Exploring Rural Poverty

Pilot Project Summary Report

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Acknowledgements

Availability

Copies of this report have been provided to the McBride and Area Public Library, the Robson Valley Support Society, and the Village of McBride. Copies of the report have also been provided to all participants. Copies have also been posted on the UNBC Community Development Institute's website: www.unbc.ca/cdi.

Project Reports

- Pilot Project Methodology Report
- A Review of Socio-Economic Characteristics in the Robson and Canoe Valleys
- Pilot Project Summary Report

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Exploring Rural Poverty: Pilot Project Summary Report

1.0 Project Description

Poverty remains an important, but challenging research, policy, and lived world issue. It is found in all communities – in all regions. In Canada, most research has been urban focused and our knowledge about the dynamics, experiences, and complex underpinnings of rural poverty is more limited. Since the early 1980s, Canadian rural and small town places have experienced accelerated economic and social change. These have generated new pressures that affect those living on low income and households at risk of living with low incomes. These impacts are especially important in resource-based economies and those places located at a distance from major urban centres.

This research project is a pilot designed to outline issues associated with rural poverty. The location for this pilot study is McBride, BC and its surrounding region. The pilot explores how key factors, attributes of place, and institutional processes affect household journeys into and out of poverty. This includes interactions between households and service networks to develop a greater understanding of emerging issues.

The research project is important for three reasons. First, the timing of the research is critical as communities respond to the impacts of on-going change and prepare for the future. Second, research beyond statistical characteristics of low income in rural Canada is generally limited, but needs addressing if we are to develop more place-based policy solutions. Third, findings from the research will broaden an understanding of the unintended consequences of change and policy on rural low income and can be used to inform future debates.

This report is comprised of four sections. Following this introduction, there is a review of what defines poverty and low income, as well as a discussion about what makes this issue different in rural and urban places. Pathways into poverty are then explored through a discussion of the pilot study. This will include a discussion of strategies and mechanisms that have been used to cope with low income, as well as a discussion of key issues and barriers that affect residents.

All data in this report come from 22 key informant interviews with residents, service providers, community groups, and leaders that were conducted in the Fall of 2011. Responses from these interviews were compiled into tables that contain key themes and patterns. Each table consists of theme headings and sub-headings. The theme headings are bolded and have a numerical count beside them of the total number of comments received for that particular topic. Under each theme are sub-headings that are in plain, non-bolded font. These cover the range of issues captured under a key theme. Beside each sub-heading is a numerical count of the total number of participants who raised a specific issue. When all of the sub-heading comments are added up, they indicate the number of times that a particular theme was raised. For a more detailed discussion of the interviews and analysis of this study, please see the Pilot Project Methodology Report.

2.0 Background

2.1 What is Poverty?

There are many definitions of poverty. Overall, however, there are two general approaches to understanding the issue. These include: 'material versus social deprivation' and 'relative versus absolute poverty'. Material deprivation can be experienced through limited income, hunger, unstable or unsafe living conditions, lack of education, lack of transportation, etc. With material deprivation, the emphasis is on a lack of materials compared to the average person. Social deprivation is both a cause and an outcome of material deprivation. With social deprivation, people may be excluded from participating in activities or belonging to groups or organizations. They may have limited power, influence, or control over decisions affecting their lives.

The second approach differentiates relative from absolute poverty. People may be viewed as relatively poor if they are unable to obtain a variety of goods and services that meet a standard for that society (i.e. poor diet, overcrowded / substandard housing, no personal vehicle, illiterate or less education than most, etc.). Absolute poverty is not open for interpretation like relative poverty. In this case, people have no shelter, no food, and no access to clean water or sanitation.

In Canada, there is no consensus about how poverty should be defined or measured. However, Statistics Canada's low income cut-off (LICO) has been used as an artificial indicator of low income. It is understood as the threshold at which families spend a higher proportion of their income on basic necessities. This threshold is based upon a 20 percentage point difference between low income household and average income household expenditures. This means that if the average family spends 43% of its income on basic necessities such as shelter, food, and clothing, then households spending 63% or more of their income on such necessities would be identified as low income.

In rural and small town places with less than 10,000 people, the LICO begins at just over $14,000 for a single person before taxes (Table 1). The LICO for small places is less due to the anticipated lower housing costs. This assumption, however, does not reflect the diverse rural landscape where housing markets may be impacted by economic booms or by an influx of seasonal homeowners or property investors. The LICO also does not take into account other expenses, such as transportation costs incurred to commute to larger communities to access regionalized services.

Table 1: Before-tax versus after-tax LICOs for 2005

Number of People	Rural areas		Less than 30,000		Less than 100,000	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
1 person	14,303	11,264	16,273	12,890	17,784	14,380
2 persons	17,807	13,709	20,257	15,690	22,139	17,502
3 persons	21,891	17,071	24,904	19,535	27,217	21,794
4 persons	26,579	21,296	30,238	24,373	33,046	27,190
5 persons	30,145	24,251	34,295	27,754	37,480	30,962
6 persons	33,999	26,895	38,679	30,780	42,271	34,338
7 persons	37,853	29,539	43,063	33,806	47,063	37,713

Source: Statistics Canada. 2006. Low Income Cut-Offs for 2005 and Low Income Measures for 2004. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

2.2 What Makes Rural Poverty Different from Urban Poverty?

Most research and policy attention is focused on poverty in urban areas. Rural poverty, however, is different. First, poverty in small communities tends to be more hidden. This is because people tend to view small places as picturesque, ideal communities. When this is combined with the small town environment where everyone tends to know everyone else, people may hide their financial pressures. Low income households may not be clustered together as much as in urban centres. In resource-dependent regions, there is a history of low-skilled jobs that have been lost with the adoption of new technologies and a movement towards more skilled labour. At the same time, low-skilled employees may have more limited access to education and training supports to assist them to build the capacity necessary to take advantages of new opportunities. Furthermore, due to the isolated nature of some places, commuting to nearby communities to search for employment is much more difficult. The result is that unemployment is likely to last longer as people search for jobs elsewhere or wait for the economy to recover.

3.0 Pathways

This part of the report describes the key themes identified in the pilot study about factors associated with living with low income.

3.1 Key Events

It is very rare that low income has a single cause. Instead, it can be influenced by a broad range of factors. As such, residents, service providers, and leaders were asked to discuss key events and triggers that have influenced low income in the region. Key events that were highlighted included pressures in the forest and agricultural sectors, as well as the subsequent impact these changes have had on employment and other facets of the local economy, the restructuring of key services and supports, and pressures associated with transportation and travel to other places. In terms of forestry, for example, people talked about the impacts of mill closures (i.e. McBride Forest Industries), the loss of the forest district office, and market pressures. The agricultural community has been impacted by changes in government regulations, such as new inspection regulations and fees, unfavourable market conditions for selling their products, new processing

and water management regulations, and the BSE crisis. Pressures in these resource-based sectors have led to business closures, the loss of full-time jobs, and the displacement of workers. Government services, supports, and resources continue to be regionalized, and have resulted in the closure of the Ministry of Social Development office in McBride, as well as fewer employees with the Ministry of Highways. Participants also expressed concerns about the impact that these economic pressures have on the quality of educational opportunities, as well as the retention of educated professionals. As more services are concentrated in distant regional centres, there are concerns about the costs and ability of low income residents to access services. Communities such as Dome Creek and Dunster depend on McBride and Valemount for the provision of general services. Residents in the region, however, must travel three hours to distant centres, such as Prince George or Kamloops (Table 2). If residents are required to travel to a larger metropolitan centre to access additional, more specialized services, they must first commute three hours to the nearest airport and then take a flight to Vancouver. The stress of commuting these distances can be compounded by poor winter driving conditions through mountain passes.

Table 2: Distance between McBride and other centres

Place	Distance from McBride (kms)	Distance from Valemount (kms)
Vancouver	750	669
Prince George	208	300
Kamloops	400	324
Jasper	163	124
Valemount	84	
McBride		84
Dome Creek	90	174
Dunster	30	54
Tete Jaune Cache	67	18

3.2 Key Triggers

To explore the complexity of living with low income in rural regions, participants were asked to discuss key causes. The most prominent triggers involved employment, personal finances, and health issues. First, employment was deemed to be the most prominent trigger due to the quality of employment opportunities (i.e. low wages, underemployment, part-time / seasonal employment); the lack of new employment opportunities (both for specific age groups such as youth or older workers, as well as for less skilled workers now impacted by the mechanization of industry); job losses associated with industry, office, and business closures; and a general sense that limited diversification has also limited the breadth of employment opportunities. The effects of employment barriers are then exacerbated by problems associated with personal finances, including limited budgeting / financial skills, debt / poor credit, and limited access to benefits (i.e. low social assistance rates, spouse's pension benefits, or child support payments).

