

Making a Difference: Taking Action on Poverty in Surrey

Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition (SPRC) 2022 Community Forum

FORUM SUMMARY

Date: December 9, 2022

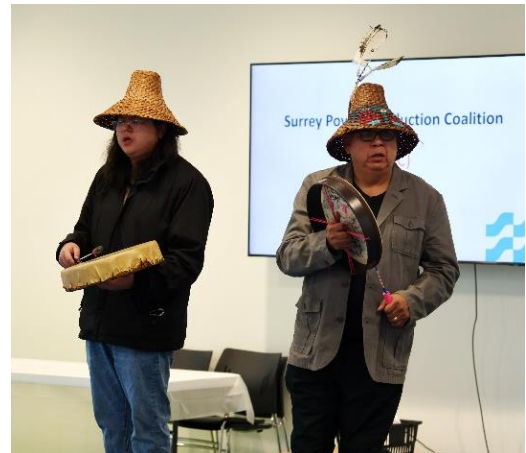
Location: The Rosewood, Elizabeth Fry Society

Time: 9am – 3:30pm

Participants: ~60

Territorial Welcome: Kwantlen First Nation

Kevin Kelly and Michael Kelly Gabriel opened the day with a generous welcome, emphasizing the importance of taking care of ourselves and one another.



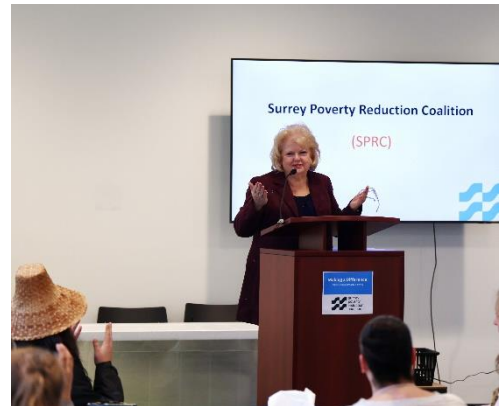
Participants shared:

"I loved the opening welcomes."

"Enjoyed the talks a lot. Great Indigenous opening and closing."

Opening Remarks: Mayor Locke

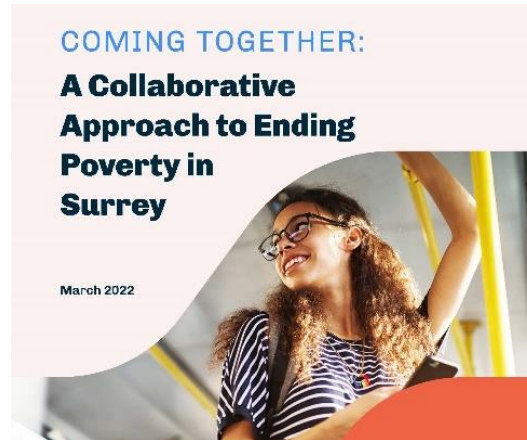
Mayor Locke shared her appreciation and support for the work of the SPRC, thanking the organizations and individuals furthering important poverty reduction initiatives to improve the lives of Surrey residents.



SPRC Overview: Past, Present & Future

SPRC executive committee members, Vera La Franc (Elizabeth Fry Society), Steve Dooley (SFU Surrey), and Aileen Murphy (City of Surrey, Housing and Social Development) provided an overview of the SPRC from its conception in 2012 with the development of the 2012 Plan: *THIS (Transportation, Housing, Income, Support) is How We End Poverty*, through implementation of community action projects, mobilizing community forums, and championing change through advocacy.

Currently the SPRC supports three initiatives: Community Leaders Igniting Change (CLIC), Connecting Community to Surrey Youth Leaving Care, and an Equity Research Project. More information on these initiatives is available on the SPRC's new [website](#). In 2022, the SPRC launched its new Plan – [Coming Together: A Collaborative Approach to Ending Poverty in Surrey](#), with the mission to facilitate collective action on eliminating poverty and inspiring systemic change in Surrey.



