAM bus service between and within the two communities. (*NOTE – since October 15<sup>th</sup> gathering this item is now in progress.*)



21. To Greyhound and the Town of Canmore ... explore ways to inexpensively and effectively provide some shelter to those waiting for the Greyhound bus. (*NOTE – since the May 14<sup>th</sup> gathering this item is now in progress.*)

### Re Life Skills & Education Issues

22. To Bow Valley College, Bow Valley Learning Council, FCSS, Alberta Works and the Job Resource Centre ... explore any potential of creating a C.A.L.M. (Career And Life Management) course for adults that can be accessed by patrons of the Job Resource Centre, Alberta Works and FCSS.

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“And that is how change happens.

One gesture.

One person.

One moment at a time.”

*Libba Bray,*

*Author*

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## NEXT STEPS

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Following on completion of this report, the next steps include the following:

- Presentation of the Final Report to Canmore Town Council along with any related recommendations to the Town of Canmore.
- Sean Krausert, That Poverty Project/St. Michael's following up with every recommendation to communicate with designated and interested stakeholders, facilitate discussion of same, and encourage implementation.
- A further gathering of attendees and others may be held as a follow-up to this process if it is determined to be needed.

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**“Our lives begin to end the day we  
become silent about things that matter.”**

*Martin Luther King Jr.*

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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For further information, comments, questions, or to get involved... please contact:

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