Sudden or chronic health changes may not only reduce, restrict, or impede one's ability to continue employment, but can also add unanticipated expenses that can be difficult to cover with low incomes. In this study, participants talked about both sudden (i.e. injuries / accidents, funerals) and chronic (i.e. addictions, mental health disability, general chronic health issues) health care issues. The financial impacts of these health conditions were exacerbated if they required therapy or prescriptions that were not covered by health care benefits. An important

problem in rural settings can be unanticipated travel and accommodation costs incurred by residents who must commute to regional centres (for medical / care treatment).

The adoption of labour shedding technologies have produced new demands for high-skilled labour and have left low-skilled labourers at-risk if they are unable to access new education and training opportunities. Participants expressed concerns, however, that in addition to limited access to education programs, there are high costs for such programs.

Participants also argued that the rising cost of living for items such as housing, transportation (i.e. gas, insurance, maintenance, and repairs), Internet / communications, and services (i.e. daycare) can both trigger and make it difficult for people with low incomes to keep pace with such changes. The absence of services can also exacerbate transportation costs for those who must commute (again, generally three hours or more) to other places to access supports.

Finally, relationships and personal development characteristics were identified as issues that impact well-being. For example, changes within families and relationships can trigger poverty as relationship breakups, divorces, and poor enforcement of child support payments can lead to unexpected costs and reduced disposable incomes. On the other hand, personal characteristics, such as a lack of confidence, can impact the ability of low income residents to obtain supports when needed.

3.3 Cost of Living

Addressing the needs of rural poverty can be difficult due to perceptions that the cost of living is generally lower in rural and small town places. However, some studies suggest that higher costs may be incurred by rural residents for commuting and transportation, heat and electricity, phone and Internet services, food, shopping, and health care. Therefore, participants were asked if they felt the cost of living was reasonable.

Overall, home maintenance (i.e. heating and utility costs, communications, and repairs), transportation (i.e. gas, insurance, and vehicle repairs), and food costs were identified to be prominent concerns for low income residents in the study areas. With a smaller retail sector and more limited choices, some felt that clothing, boots, equipment, hardware, and other general items were more expensive. Other cost of living concerns included health care (i.e. prescriptions or commuting long distances for health care), housing (i.e. rent, insurance, and land prices), and recreation (i.e. community events, recreation equipment, etc.). Once these basic costs are addressed, low income residents may have limited financial resources remaining to address other needs.

3.4 Strategies for Coping with Low Income

While several formal and informal coping mechanisms used by rural households can be very similar to those used in urban areas, government decisions to regionalize resources and supports can jeopardize some of these coping strategies. In this section, we asked participants about the benefits and disadvantages for low income residents living in the McBride area, as well as strategies that have been used to cope with or escape poverty.

In the context of small communities, it is not surprising that most participants felt that the key benefit for low income residents was community support. This community support was grounded in informal support networks, as well as donations to, and support provided by, local community groups. Despite earlier concerns about certain aspects of the cost of living, several participants felt that the cost of living was more affordable compared to urban centres. Furthermore, the close proximity associated with small town living makes it easier for low income residents to access basic local services and supports.

In contrast, an important disadvantage for low income residents involved transportation issues, such as limited options, costs, and winter driving conditions. These transportation barriers have made it difficult for low income residents to connect with regionalized services in other places. Emerging concerns were also cited about community supports. Both limited availability and reductions in local services and resources can make it difficult for low income households to cope, as well as to build the capacity needed to move out of poverty. Other disadvantages included the status of the economy.

When participants were asked to discuss strategies used to cope with living with low income, the most prominent response involved changes in consumption. Low income residents have also engaged in the informal economy by gardening, harvesting food and firewood in the forest, hunting, fishing, and other subsistence activities. They have also acquired support and resources through local and regional service organizations, as well as through their networks of family, friends, and other residents. Other coping strategies have included changes to transportation (i.e. bicycle) and employment (i.e. obtaining a new or second job). When participants were asked how their coping strategies were enhanced by living in a small community, people talked about their access to community services and supports, the affordable cost of living, the small town living environment, and new employment opportunities that emerged.

3.5 Barriers to Addressing Low Income

In this final section, we asked participants to talk about key barriers that may inhibit the use or effectiveness of available coping mechanisms. Most comments focused upon reduced access to services as a result of fewer personnel and resources to deliver supports, strict eligibility criteria and other program restrictions, and a movement to on-line delivery of services. Accessing on-line supports can be difficult for those who do not own a computer, those who have limited computer literacy skills, those who are unable to access public computers outside of work hours, or for those who are unable to load government web pages with a dial-up Internet connection.

A second area of concern involved <u>attitudinal barriers</u>. These problems can emerge when low income households have been living in poverty for a long time. Some participants noted that there may be a culture of defeat or an acceptance of low income as a way of life. Others felt that some problems remain hidden, and that there may be a stigma attached to accessing supports. Others noted that without <u>employment</u> or financial security, they would not be able to move out of low income. Limited <u>financial management</u> skills or financial capacity can also make it difficult to cover not only household <u>costs</u>, but also the cost of accessing local and regionalized services and programs. Other barriers to coping included limited <u>informal support</u> networks, <u>health</u> problems, limited <u>education and training</u>, limited <u>life skills</u>, and limited access to <u>transportation</u>.

4.0 Infrastructure and Services

Since the 1980s, urban-based models and policies aimed at reducing government expenditures have been downsizing, closing, and regionalizing rural and small town services and programs. Social infrastructure and services, however, play an important role helping low income residents develop and maximize their resources as they cope with economic and social pressures and work to move out of poverty. In this section, we describe the key themes and issues associated with residents' access to housing, transportation, education and training, employment and self-employment programs, community services and supports, and social / recreational programs.

4.1 Housing

Household pressures can be triggered by direct and hidden housing costs. It can also be impacted by market pressures and the availability of social housing options. Therefore, participants were asked if the current housing situation in the McBride area meets the needs of low income residents. Participants talked about several positive developments, including an expansion of the existing social housing stock with <u>new BC Housing units</u> for seniors and people with disabilities. Some felt that <u>affordable housing</u> and rental options were available in the region. Other forms of housing support identified in the region include <u>BC Native Housing</u> and <u>safe shelters</u>.

A number of concerns, however, were also raised about the existing housing stock. The most prominent concern was the <u>lack of affordable, good quality rental units</u> as some housing was deemed to be poorly insulated and to have high heating costs. At the same time, there are concerns that the <u>affordable housing stock is declining</u> due to market pressures from external investors. Others noted that it can be confusing and difficult to work through the <u>process of applying for, and waiting for, BC Housing</u> units. Furthermore, there are <u>no emergency or short-term housing options</u> within the area. In response, participants identified several key housing needs, including an expansion of low income housing, assisted living, supportive housing for residents with mental health disabilities, short-term / transition housing, an emergency shelter, and a hospice home. Another key issue to be addressed is the limited awareness that low income residents have about programs to assist with housing costs.

Given the impact that house repair costs can have on household budgets, participants were asked to describe their awareness of any local, provincial, or federal housing repair and renovation

programs for low income households. At the local level, many people talked about the handyman program available through the Robson Valley Support Society, as well as support that can be obtained from churches, First Nations organizations, friends, family, and from other residents. A number of participants also talked about the federal EcoEnergy Retrofit Program, as well as programs offered through the Canada and Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC). It is important to note, however, that CMHC programs, such as the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program or the Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence Program, were temporarily not accessible to BC residents. A bilateral agreement announced last summer between the Province and the federal government transferred the funding and responsibility for delivering these programs to BC Housing (http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/prfinas/prfinas_016.cfm). BC Housing recently announced the Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence Program (http://www.bchousing.org/Initiatives/Renovating/HAFI) and an announcement for the re-introduction of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program is expected soon. When asked if they used any assistance programs for household repairs, however, some respondents noted that they had accessed support from CMHC programs in the past to address repair and upgrade needs. To improve household repair programs, participants recommended developing a program to share building materials and equipment.

4.2 Transportation

High costs for fuel, repairs, and insurance, as well as the limited availability of personal or public transportation options not only impacts mobility within and between rural and small town places, but it can also impact access to services and supports and exacerbate social and economic pressures. When low income participants were asked how they travel within the community, most relied on their personal vehicle, rides from family and friends, or walking. Annual transportation costs for low income participants ranged from $2,400 to $3,600. As a result, some noted that they could no longer afford to insure their vehicle and must find other modes of transportation.

When asked if the current types of transportation options meet the needs of low income residents in the area, positive transportation supports identified by participants included the Northern Health Connections bus, as well as transportation supports provided through informal networks, the Old Age Pensioners Association, and the Robson Valley Support Society. However, residents are not able to access informal transportation support on a routine basis, and, as a result, limited transportation options have affected their ability to access goods and services. Concerns were also raised about the inconvenient schedules offered by the private sector bus service and the Northern Health Connections bus, resulting in extra costs for overnight stays in regional centres or difficulty arranging local transportation when returning to the area late at night. At the same time, insurance costs, liability issues, and a limited pool of volunteers has impacted initiatives to address transportation issues across the valley.