Equity & Poverty Workshop: LevelUp Planning Collaborative

Central to the SPRC's plan is applying an equity lens to its work on poverty reduction. With an aim to develop a shared understanding of equity and what it means in the Surrey context, the SPRC's equity research will inform the SPRC's actions as well as support the work that individual organizations may undertake. The SPRC has retained Level Up Consulting to prepare fact sheets on poverty in Surrey using an equity lens. This work builds on the initial equity research undertaken for the development of *Coming Together: A collaborative Approach to Ending Poverty in Surrey*.



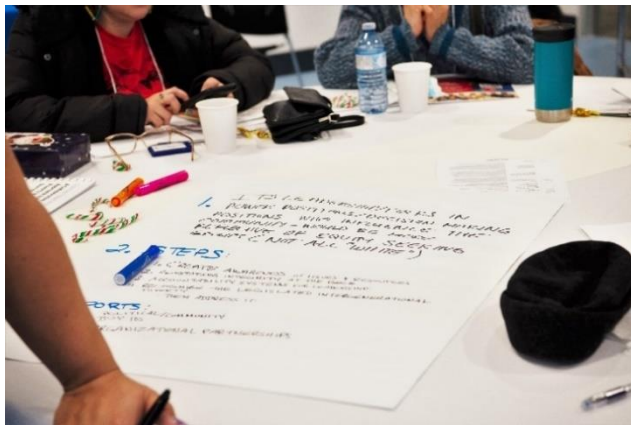
Lavleen Sahota and Ciara Chamberlaine from Level Up Consulting provided a presentation on equity and the intersection of equity and poverty. They shared nine key learnings on integrating equity into poverty reduction work:

1. Bring your whole self into the work – *everything you experience in the world is shaped by aspects of your identity.*
2. Language matters – *be conscious that people may react differently to a particular phase – your non-reaction is a privilege.*

3. Meet people where they are at – *this is challenging work, and we’re all learning. Exclusion from the process is not okay.*
4. Data can be great, but it must be questioned – *consider intersectionality as much as possible and be critical of how data is collected and presented as it has the potential to cause harm.*
5. Question everything / dig deeper – *what is the story behind the story? Learn to sit in the discomfort rather than run away from it.*
6. Work to define success together, then develop systems to determine whether you’re getting there – *from whose perspective are you defining success?*
7. This work is all about relationships – *value relationships first – with ourselves, each other, clients, and community members.*
8. Balance upstream and downstream actions – *actions that address immediate needs and also those that address root causes of poverty are important.*
9. Use a “nutcracker approach” – *social inequalities and poverty are most effectively tackled by simultaneous political / policy level action, together with community-level action.*

Participants completed a self-reflection activity in partners, considering and sharing the biases, lived experiences, and privileges they each bring to this work. In small groups, participants then discussed the following three questions, capturing their thoughts on poster papers:

1. What would Surrey look like if it was centered in equity? How could you tell?
2. What might be some first steps to achieve that vision?
3. What supports do you need to take those steps?



LevelUp will be compiling the community responses, which will inform the creation of a set of Poverty in Surrey fact sheets, which will be made available in Spring / Summer 2023.

Participants shared:

“The highlight of the day were the equity discussion / presentation and stories.”

Transitioning From Care – Voices of Young People

Heather Lynch, Options Community Services, moderated a discussion with former SPRC Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) members, Stacey Sterne and Zae Martinze. Stacey and Zae shared their personal experiences with the government care system, the people and supports that made a difference, and what could we be doing better.



Key Takeaways:

- Take youth seriously and include youth in decision-making and policy change processes.
- The YAC provided a welcoming environment and fostered deep relationships with peers.
- Adequate financial support needs to be provided to youth to remove barriers to youth participation in policy change.

Participants shared:

“The highlight of the day was the Transitioning from Care - voices of young people session.”

“Hearing from Youth in Care and the folks from Skookum Lab. Wow! Emotional, clear, and inspiring with clear calls to action.”

