



Richmond PRC Newsletter

❄️ Winter 2016-17 ❄️

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PRC launches ‘Eliminating barriers to participation’ project

The Richmond Poverty Response Community is a coalition of Richmond residents and agencies working together to reduce poverty and its impacts with research, projects and public education. To that end, RPRC is launching a new project: “Eliminating barriers to participation for Richmond residents experiencing poverty.”

The goal is three-fold — to help those living in poverty develop a self-advocacy network to tell their stories; educate local service providers on the wide range of issues contributing to poverty; and create opportunities for like-minded folks to meet (via community forums, neighbourhood gatherings, city council meetings, etc.) to discuss and affect positive changes in policy promoting barrier-free participation.

“There’s a synergy with diverse groups of people coming together. Something is going to come out of this which could change the community, and it could be some-

thing simple,” said RPRC chair De Whalen.

The initial phase of “Barriers” will involve trained volunteers facilitating a number of conversation circles, or places where individuals experiencing poverty and agency staff can tell their stories. As the project progresses, a self-advocacy network of people experiencing poverty will be established to support each other and find opportunities to tell their stories to local agencies, groups, clubs and other organizations.

This particular demographic, that is largely ignored by society and left without a voice, includes people experiencing mental and physical disabilities, new immigrants and refugees, single parents, low-income families and seniors on pensions, and more. Coordinator Colin Dring said at its core, the Barriers project is relational.

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Tenants lose homes over reno/demovictions

With vacancy rates under one per cent, tenants across the Lower Mainland are finding themselves evicted as landlords look to reap profits from rising rents.

"Landlords are misusing the [B.C.] Residential Tenancy Act to their advantage to kick out renters," says Richmond Poverty Response Committee chairperson De Whalen, referring to the so-called renovictions and demovictions.

As Whalen explains, renovictions occur when landlords issue notice to end tenancy due to renovations.

"Under the Residential Tenancy Act, they can do this, as long as [the renovation] is major, so the unit is not habitable in the short

term," she says. But oftentimes landlords are simply hoping to get rid of tenants paying below market prices.

"Then they only do minor renovations, such as replacing a toilet or fixing a leak, and re-rent the unit to someone else at a much higher rent," she says. Similarly, demovictions happen when the original landlord sells the property to a new owner, who then evicts tenants in order to demolish and build new property.

"Sometimes they evict two to three families that are living in two to three suites in the old house. The renters then have no place to go," says Whalen, who urges individuals to understand their rights under the B.C.

Residential Tenancy Act. "For instance, it is illegal in BC for a landlord to demand first and last months rent before renting out a suite," she says.

The act also states that renovations should be completed without eviction whenever possible. Necessary permits must also be obtained before landlords can give tenants notice, and such landlords are required to compensate one month's rent.

Still, low rental stock continues to threaten affordable housing.

"Over 22 per cent of the population is low-income and there is little over 3000 rental suites for people. The numbers don't match up," says Whalen.

— Cherrie Lam

Study of food insecurity among homeless mentally ill adults in Vancouver

A limited number of studies have shown that homeless populations are affected by higher levels of food insecurity, but little is known about food insecurity among homeless adults living with mental illness. Understanding the extent to which food insecurity affects homeless mentally ill adults is crucial to informing relevant policies, intervention and reducing related health consequences. A recent study was the first to address the question of what is the prevalence and potential factors associated with food insecurity among homeless adults with mental disorders.

A cross-sectional study design was used to analyse baseline data from participants of the Vancouver At Home Study, all of whom were homeless or unstably housed adults with mental illness and were recruited by referral from community agencies in Vancouver. Of the 421 participants, 64% were food insecure.

The exceptionally high prevalence of food insecurity in this sample of homeless adults living with mental illness indicates the need for consideration and intervention. Screening for the aforementioned correlates may help identify those who are food insecure. The supported notion is that current food provision systems to food insecure individuals are insufficient, with a better systematic response needed.

— via The Homeless Hub



First living wage summit held

The Living Wage for Families Campaign (LWFC) and the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (BCPRC) partnered in November to deliver a two-day summit for engaged community members from across B.C.

“The Poverty Reduction — Living Wage summit was an opportunity to draw connections between the local and provincial. It is through strengthening our connections and understanding the common issues that we face that we can begin to address the realities of low wage work and advocate for more employers to sign on to pay a living wage to all direct and contracts staff,” says Deanna Ogle, LWFC organizer.

B.C. has one of the highest overall rates of

poverty in Canada, yet is now the only province in Canada without a poverty reduction strategy. Poverty is partially a low wage story, with one in three poor children in the province living in a home where at least one parent is engaged in full time, full year work.

Trish Garner with the BCPRC added there is currently a broken social safety net that needed to be addressed collectively.

Key features of the event included presentations by Cease Wyss, a Skwxw'u7mesh ethnobotanist, media artist, educator, and food security activist, and keynote speaker Paul Taylor executive Director of Gordon Neighbourhood House and co-chair of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, who has been active in right to food and social justice organizations for most of his life.

“It’s about highlighting these issues around poverty and then embedding them in this idea that relationships between organizations, between the community, between people living in poverty — these need to be bolstered,” said Dring.

“By enhancing and developing these relationships and networks, we can create a community-based approach to addressing poverty.”

The project would not be possible without the assistance of several partners and their affiliates, such as Richmond Family Place, Richmond Food Bank, Richmond Drop-in Centre, Chimo Community Services, Richmond Centre for Disability, Richmond Multicultural Community Society, Richmond Public Library, Kehila Society of Richmond, Richmond Community Meals, Pathways Clubhouse, Richmond Addictions Services, Salvation Army Richmond and Touchstone Family Services.

In order to ensure as diverse results as possible, the Barriers team intends to ask others not registered in “the system” for participation as well.

To put it simply, Whalen said of the project, “We want to find out how people living in poverty are coping and how we can make it better.”

For questions and the latest updates, join the conversation on Facebook and Twitter by using the hashtag #DoorsNotWalls.

— Benjamin Yong, Richmond PRC



.... a coalition of Richmond residents and agencies working together to reduce poverty and the impacts of poverty with research, projects and public education.

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee has a strong track record of identifying gaps in services to the poor in our community, and partnering with suitable agencies to implement effective solutions. We have many ongoing and new projects that need your support.

VOLUNTEER: The RPRC welcomes the participation of all members of the community. There are regular meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. at the Richmond Caring Place. We also always need help at events, doing outreach, and putting together our newsletters.

DONATE: As a non-profit organization, the RPRC depends upon generous donors like you. Your tax-deductible gift will help support our research, education, and projects. Please make cheques payable to the Richmond Food Bank Society and add 'Poverty Response Committee' on the memo line. To get involved: call 604-205-1200 or email info@richmondprc.org.

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