A bus or shuttle service to connect residents across the Robson and Canoe Valleys remains an important priority amongst participants. Others felt that greater synergies could be developed to make public transportation more efficient, specifically by expanding the use of the Northern Health Connections bus or developing agreements to utilize school buses for weekend

transportation. Several pilot initiatives were also recommended, such as a winter transportation program, a monthly shuttle, or a weekend taxi service. Better promotion of pilot initiatives and existing transportation programs is also needed.

4.3 Education and Training

Historically, many residents were able to secure high-paying low-skilled employment. Labour restructuring trends, however, have produced demands for high-skilled labour and have left many low-skilled labourers at-risk. Limited education and training opportunities, however, has been a barrier to helping rural residents prepare for and take advantage of new opportunities.

To explore how key education and training issues impact the well-being of low income residents, participants were first asked to describe key organizations that provide education and training programs in the area. School District 57 and literacy programs were identified as being able to meet basic educational needs, while the Valemount Learning Centre, the Robson Valley Support Society, and the Ministry of Forests have provided post-secondary / industry programs. Public interest courses are also provided through the public library and the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

When asked to discuss the strengths of these programs, participants felt that organizations worked hard to be responsive to local needs or to connect residents to education programs outside the region. Video conferencing technology has also been used to enable residents to participate in regional education programs. At the high school level, programs are available to develop leadership skills and connect students with learning experiences outside of the community.

Participants then discussed concerns with five key areas of education and training, including post-secondary education, grade school education, continuing education, distance education, and literacy. The impacts of limited educational opportunities in the area are compounded by costs incurred to commute for courses and workshops in distant regional centres. While participants felt positive about educational programs offered through the Valemount Learning Centre / CNC in Valemount, they expressed concerns about the impacts of funding cuts on program availability. Concerns were also expressed about educational opportunities for youth due to aging teachers in the school district, as well as reductions in teaching staff, teaching resources, and the breadth of high school courses that are available on an annual basis. Following the closure of Canoe Robson Educational Development Association (CREDA), fewer continuing education opportunities have been available. There have also been a number of challenges to developing and delivering continuing educational opportunities, such as the financial costs of bringing instructors in from outside of the area, limited volunteers, fluctuations in the standards or quality of the courses, and limited promotion of programs. Success with distance education has been limited due to difficulty coordinating schedules for video conferencing classes and limited support for distance education programs. Literacy programs have also been impacted by fluctuating resources.

Low income residents talked about key forms of financial support to help access education and training programs, such as personal credit, student loans, scholarships / bursaries for high school

graduates, training programs for displaced forestry workers, apprenticeship grants, and training grants through the Elks / Royal Purple. Some programs, such as literacy programs, were free. It was noted, however, that reductions in EI funding for training, as well as funding for education programs, has limited access to education opportunities.

In addition to limited financial resources, participants talked about other key barriers around access to education and training supports including limited education and training programs, limited promotion of programs, a lack of literacy (reading and computer literacy) programs, limited access to a computer or the Internet, and limited access to transportation. Recommendations by low income residents to improve education / training programs included broader and longer promotion of education programs; developing greater flexibility in how programs are designed, accessed, and completed; and reduced rates for low income residents.

4.4 Employment and Self-Employment

With fewer employment offices in rural and small town places, scarce information about labour market trends and limited access to programs can affect employment opportunities and decisions.

While some low income participants have experienced long periods of unemployment due to chronic illnesses or industry layoffs / shutdowns, others have only experienced short-term periods of unemployment. When asked about key barriers to obtain or maintain employment, low income participants talked about transportation barriers; limited employment opportunities; challenges with starting and maintaining a business; limited access to information, equipment, and supports; and health conditions. In response, some have accessed employment and self-employment support programs locally, as well as through organizations in distant centres such as Prince George or Vancouver. Key employment and self-employment programs identified within the area included the Community Futures Self-Employment Benefits Program, as well as employment services offered through the Robson Valley Support Society. Others talked about support provided through the Chamber of Commerce, the McBride Community Forest Corporation, and summer youth employment programs.

When all of the participants were asked to discuss the strengths of employment / self-employment programs, people talked about the opportunities provided to test skills and gain experience; quick access to useful information, advice, and mentoring supports; the production of success stories; and good cooperation across local organizations. On the other hand, concerns were expressed about operational constraints, program restrictions, promotional / information problems, financial barriers, and personal capacity constraints that limit access to, or the effectiveness of, employment and self-employment programs. In terms of operational constraints, top down program requirements from senior levels of government have restricted the ability of local service groups to be flexible and responsive to local needs. Program restructuring decisions have also created uncertainty for service providers. Clients can find it difficult to connect with local and regionalized forms of support due to hours of operation and limited ability to access on-line programs. Other participants noted that there are limited employment supports for people with mental health challenges. Key information barriers included the limited promotion of local and regional employment supports, as well as the limited promotion of success stories that could encourage others to access such supports. For some, it is unclear how

employment / self-employment programs should be accessed. Compounding limited financial resources is a perception that short notice is given to apply for grant programs that have long and time consuming processes. Participants hoped that employment and self-employment programs could be improved through more flexible EI policies to provide people with adequate time to develop new business opportunities, use more outreach supports, and understand the needs and contexts across rural regions.

4.5 Community Services and Supports

As the pressures and impacts of restructuring increase, local supports in rural and small town places for dealing with these pressures are decreasing. This has left unemployed or 'at-risk' residents in small places without adequate support to respond or cope with change, develop new skills, or pursue new opportunities. Therefore, participants were asked a series of questions about the availability of, and barriers to using, community support programs.

To begin, participants were asked to identify key community social and support services for low income residents. Key supports included mental and physical health programs and supports; community social services; food and nutrition programs; informal supports through churches, family, and friends; safety programs; and support offered by service clubs. In the past 10 years, low income participants accessed local support from the Seventh Day Adventist food bank / thrift store, the Ministry of Social Development, the Robson Valley Support Society, the Northern Health Authority, nearby swap sheds, the United Anglican Church thrift store, and others. Some have also accessed community support from organizations in Prince George. Several local leaders and service providers also noted that with the closure of the Ministry of Social Development office in McBride, residents must now commute to access supports in Valemount. Services, such as government agent or court services, must also be accessed in Valemount, and residents must commute to other distant regional centres for specialized health care. In some cases, low income participants obtained local advice to work through processes to access programs or to complete on-line forms before obtaining assistance, while in other circumstances they were required to commute to other centres.

Participants offered several comments about the strengths of each type of community support services. First, general community services were valued for their quick access to supports, flexibility, location, breadth of programs, and affordability of goods and services. Positive attributes of health supports included the provision of outreach / mobile programs, an increase in doctors, and the delivery of local mental and physical health programs. Strengths identified with food and nutrition programs included the provision of informal transportation to connect with food supports, good coordination across local groups, the mobilization of fundraising initiatives, and the promotion of healthy living habits. Local facilities, such as the public library and the railway station, were valued for their welcoming and safe environment, as well as their public computer stations. Furthermore, community safety programs and informal supports were acknowledged as strong community assets.

In contrast, participants talked about eight types of barriers that have limited residents' access to community supports and services. <u>Communication and information barriers</u> were the most prominent concerns. This included limited awareness of support programs and processes to

access those programs, the limited communication infrastructure or promotion of services, and confusion and frustration maneuvering telephone protocols to access supports. Low income residents may also have limited computer literacy and limited access to computers for on-line supports. Key issues associated with the <u>availability of programs and services</u> involved limited access to specialized services, inconsistency with services and programs, and limited support for outreach programs. Participants also talked about <u>financial barriers</u> that impacted organization operations and client supports, including restrictions with funding programs, increased competition for fewer grant resources, fewer donations to local programs, and costs incurred by residents to access both local and distant regionalized supports. Other <u>operational challenges</u> stemmed from confidentiality concerns, trends towards on-line delivery of supports, client confusion over changes in services and processes to access those services, and limited hours of operation. Organizations have also been impacted by <u>changing policies and program requirements</u> that have reduced supports for local programs, but have also offloaded responsibilities to local groups without providing adequate resources to support those changes. At the same time, community groups are operating with a loss or change in <u>human resources</u>, have a more limited volunteer pool, and have incurred increased workloads. While <u>limited transportation</u> options have impacted how, when, and if residents can access services, participants also talked about <u>attitudinal barriers</u> that can prevent low income residents from accessing supports.

In response, participants offered several recommendations for improving community supports and services for low income residents. First, a broader and more <u>comprehensive communication and information strategy</u> should be developed that reflects the needs, comfort levels, and resources available to low income residents. This should include investing adequate resources to keep information about programs and services up-to-date. Where possible, promoting success stories was recommended so people see the value, rather than the stigma, of programs. Second, participants talked about advocating for more proactive <u>health care</u> programs and routine access to visiting / specialized health care professionals. In terms of <u>community services</u>, participants identified new program needs, such as financial management programs, as well as the need to allocate more resources to assisting low income residents gain access to supports. Participants also felt that strategic investments in <u>business infrastructure</u>, such as an industrial park, as well as advocacy to obtain reliable power, would be important to attract new economic investments to the area and address employment needs. They also felt that there is a need to advocate for greater synergies in <u>transportation</u> programs, as well as <u>financial resources</u> to provide daycare subsidies, in order to improve residents' access to local and regional programs and services. Furthermore, participants called for more resources for <u>food and nutrition programs</u>.