Addressing Indigenous Poverty – Stories from Skookum Surrey

Vera LeFranc, COO Elizabeth Fry Society moderated a discussion with Krystal Dumais and Megan Rosso who are both involved in Skookum Surrey. Krystal and Megan shared their personal experiences of poverty in Surrey and highlighted the important work of the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee (SUILC) and it’s Skookum Surrey initiative in strengthening the urban Indigenous community and cultural connections.



Key Takeaways:

- Skookum Lab developed a concept for poverty reduction called the 4 C’s - Community Belonging, Connection to Family, Cultural Awareness/ Visibility, Cash/ Financial Security.
- The Skookum process is so impactful because it centres Indigenous wisdom and relationships.
- Skookum Surrey hosts monthly events for community to gather and participate in different cultural activities – more information is available on the Skookum Surrey social media.

Participants shared:

“The highlight was hearing the individual stories from people who had been impacted by poverty reduction initiatives.”

“The highlight was the story telling - hearing from people with lived experiences and Indigenous voices.”

Fostering Hope – Reflections on Progress Made

Penny Bradley, Alex House Executive Director and SPRC Co-Chair, moderated a discussion with Shane Simpson, Former Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Tabitha Naismith, Newton Chair of BC ACORN and SPRC Co-Chair. Shane and Tabitha offered insights into how to move the dial on poverty.



Key Takeaways:

- There will be opportunities with new Provincial Ministries being created and the new Federal Disability Legislation.
- A significant challenge with securing PWD (Person With a Disability) support is having a physician complete section 3.
- Change will be incremental – we are making progress and need to celebrate those steps forward.
- Advice on how to advocate:
 - Choose 2-3 priorities and do a deep dive on these issues.
 - Give practical advise to politicians – think about realistic options and paths forward and do not just speak rhetoric and ideals.
 - Find champions – build relationships and get the support of local MLA’s or bureaucrats before you go to the Minister.

Participants shared:

“Shane Simpson's clarity was really helpful and the whole day was excellent.”

“The afternoon panel sessions were very powerful!”

Closing: Semiahmoo First Nation

Chief Harley Chappell provided a powerful closing, highlighting the discrepancy of resources and services available on and off-reserve, and the need for economic reconciliation.

Participants shared:

“The highlight of the day was Chief Harley.”

“The Kwantlen Nation representatives and the Semiahmoo Chief were the highlight of the day.”

“Really enjoyed speaker from Semiahmoo.”



For updates on the SPRC, please visit www.surreyprc.ca

Participant Feedback

Participants had an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback day-of on paper forms as well as digitally on a follow up survey. Twenty participants provided feedback, all sharing that the forum was worthwhile, with the majority of participants indicating that they felt the event was 10/10 worthwhile. Participants rated the afternoon panel sessions very highly and the equity session highly.



Areas of Improvement

<p><u>Format</u> Future community forums should have <i>more</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive elements • Opportunities for planning and collaboration • Group work on advocacy and calls to action • Time to talk about poverty reduction strategies • Breaks (frequency and duration) • Youth panel stories • Networking opportunities 	<p><u>Participants</u> It would be great if <i>at future forums</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision makers are there and stayed for the sessions. • A broader diversity of people from different sectors - business, school district, health, etc. were engaged.
<p><u>Knowledge Translation</u> It would have been helpful if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was greater clarity on actionable goals • Level Up presentation was linked more closely to action and strategy • There were more handouts pertaining to the sessions to make it easier to follow 	<p><u>Venue & Technology</u> When choosing a location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be an adequate sound and projector systems for the size of the room.

"I really appreciated this event, and it opened my eyes to the great work already being done, as well as the plans and efforts being made to tackle the challenges that remain."

"Thank you for this event. I hope it is the start of more conversations as so many great ideas that can be moved forward."

"I have pages full of notes from this event. It was incredible, thank you!"

"I think we need to do more of this."



Making a Difference: Taking Action on Poverty in Surrey was made possible with the financial support of the Vancouver Foundation and PlanH Healthy Communities Fund.