

NEWS RELEASE

Town launches public engagement for Poverty Reduction Plan

Ladysmith, February 10, 2021 - What are the factors contributing to poverty in Ladysmith and Stz'uminus? How does it affect us as individuals, families, in our neighbourhoods? What can we do about it?

The Town of Ladysmith in cooperation with Social Planning Cowichan and our community partners have launched [CommUNITY Together to End Poverty - Hw-nuts'-ulwum](#) (as one) - a project aimed at engaging area residents on the ways we can work together to reduce poverty.

The project will lead to the creation of a Poverty Reduction Plan, identifying strategies for tackling the underlying causes of poverty by engaging with those who have lived experiences as well as with those who have not, to encourage everyone to participate in the solutions.

Over the coming weeks, we are looking to hear from Ladysmith and Stz'uminus community members. We want to find out how poverty impacts residents as we explore possible solutions together.

The first opportunity for public input is through a [Poverty Reduction Questionnaire](#) that is available now through the [project website](#) as well as on PlaceSpeak.

While there are universal strategies for addressing poverty, each person's experience can be unique depending on where they live, access to affordable housing, employment opportunities, transportation, healthy food, health care, social services, education, all while combating instances of discrimination.

"A community-based Poverty Reduction Plan will help guide us towards a better understanding of the unique issues facing residents here in Ladysmith and area as we work towards creating lasting change for folks who may be struggling," said Mayor Aaron Stone. "At the same time, the face of poverty is changing and we have seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic how families, seniors, neighbours and youth venturing out into the workforce are all struggling in different ways."

Hearing directly from those who have experienced poverty is critical to the project's success. A diverse group of six peers with lived experience will be hired to conduct interviews and capture stories and recommendations for improving conditions for vulnerable populations.

Poverty Reduction Challenges

Community members are also invited to participate in one of three Poverty Challenges during the week of March 29 – April 9, 2021.

Can you live on a three-day food allowance that is based on social assistance? What would it be like to only have access to public or active transportation for three days? What would you do with 12 hours out in the community and nowhere to go?

Sign up now through the [project website](#) to complete one of these three Poverty Challenges. Participants will have an opportunity to share their experiences and explore ideas that will be incorporated into the strategy.

“There is no one solution to poverty,” said Chief Roxanne Harris. “I am excited for our leadership and community members to be involved in this project, especially with the poverty challenges. This will give the opportunity for people to have an experience that will help them come up with solutions collectively, together.”

A CommUNITY effort

The CommUNITY Together to End Poverty - Hw-nuts'-ulwum (As One) project is guided by a working group of community-based organizations that will champion the engagement process.

Members of the working group includes local representatives from the Ladysmith Resources Centre Association (LRCA), Stz'uminus Health, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Vancouver Island, First Nations Health Authority, Stz'uminus Primary School, Island Health, Our Cowichan Health Network, Nutsumaat Lelum Child Care Centre, School District 68, the Town and Social Planning Cowichan.

The Hul'q'umi'num word “Hw-nuts'-ulwum,” meaning *as one*, was selected by a Stz'uminus Elder to give further meaning to this project.

“Everyone is encouraged to participate. We are really relying on the strong relationships and connections that we know already exist in our community,” said Rosalie Sawrie, Social Planning Cowichan Project Director and Facilitator. “The more that people fill out the questionnaire and/or participate in the poverty challenges, the greater success we will have in developing a strategy of local actions that will best address the needs of those living in poverty in our communities.”

The Town successfully received [provincial funding in June 2020](#) to develop a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Ladysmith and collaborated with Social Planning Cowichan and other community agencies to complete the project.

More information, the questionnaire and other ways to participate can be found at www.communitytogethertoendpoverty.ca.

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