4.6 Social and Recreation Programs

People living with low income may participate less in social or recreational organizations or have fewer networks, and, as a result, may have fewer opportunities to connect with a broader range of resources and opportunities. Limited resources and limited access to transportation can impede one's ability to participate in social and recreational activities. Therefore, we asked participants to talk about the social and recreational opportunities that are available to low income residents.

When we asked low income participants about the types of social and recreational activities that they were involved with, people told us about informal social groups at coffee shops, recreational activities, church groups, service clubs, and other community groups. However, few low income participants have been engaged in voluntary activities. While most did not feel that they were excluded from participating in community activities, low income participants, service providers, and local leaders talked about a range of barriers that can affect participation. The most prominent concern involved <u>high costs</u> for events, recreation equipment, activities, and recreation-related travel. Others felt that there is a <u>lack of activities</u> for youth, seniors, and women. The <u>absence or closure</u> of service clubs and recreation groups was also noted. Other issues, such as limited access to <u>transportation, lack of interest, health issues, limited human resources, personal barriers, and crowded facilities</u>, were also identified.

At the same time, however, participants identified supports available to help low income residents access social and recreational opportunities. In addition to a range of <u>affordable or free activities</u>, people talked about <u>financial supports</u> such as lower fees for low income residents, seniors' rates, sponsorships, grants, and in-kind support to cover insurance costs and rental fees. Sharing or <u>equipment loan programs</u>, as well as informal <u>transportation support</u>, were also noted. Recommendations to improve social and recreational programs for low income residents included broadening equipment loan and financial support programs, broadening free community events and activities, maintaining affordable rates, and incorporating mechanisms to provide a broader range of residents with transportation to events.

5.0 Community Capacity

Community programs and strategies can provide important tools to guide collaborative approaches to address rural poverty. At the same time, however, rural and small town places may have fewer resources and limited authority to assess and address low income issues in their community. In this section, we describe the key themes and issues associated with the capacity of local leaders, service providers, and community organizations to respond to the needs of low income residents.

5.1 Organizational Barriers

One important theme concerns organizational barriers that limit responses to addressing rural low income needs. Policies have regionalized services and offloaded social service responsibilities to an over burdened voluntary and local service sector. These organizations may already be struggling with limited human resources, in terms of management, staff, or a stable pool of volunteers, to address complex problems. As such, we talked to local leaders, service providers, and community groups about how their programs are delivered and about the key challenges that they face to respond to local needs.

The organizations and community groups that we connected with serve a broad range of clients and needs in the region. While some programs have no restrictions, others are targeted toward specific age groups, occupations, or employment needs. In some cases, referrals from other agencies or professionals are required. Services are also delivered to low income residents through open door policies, specific venues, outreach programs, and even neutral meeting places

that are comfortable for clients. In some cases, supports are accessible by phone, e-mail, or the Internet. While participants collectively appear to use a broad range of communication tools to promote their programs and services, their individual use of a broad range of communication tools is more limited. In general, word of mouth, print media and materials, meetings, and Internet / e-mail were most commonly used to promote programs and services.

When participants were asked to describe challenges to delivering supports to low income residents, nine key themes were identified. First, organizations are coping with <u>human resource</u> constraints from issues such as an aging workforce, reduced staff hours, a lack of volunteers, and volunteer burnout. Other <u>operational</u> challenges stem from difficulty coordinating with other groups, limited flexibility and staff roles, and time constraints to address both general operational and <u>communication</u> needs; as well as changes with <u>government programs</u>, such as fewer grant programs, restructuring of services, and protocols that are not conducive to rural needs. There was also a sense that clients have difficulty connecting with supports due to attitudinal barriers, limited <u>financial</u> resources, and limited knowledge or <u>education</u>. At times, participants also felt that there is a <u>lack of complimentary supports</u> to address the needs of all household members. Furthermore, <u>infrastructure</u> limitations can impact meeting attendance.

5.2 Community Responses

Most participants agreed that issues around low incomes are a concern in their community. At the same time, however, more than 80% of participants felt that there were barriers impacting community response to poverty. The most prominent barrier involved <u>attitudes</u> and perceptions such as that poverty is not an issue or that poverty is a personal problem. Others noted that there is a fear of change, a stigma attached to poverty, and a strong self-help ethic. Secondly, participants talked about <u>financial and economic barriers</u> linked to inadequate resources to address the needs of low income residents during periods of poor economic conditions. Some felt that organizations and leaders may lack <u>information</u> about the scale and scope of low income in the community in order to make strategic and purposeful investments in infrastructure and programs. To support comprehensive and strategic planning for programs and services, more work also needs to be done to address limited or competing visions across the service landscape. Furthermore, concerns were expressed about the temporary provision of supports, lack of leadership to coordinate and address poverty issues, burnout, and limited authority or power by community groups to address local needs.

When asked what role the local government should play, many felt that the local government is already overwhelmed, has limited resources, and should not be expected to play a role beyond providing reduced taxes – something that is available through the provincial Homeowner Grant program. Others felt that local government efforts should be focused on developing strategic infrastructure that will attract new industry and economic development opportunities. Others felt that the local government could play a stronger role to facilitate cooperation, develop more partnerships with both public and private sectors, as well as allocate more resources for marketing.

6.0   Conclusion

As rural and small town communities are very diverse, so too are the ways in which living with low income can develop and be experienced. The purpose of this report was to provide background information about poverty in general, and then to explore a range of issues using a pilot study. Some key triggers around low income are related to employment, personal finances, health, and challenges around certain costs of living. As more services are regionalized in distant urban centres, an important problem for low income residents is access to convenient and affordable transportation supports. Key findings have also revealed that service changes that limit local access, as well as personal and community perceptions, limited financial and educational capacity, the availability of personal networks, and health status can impact household strategies to cope with living with low incomes. Below, we have included a summary of some possible areas of action:

Housing needs – As the economy will continue to fluctuate, there is a need to advocate for, and plan, the development of a breadth of social housing infrastructure that can address a range of community needs. There should also be attention to upgrading the older housing stock. Given the loss of some home repair and renovation programs for low income residents, it will be important for leaders and community groups to support new partnerships and the sharing of resources to update an older housing stock. While social housing developments are a long-term initiative, shorter-term initiatives, such as facilitating the sharing of building materials and equipment, can build upon existing handyman and other related programs to address housing repair needs and reduce household maintenance costs.

Service needs – A number of community organizations have already invested in smart, efficient infrastructure and have pursued cooperative initiatives across the Robson and Canoe Valleys. There is an opportunity to build upon these successes by developing new strategic programs, such as around financial literacy, that can provide proactive and responsive tools to address the needs of low income residents. Greater flexibility in how programs / workshops are designed and delivered will be important, and should include careful consideration to ensure that such opportunities are also accessible to underemployed or low-wage workers. Investing more resources to help low income residents to understand and access supports in a timely manner will help. Continuing to invest resources in literacy programs (both reading and computer literacy) will build skills to improve the employability of residents, and enhance their ability to access supports.

Information and communication needs – There is an opportunity to build upon existing coordination initiatives of local and regional service providers and community groups. While some aspects may be challenging given the bureaucratic structure of key service areas such as employment or health care, low income residents will need up-to-date information in order to access supports in a timely manner. A comprehensive communications strategy is needed to promote services and supports. This strategy should reflect the capacity and resources accessible to low income residents.

Recreation and social needs – Community groups can build upon their successful initiatives by broadening equipment loan programs to reflect a diversity of interests, as well as continuing and broadening support for affordable events and activities.

Transportation needs – Significant efforts have been made to address local and regional transportation needs across the Robson and Canoe Valleys. Moving forward, there is a need to advocate for greater synergies to make transportation more accessible and efficient for low income residents. These synergies can be pursued across both public and private sectors.

Appendix A: Tables

Each table consists of theme headings and sub-headings. The theme headings are bolded and have a numerical count beside them of the total number of comments received for that particular topic. Under each theme are sub-headings that are in plain, non-bolded font. These cover the range of issues under each theme. Beside each sub-heading is a numerical count of the total number of participants also raised that issue. When all of the sub-heading comments are added up, they indicate the number of times that a particular theme was raised.

For example, in Table A2, participants were asked to identify the key triggers of poverty. The most prominent theme was employment. For example, while 15 participants talked about low wages, 3 of the participants noted that there are few jobs for youth, etc. When all of the sub-heading comments are added up, the theme of employment was raised 91 times.

Pathways

Table A1: Key events affecting low income

Forestry (17)
Mill closures (8)
Ministry of Forests office closed (4)
Downturn in forestry (2)
Market flooded with cheap wood (1)
McBride Forest Industries declined (1)
Softwood Lumber Dispute (1)

Economy (8)
Business closures (2)
Lack of full-time jobs (2)
Development opportunities fail to materialize (1)
Low-skilled workers displaced by skilled workers in
  low pay jobs (1)
No pension plans for middle-aged workers (1)
Transition to lower wage jobs (1)

Agriculture (7)
Agricultural pressures (1)
Government regulations (1)
Inability to sell products (1)
Inspection regulations / fees (1)
License fees (1)

Agriculture Cont'd
Over supply of some agricultural goods (1)
Regulations favour big industry (1)

Education (7)
School enrolments / cutbacks linked to decline (3)
Loss of educated professionals (2)
Fewer parents to fight for educational standards (1)
Low expectations for children's education (1)

Government (6)
Loss of ministry of social development office (3)
Loss of Ministry of Highways jobs (2)
Difficulty accessing regionalized supports (1)

Transportation (6)
Long distance labour commuting (4)
Inconvenient bus schedules (1)
Limited inter-community transportation options (1)

Other (2)
Transient population (2)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table A2: Key triggers of low income

Employment (91)
Low wages (15)
Job losses (14)
Part-time / underemployment (11)
Unable to find job that utilizes skills (8)
Employment / financial security (6)
No opportunities for job promotion (5)
Scarce job postings (locally) (5)
Seasonal employment (4)
Lack of jobs for youth (3)
Long distance labour commuting (3)
Mill closures (2)
Regulations affect viability/competitiveness of forest
  industry (2)
Unable to maintain irregular work schedule (2)
Companies not interested in older workers (1)
Conflict between self-employment and part-time
  work (1)
Decreased demand for wood products (1)
Expectations for high paying jobs (1)
Lack of development (1)
Lack of employment for unskilled workers (1)
Lack of gov't support for regional investments (1)
Ministry of Forests office closed (1)
No light industry (1)
Resource jobs vulnerable to boom/bust cycles (1)
Scarce job posting (regionally) (1)

Personal Finances (52)
Credit card debt (7)
Accumulated debt (6)
Limited access to benefits (6)
Low social assistance rates (5)
High interest rates on loans, payday lending, pawn
  shops (4)
Pressure to live an unaffordable lifestyle (4)
Gaps between employment and receiving financial
  assistance (3)
Poor credit history (3)
Difficulty budgeting finances (2)
No more access to spouse pension benefits (2)
Poor enforcement of child support payments (2)
Banks too quick to lend money (1)
Can't afford to invest in RRSPs (1)
Can't afford to present well for interviews (1)
Comfortable paying minimum of bills (1)
Difficulty obtaining pension benefits (1)
No credit to upfront costs (1)
Required to report all self-employment income
before deducting expenses (1)
Unable to re-apply for credit (1)

Health (52)
Addictions (8)
Mental health disability (6)
Health issues (5)
Birth of a child in a regional centre (5)
Chronic health issues (5)
Injury/unexpected accident (4)
No extended health benefits (4)
Prescription costs (4)
Health issues of a family member (3)
Rehabilitation/therapy costs (3)
Funeral costs (2)
Limited understanding of health care coverage (2)
Dental costs (1)

Education (25)
Limited access to educational programs (7)
Cost of education (5)
Post-secondary education not perceived to be
necessary (3)
Lack of education success in family (2)
Absence of after school/summer programs (1)
Absence of income during education / training (1)
Can't pursue education with family / household
  commitments (1)
Cuts to education resources/teachers (1)
Lack of initiative to get training (1)
Limited education/comprehension skills limit access
  to programs (1)
Limited opportunities for life-long learning (1)
Unable to upgrade tickets / certifications locally (1)

Housing (19)
High housing costs (6)
Inability to sell house (5)
High rental costs (3)
Lack of rental units (3)
Repairs (1)
Utility costs (1)

Transportation (18)
Car insurance (8)
Gas costs (5)
Cuts to Ministry of Highways (1)
Lack of transportation options to regional centres (1)
Transportation costs (1)
Vehicle maintenance costs (1)
Winter driving conditions (1)

Family / Relationships (17)
Relationship break-up/divorce/separation (9)
Single parent (5)
Abuse / violence (2)
Divorce costs (1)

Communications (11)
Internet costs (7)
No access to a computer (2)
Dial-up Internet impacts communication / access to
  information (1)
Inability to pay over the Internet (1)

Services (10)
Cost of daycare (4)
Loss of services (2)
Absence of daycare (1)
Lack of home care (1)

Services Cont'd
No access to employment offices (1)
No laundromat (1)

Crime and Safety (7)
Elder abuse (4)
Crime (3)

Personal Development (4)
Lack of confidence (1)
Language limitations (1)
No aspirations / future goals (1)
Reluctance to accept help (1)

Social / Recreation Activities (3)
Lack of organized sports (1)
Lack of youth activities (1)
Youth not active in school life (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table A3: Cost of living concerns

Home Maintenance (28)
Utility costs (5)
Internet costs (4)
Heating costs (3)
Telephone costs (3)
Household repair costs (2)
Hydro costs (2)
Poor housing conditions exacerbate costs (2)
Satellite TV costs (2)
Building permit costs (1)
Costs associated with power outages (1)
Late payment fees for bills (1)
Material costs (1)
Water costs (1)

Transportation (26)
Gas costs (9)
Insurance costs (3)
Transportation costs (3)
Vehicle repair / maintenance costs (3)
Greyhound is expensive (2)
Long distances to commute to regional centres (2)
Costs of operating two vehicles (1)
Driver's license renewal costs (1)
Extra costs for accommodations with inconvenient
  bus schedule (1)
High costs to purchase a vehicle (1)

Food (19)
Groceries are expensive (10)
Purchase lower quality food (2)
Restaurants are expensive (2)
Animal tag costs (1)
Expensive fresh fruit / vegetables (1)
Hunting license costs (1)
Lack of choice in food products (1)
Processing costs for animals (1)

Retail (12)
Lack of retail options (3)
Boots / clothing are expensive (2)
High costs for equipment / hardware (2)
Costs for birthday gifts (1)
Costs of reading materials (1)
HST costs (1)
Only basic consumer goods available (1)
Retail is expensive (1)

Health Care (10)
Dispensing fees for prescriptions (4)
Costs for commuting to access health services (3)
Costs per visit for therapy (i.e. physio, psychiatry,
  etc.) (2)
Costs of prescription glasses (1)

Housing (8)
High rental costs (4)
High land / house prices (3)
House insurance (1)

Recreation (5)
Community dance tickets are expensive (1)
Cross-country skis are expensive (1)
Entertainment costs (1)
Roundhouse theatre tickets are expensive (1)
Snowmobiling is expensive (1)

Other (6)
Cost of living is reasonable (2)
Shipping / mailing costs (2)
Cost of living difficult for single individuals (1)
Intermittent Internet is costly for businesses (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table A4: Benefits for low income residents of living in the Robson / Canoe Valleys

Community Support (24)
Good community support (5)
Good support networks (4)
Food bank hampers (3)
High school donations for food bank (2)
Surplus garden food is donated (2)
Ability to barter (1)
Churches provide good support (1)
Clothing donations (1)
Community fundraising potlucks / dinners (1)
Easy to find out about programs (1)
Elks / Royal Purple food hampers (1)
Farms / residents loan space to grow food (1)
Free admission to Old Timer hockey games with
   food bank donation (1)

Cost of Living (8)
Low cost of living (3)
Affordable housing (2)
No temptation to shop with few stores (2)
BC Housing rent is based on income (1)

Small Town Living (8)
Close proximity to grocery store (2)
Small town living (2)
Close proximity to hardware store (1)
Close proximity to post office (1)
Growing your own food (1)
Safe community (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table A5: Disadvantages for low income residents of living in the Robson / Canoe Valleys

Transportation (17)
Limited transportation options (6)
Need to commute to regional centres to access
  services (6)
High transportation costs for commuting (2)
Dangerous winter highway driving conditions (1)
Inconvenient inter-community bus schedules (1)
Must rely on family/friends to connect to services (1)

Community Supports (12)
Lack of services (3)
Cutbacks to education (1)
Cutbacks to services (1)
Difficulty getting services in rural areas (1)
No local social assistance office (1)

Community Supports Cont'd
Lack of resources for education / training (1)
Lack of resources for employment programs (1)
Lack of shopping (1)
No post-secondary education (1)
Shift towards phone /Internet delivery of supports (1)

Economy (4)
Lack of employment opportunities (2)
Boom and bust economic cycles (1)
Limited opportunities for advancement (1)

Cost of Living (1)
High rental rates (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table A6: Strategies to cope with living with low income

Consumption (18)
Reducing consumption (4)
Disconnected Internet / phone (3)
No power (2)
Comparison shop (1)
Delay bill payments to purchase food (1)
Don't purchase gifts (1)
Give up magazine subscription (1)
Give up satellite TV (1)
No dining out (1)
No haircuts (1)
Reduce meat consumption (1)
Use basic foods rather than pre-made foods (1)

Informal Economy / Subsistence Activities (9)
Gathering firewood for heat (2)
Growing own food (2)
Bartering (1)
Dumpster diving (1)
Harvesting for food in forest (1)
Housesitting (1)
Hunting / fishing (1)

Services and Supports (7)
Accessing supports (2)
Don't access services (1)
Use food bank (1)
Use Prince George services (1)
Use swap shed (1)
Use thrift store (1)

Networks (5)
Receive support from family / friends (3)
Give up club participation (1)
Receive food from other residents (1)

Transportation (3)
Driver's license not renewed (1)
Sold bike (1)
Using bike to access supports (1)

Employment (2)
Obtaining a second job (1)
Obtaining full-time work (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table A7: How have your coping strategies been enhanced by living in a small community?

Services and Supports (5)
Great community support (2)
Quick access to supports (1)
Community helps cover travel costs (1)
Volunteer spirit (1)

Cost of Living (3)
Affordable housing (1)
Affordable recreation / entertainment (1)
Lower cost of living (1)

Small Town Living (3)
Not crowded (1)
Small town living (1)
Short commute to work (1)

Employment (1)
New job opportunity (1)

Other (2)
No benefits (2)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table A8: Key Barriers to Overcome Low Income

Services (23)
Lack of resources for services (3)
Services are only computer-based (3)
Cutbacks to legal services (2)
Inability to qualify for programs and benefits (2)
Lack of local supports (2)
Lack of social services / workers (2)
Supports not publicized enough (2)
Inappropriate policies / procedures (1)
Insufficient career counseling for high school
  students (1)
Lack of education (1)
Need help to fill out forms (1)
No health care benefits (1)
No poverty advocate (1)
No social service office in McBride (1)

Attitudinal Barriers (13)
Culture of defeat (2)
High expectations for lifestyles (2)
Addiction problems kept 'hush-hush' (1)
Can't tell people things, must learn for themselves (1)
Difficulty pushing people beyond comfort zone (1)
Lack of career counseling for youth at home (1)
Low expectations for youth education (1)
People stop looking for assistance / support (1)
Poverty accepted as a way of life (1)
Stigma (1)
Young girls not encouraged to be self-sufficient (1)

Employment (9)
Lack of jobs (2)
Low wages (2)
Lack of client base / opportunities for self-
  employment (1)
Lack of full-time employment (1)

Employment Cont'd
Lack of value-added manufacturing (1)
Loss of local processing jobs (1)
Must leave McBride to find work (1)

Cost of Living (8)
Cost of accessing regionalized services (3)
Cost of accessing health care supports (1)
Cost of recreation / entertainment (1)
Costs to travel to government agent in Valemount (1)
Gas costs (1)
Lack of free social / recreation options (1)

Financial Management (7)
Inability to upfront costs (2)
Lack of financial management skills (2)
Impacts of interest rates (1)
No long-term financial plan (1)
Unaware of what living costs should be (1)

Informal Support (4)
Lack of informal community support (2)
Lack of good friends (1)
No one to talk to about pressures (1)

Health (2)
Depression (1)
Family health issues (1)

Education and Training (1)
Lack of computer literacy (1)

Life Skills (1)
Difficulty knowing where to start (1)

Transportation (1)
Lack of inter-community transportation (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Housing

Table B1: Would you say the current housing situation meets the needs of low income residents?

Positive (20)
New units added for seniors / disabled (7)
BC Housing units for seniors / low income (4)
Affordable rent (2)
3 low income houses (1)
Affordable housing through Beaverview Lodge (1)
Affordable housing to be purchased (1)
BC Native Housing (1)
Increase in rental properties (1)
Rent is determined by income (1)
Safe shelter (1)

Concerns (31)
Difficulty getting into BC Housing (4)
Lack of affordable rental units (4)
Reduced long-term care units at the hospital (1)
Small seniors' housing units (3)

Concerns Cont'd
Lack of good quality rental units (3)
Concerns about Beaverview Lodge manager (2)
Old housing stock with poor insulation (2)
Poorly insulated trailers (2)
Closure of hotels (1)
Farms / houses bought up by rich investors (1)
Lack of affordable land (1)
Low demand for BC Housing (1)
Low income limits ability to heat units properly (1)
Low vacancy rates in winter (1)
Need different levels of care for housing (1)
No emergency shelter (1)
No room for hobbies / activities (1)
People live in old mill worker cabins (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table B2: Housing needs for low income residents

Low income housing (5)
Assisted living (3)
Short-term / transition house (3)
Supportive housing for people with mental health disabilities (2)
Temporary / emergency shelter (2)
Hospice home (1)
Mixed housing rental units (1)
Safe shelter program for men (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table B3: Have local government, community groups, and private sector groups explored/pursued any steps to develop housing options for low income residents?

Northern Health Authority / BC Housing –seniors / disabilities (6)
Mennonites – assisted living (1)
Robson Health Association – low income housing (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table B4: Are you aware of any assistance programs to assist with your housing costs?

No (4)
Programs target renters (2)
BC Housing Rental Assistance Program (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.
Note: none of the interview participants had received support from any housing assistance programs. Since these programs target low income renters, they are less suitable for a rural setting where there are few rental options.

Table B5: Are you aware of any programs that can help you with household maintenance and repairs?

Handyman program (8)
CMHC programs (6)
EcoEnergy Retrofit Program (4)
Churches (2)
Family / friends (2)
Manager of housing unit (2)
Bartering (1)
First Nations groups (1)
Homeowners grants (1)
No assistance available for septic systems (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Transportation

Table C1: How do you normally travel within your community?

Car (6)
Friends/family (5)
Walking (4)
Bicycle (2)
Carpool (1)
Northern Health Bus (1)
VIA Rail (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table C2: Would you say the current types of transportation options meet the needs of low income residents?

Positive (24)
Northern Health Bus is available / affordable (7)
Greyhound provides regional transportation (2)
Able to walk to most facilities (1)
Community members do errands for others in
  regional centres (1)
Entrepreneur provides affordable used vehicles (1)
IGA delivers groceries (1)
Informal local / regional transportation networks (1)
Informal rides to food bank (1)
Informal senior network (1)
Informal support from family / friends (1)
Northern Health Bus stops in McBride, Dunster, and
  Valemount (1)
Old Age Pensioners' Association bus trips (1)
Rural locations serviced by VIA Rail (1)
RVSS helps people with shopping (1)
University Hospital of Northern BC coordinates
  appointments with Northern Health bus schedule (1)
Volunteer drivers take people home from the bar (1)
Volunteer drivers support regional transportation (1)

Concerns (30)
Greyhound schedule is inconvenient (3)
Lack of local transportation (3)
High insurance / liability costs to operate a taxi (2)
McBride-Valemount shuttle impacted by liability /
  insurance issues (3)
Greyhound reduced services (1)
High costs to rent a bus (1)
Icy sidewalks (1)
Lack of volunteer drivers (1)
Limited demand for taxi (1)
Limited transportation options to Valemount (1)
More information about travel assistance (1)
Need better promotion of transportation options in
  the newspaper (1)
Return bus trips to Prince George not possible in one
  day (1)
Northern Health Bus has inconvenient schedule (1)
Northern Health Bus trip to Vancouver is time
  consuming (1)
Northern Health Bus is uncomfortable (1)
Northern Health Bus is underutilized (1)
Northern Health Bus not always available on day of
  appointment in regional centres (1)
No evening transportation (1)
No shelter for Greyhound passengers (1)
No taxi (1)
No transportation for seniors (1)
Regional shuttle initiatives depend upon Greyhound
  approval (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table C3: Transportation needs

Maintain / expand use of Northern Health Bus (4)
Shuttle service for appointments in Robson Valley (4)
Bus service to Valemount (2)
Community owned bus (2)
Need more promotion of transportation options locally / regionally in newspaper (2)
Taxi (2)
Bus for seniors' trips (1)
Dunster shuttle (1)
Monthly shuttle service for shopping (1)
Need better passenger connections to increase use of VIA Rail (1)
Need more promotion of train services in rural areas (1)
Promote car pooling opportunities (1)
Transportation for seniors (1)
Travel for medical needs not covered by the Northern Health Bus (i.e. physiotherapy) (1)
Use school buses for weekend transportation (1)
Weekend taxi service (1)
Weekly bus service along the Robson Valley (1)
Winter transportation (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study, 2011.

Education and Training

Table D1: Key organizations that provide education/training programs

RVSS (4)
CNC – Valemount (3)
Literacy programs (3)
RVSS adult literacy worker (3)
Community literacy group is forming (2)
Public library computer courses (2)
School District 57 (2)
Elementary school – Ready Set Learn programs (1)
High school literacy support (1)
High school used to offer video conferencing courses (1)
Language courses (1)
Ministry of Forests tree planting / tree spacing (1)
Northern Health Authority anger management courses (1)
Public library special interest courses (i.e. photography) (1)
RCMP – proposed story-reading program (1)
RVSS toy lending library (1)
School ESL programs (1)
Seventh Day Adventist – nutrition, smoking cessation, etc. (1)
Valemount Learning Centre (1)

None (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table D2: Strengths of education / training programs

Adult literacy programs (1)
Delivering video conferencing courses that aren't available locally (1)
High school literacy support (1)
High success rate at high school (1)
Leadership conference for students (1)
People find money to put on programs when needed (1)
RVSS provides positive reinforcement (1)
RVSS tries to connect residents with education supports (1)
Students can access Encounters in Canada (1)
Toy lending library good resource for teachers (1)
Library / elementary school partnership to offer Ready Set Learn program (1)
Valemount Learning Centre is responsive to program needs (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table D3: Weaknesses of education / training programs

Post-Secondary Education (14)
Lack of educational opportunities (5)
CNC programs cut (2)
Lack of travel support for education (2)
No CNC / UNBC courses offered in McBride (2)
Low student population (1)
Transportation costs to commute to Valemount (1)
Video conferencing potential not used to connect
  locals with post-secondary opportunities (1)

Grade School Education (11)
Low student population (2)
Aging teacher population (1)
Cutbacks have reduced teaching staff (1)
Lack of resources for students with learning
  disabilities (1)
Lack of staff resources (1)
Limited range of high school courses (1)
Strict criteria limits access to educational supports (1)
Teachers reluctant to change (1)
Teacher workloads (1)
University required courses not offered regularly (1)

Continuing Education (10)
CREDA closed (2)
Computer training instructor too fast for seniors (1)
Computer training no longer offered (1)

Continuing Education Cont'd
Courses only viable with volunteers (1)
High costs to bring instructors to McBride (1)
High costs to deliver education programs (1)
Information requests about upcoming courses not
  followed through (1)
Lack of opportunities for upgrading (1)
Standards / quality of courses fluctuate (1)

Distance Education (8)
Difficult to coordinate schedule for video
  conferencing classes (2)
Lack of teacher support for video conferencing
  classes (2)
Limited student capacity to do on-line / distance
  education (2)
Limited interaction with distance education (1)
Limited support for distance education courses (1)

Literacy (4)
Adults reluctant to pursue educational supports (1)
Lack of adult literacy support (1)
Lack of literacy programs for small children (1)
Literacy programs subject to availability of grants (1)

Other (3)
Funding for education programs cut (2)
Mental health / life skills worker cut (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table D4: What financial supports are available to assist low income residents to access education and training programs?

Personal credit (2)
Student loans (2)
Elks / Royal Purple grants for training programs (1)
EI funding for training reduced (1)
Free literacy programs (1)
Free story reading programs (1)
Provincial apprenticeship grants (1)
Scholarships / bursaries for high school graduates (1)
Training supports for displaced forestry workers (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table D5: Barriers to access education and training supports

Financial Barriers (9)
Cost of education programs (2)
Expense of longer programs (2)
Transportation costs for out-of-town programs (2)
Limited access to low interest rate loans (1)
Restricted length of funded programs (1)
Strict application process for funding programs (1)

Attitudinal Barriers (6)
Reluctance to admit they need more education (2)
Frustration with learning processes (1)
Lack of confidence to pursue education programs / supports (1)
Perceived availability of high-paying, low-skilled jobs (1)
Personal (1)

Personal Capacity (6)
Limited computer literacy (2)
Literacy barriers to program participation (1)
Limited access to a computer / Internet (1)
Limited understanding about processes to apply for education programs / funding support (1)
Numeracy barriers (1)

Accessibility of Services (9)
Adult basic education is not offered regularly (1)
Adults not eligible for high school supports (1)
Inconvenient course schedule (1)
Job training programs linked to EI were cut (1)
Lack of educational programs (1)
Lack of upgrading programs (1)
Not eligible for training support when EI ends (1)
Strict eligibility criteria (1)
Transition of EI training programs from federal to provincial governments (1)

Information and Communication Issues (4)
Lack of information about available programs (2)
Adult basic education not promoted (1)
Can't access on-line courses with dial-up Internet (1)

Transportation (1)
Winter driving conditions (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table D6: How could education/training programs be improved?

Advertise programs on CBC radio (1)
Advertise programs at community centre (1)
Advertise programs at library (1)
Advertise programs at post office (1)
Expand in-class education (1)
Expand video-conferencing opportunities with post-secondary institutions (1)
Expand ways to study at home (1)
Flexible timing (1)
Reduced rates for low income residents (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Employment and Self-Employment

Table E1: Barriers to obtain/maintain employment

Financial / Economic Barriers (8)
Cost of equipment for forestry jobs (1)
Expensive to start a farm / business (1)
Few part-time jobs for people with mental health disabilities (1)
Impact of taxes on self-employed work (1)
Lack of employment opportunities (1)
No self-employed income is received until job is done (1)
Rising land prices (1)
Self-employment requires more time (1)

Personal Capacity (4)
Health issues (1)
Lack of tools / equipment to do jobs (1)
No tickets / certification (1)
Older age (1)

Information and Communication Issues (3)
Have not accessed labour market information (2)
Dial-up Internet (1)

Transportation (3)
Gas costs (2)
Distance to job (1)

Service Issues (2)
Removal of government services (1)
Some local employers not sensitive to needs of people with mental health disabilities (1)

Other (2)
None (2)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table E2: Key organizations that provide employment/self-employment programs

Community Futures self-employment benefits program (6)
RVSS employment assistance services (6)
Summer employment youth program (2)
Accessible by phoning larger centres (1)
Chamber of Commerce (1)
Community Futures covers living expenses during business start-up (1)
McBride Community Forest Corporation (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table E3: Strengths of employment / self-employment supports

Youth gain valuable experience through summer employment program (2)
Business plan mentoring / review from leaders / business people (1)
Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures, and RVSS work well together (1)
Easy access to local supports (1)
Easy to get word out in small community (1)
McBride Community Forest has been established (1)
RVSS / Community Futures support for business plan development (1)
RVSS staff stay with same client through their transition period (1)
People know who the employment / self-employment staff are (2)
People learn business skills (1)
Staff have broad knowledge / expertise (1)
Success stories of self-employment programs exist in community (i.e. Beanery) (1)
Summer youth employment programs allow businesses to hire / test capable students (1)
Useful information (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table E4: Weaknesses of employment / self-employment supports

Operational Barriers (19)
Uncertainty around EI programs transferred to provincial governments (3)
Limited clientele to support services / businesses (2)
Application deadline for summer employment programs does not coincide with employer hiring practices (1)
Encouraged to send people commuting for work (1)
Grant criteria restrict local flexibility and control (1)
Increased paper work detracts from providing support to those in need (1)
Infrequent timing of programs delivered (1)
Lack of supports for chronic unemployment (1)
Limited respect for client confidentiality by senior levels of government (1)
New EI program assessment determines how much time can be spent with clients (1)
On-line job training is not accessible for everyone (1)
Restrictions imposed on local staff roles (1)
RVSS employment supports not accessible on weekends (1)
Short length of programs (1)
Staff in regional centres can be perceived as threatening (1)
Time consuming reporting requirements (1)

Program Restrictions (10)
Limited employment supports for people with mental health disabilities (2)
Self-employed people are not eligible for EI (2)

Program Restrictions Cont'd
Don't qualify for programs if recently employed (1)
Must be on EI to access self-employ. programs (1)
Not qualified for programs once EI expires (1)
Restrictions to access supports (1)
Strict criteria to access EI (1)
Unable to qualify for EI if there is no employment (1)

Promotional / Information Barriers (6)
Limited promotion of success stories creates culture of defeat (2)
Uncertain about how to access employment / self-employment programs (2)
Don't hear about programs / supports in Prince George (1)
Limited promotion of local employment / self-employment services (1)

Financial Barriers (5)
No startup capital for equipment/facilities (2)
EI rates have been reduced (1)
Limited notice to apply for grant programs (1)
Takes many applications to be successful for grants to support local programs / projects (1)

Personal Capacity (4)
Literacy / personal barriers to access employment / self-employment programs (3)
No phone (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table E5: Recommendations to improve employment/self-employment programs

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Create flexible EI policies to allow residents to invest time to develop a new business (1)
EI should provide transition support as people initiate their own business (1)
Improve interaction with rural residents (1)
Need to reduce hours required to qualify for EI (1)
Regional staff need to understand rural context better (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Community Services and Supports

Table F1: Key social/support services for low income residents

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Health (26)
Northern Health Authority (5)
RVSS (5)
Diabetes clinics (2)
Doctors (2)
Mental Health Family Support Group (2)
Alcoholics Anonymous (1)
Heart health program (1)
Hospital Auxiliary (1)
Massage therapy / acupuncturist (1)
Mobile mammogram (1)
Nurses (1)
Robson Health Association (1)
School counselors (1)
Smoking cessation programs (1)
Well Women's clinic (1)

Community Services (22)
RVSS – general (12)
United Anglican Church – thrift store (5)
Social services (2)
Swap shed – Dunster (1)
Swap shed – McBride (1)
Swap shed – Valemount (1)

Food and Nutrition (14)
Seventh Day Adventist (10)
Meals on Wheels (2)
Farmer's market (1)
Schools – fruit and veggies program (1)

Informal Supports (12)
Churches (4)
Evangelical Free Church (2)
Catholic Church (1)
Community fundraising for families in need (1)
Family (1)
Friends (1)
Mennonite Church (1)
Seventh Day Adventist – general (1)

Safety (12)
RCMP (2)
RVSS – grief counseling (2)
RVSS – safe shelter programs (2)
RVSS – victim's services (2)
Provincial court (1)
RVSS – Children Who Witness Abuse Program (1)
RVSS – emergency aid / funding (1)
Youth Justice Committee (1)

Service Clubs (9)
Royal Purple (5)
Elks (3)
Service clubs – general (1)

Communications and Information (2)
Computer / Internet access – Beaverview Lodge (1)
McBride Public Library (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table F2: What forms of social / support services have you accessed in the past 10 years?

RVSS (4)
Dorcas food bank / thrift store (3)
Ministry of Social Development (3)
Prince George services (2)
Counselling (1)
Courthouse in Valemount (1)
Employment Insurance (1)
Swap shed in Dunster (1)
Swap shed in Valemount (1)
United Anglican Church thrift store (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table F3: Strengths of current supports for low income residents

Community Services (20)
Availability of RVSS supports (4)
Daycare flexibility / opportunities (2)
Seventh Day Adventist thrift shop (2)
United Anglican Church thrift shop (2)
Bank flexibility (1)
Breadth of RVSS programs for women (1)
Central location of RVSS (1)
Employment supports for everyone, not just
  unemployed (1)
Flexible hours with daycare (1)
RVSS staff knowledge about services (1)
Same day access to supports (1)
Services are easily accessible (1)
Showers available at recreation centre (1)
Social services (1)

Health (13)
Well respected doctors (2)
Access to mobile mammogram unit (1)
Drug / alcohol supports provided by NHA (1)
Drug / alcohol supports provided by RVSS (1)
Increase in doctors (1)
Long-term contract (not fee for service) doctors (1)
Support available from Mental Health Family
  Support group (1)
Support provided by Diabetes clinics (1)
Support provided by RVSS grief counseling (1)
Support provided by visiting dietician (1)
Well respected nurses (1)

Health Cont'd
Well Women's clinic was brought back (1)

Food and Nutrition (11)
Seventh Day Adventist food bank (4)
Royal Purple / Elks work with food bank to provide
  hampers and avoid duplication (2)
Elementary school hot lunch program raises funds (1)
Farmer's market (1)
Fruit/veggies program educates youth about healthy
  eating (1)
Informal transportation support to food bank (1)
Robson Health Association obtained food guard /
  community salad bar (1)

Communications and Information (4)
Computer access at the public library (1)
Computer access at the railway station (1)
Public library provides safe place to go (1)
Public library provides welcoming environment (1)

Informal Supports (3)
Community cohesion / support (2)
Availability of church supports (1)

Safety (3)
RCMP (1)
Support provided by safe shelter (1)
Youth Justice Committee bring offenders and victims
  together for resolution (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table F4: Weaknesses / challenges to access social / support services

Communication and Information (32)
Limited computer literacy (6)
Limited awareness of supports (4)
Internet access required to access supports (3)
Limited access to computers (3)
Clients have no phone (2)
Flyers are thrown away (1)
Government websites will not load with dial-up
  Internet (1)
Lack of information about eligibility criteria (1)
Lack of information about processes (1)
Limited awareness of shower services at recreation
  centre (1)
Limited communication of application progress (1)
No radio station (1)
No television station (1)
Only dial-up Internet is available in remote areas (1)
Service Canada phone lines are too busy (1)
Stigma prevents connections with supports (1)
Telephone instructions are too rapid (1)
Telephone instructions can be complicated (1)
Weekly newspapers don't allow timely information
  to be distributed (1)

Availability of Programs / Services (24)
Limited routine access to speech therapy (2)
No physiotherapy (2)
Lack of consistency in services provided (1)
Lack of support for kids with special needs (1)
Lack of follow through with supports (1)
Limited accessibility to anti-bullying programs
  outside school settings (1)
Limited access to outreach services in rural areas (1)
Limited access to visiting professionals for needs
  assessments (1)
Limited mental health supports (1)
Limited youth programs outside of daycare (1)
Limited time for home support workers to spend with
  clients (1)
Need financial management supports for people with
mental health disabilities (1)
Need more food/nutrition programs (1)
Need transitional supports for people with mental
  health disabilities leaving the hospital (1)
No daycare for seniors (1)
No facility for mental health clients (1)
No foot clinic (1)
No government agent in McBride (1)
No psychiatrist (1)
No optometrist (1)
No respite care (1)
Seniors need help to reach / lift items (1)

Financial Barriers (18)
Cost of commuting to regional centres (4)
Reduced resources for programs / supports (3)
High competition to get funding grants (2)
Accommodation costs to access regional supports (1)
Costs to access general services (1)
Costs to access health professionals not covered by
  medical (1)
Fewer donations provided to food bank (1)
Fewer parents able to donate to lunch programs (1)
Funding proposals must be tailored to government
  guidelines, not local needs (1)
Limited disability benefits to cover expenses (1)
Loss of stipend for seniors' advocate (1)
Service clubs have fewer financial resources (1)

**Restructuring Policies / Program Requirements
(16)**
Government agencies pass off responsibilities to non-
  profit agencies with no financial support (2)
Home support now solely provided by Northern
  Health Authority (2)
Constant push to reduce supports / programs (1)
Closure of social assistance office in McBride (1)
Government guidelines restrict roles / responsibilities
  of rural staff (1)
Lack of political will to support new ideas (1)
Lengthy processes to access supports (1)
Ministry of Social Development programs are
  designed for urban centres (1)
Must travel to Valemount to turn in signed
  paperwork to maintain income assistance (1)
Need referrals from specialists in Prince George to
  access some local services (1)
Northern Health Authority services are designed for
  urban centres (1)
Personnel don't have enough hours allocated to
  deliver supports (1)
Positions for mental health / addictions combined (1)
Must be on Employment Insurance to obtain daycare
  subsidies (1)

Operational Challenges (12)
Confidentiality concerns prevents clients from
  accessing supports (2)
Regional supports only accessible on-line (2)
Confusion over changes in services / processes (1)
Confidentiality makes it difficult for support groups
  to target people (1)
Day-time programs not accessible to workers (1)
High rate of mammogram recalls (1)
Limited hours of operation for Ministry of Social
  Development (1)

Operational Challenges Cont'd

Required to pursue regional employment programs to
 maintain social assistance (1)
Restricted hours for day care (1)
Uncertainty with changes in hospital services (1)

Attitudinal Barriers (9)

Shame/stigma attached to applying for social
 assistance (4)
Social assistance staff not as helpful as could be (2)
Limited self-esteem (1)
People must be genuine to receive help (1)
People wait too long to access supports (1)

Human Resources (9)

High case load for mental health / addictions
 counselor (2)
Changes to Northern Health personnel (1)
Federal agencies lack personnel to operate phone
 lines (1)
Lack of volunteers for Meals on Wheels (1)
Loss of seniors' advocate (1)
Lost life skills worker (1)
Only one social worker available (1)
Service clubs have fewer members (1)

Transportation Infrastructure (4)

Limited transportation options to other centres (2)
Poor rural roads impacts outreach supports (1)
Private roads rapidly deteriorate with public use (1)

Other (1)

Library is not used enough (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table F5: Recommendations for new / additional services or infrastructure investments for low income residents

Communications and Information (25)
Need more positive media (3)
Use Valemount TV Network to promote supports (3)
Keep pamphlets / brochures up-to-date (2)
More referrals (2)
Word of mouth remains important (2)
Continue to use well located brochures (1)
Diversify methods of contact beyond telephone (1)
Don't rely on brochures (1)
Improve staff interactions with rural clients (1)
Information about financial assistance programs for
 health costs (1)
Little McBride Paper (1)
More frequent promotion of supports (1)
Need open houses (1)
Need to promote success stories (1)
Need to use a variety of promotional tools (1)
Promotion strategies from local & regional service
 providers (2)

Health Services (10)
Chiropractor (1)
Dentist (1)
Hearing aid programs (1)
Long-term care (1)
More frequent access to speech therapy supports (1)
More frequent visits from specialists (1)
More out-patient planning (especially for mental
 health illnesses) (1)
Physiotherapy (1)
Proactive support for people with mental health
 disabilities (1)
Visiting psychiatrist (1)

Community Services (8)
Assistance filling out forms (1)
Assistance addressing real estate planning issues (1)
Budgeting / financial management programs (1)
Develop a support group for low income residents (1)
Emotional support (1)
Free / affordable assistance with completing taxes (1)
More life skill outreach supports (1)
Seminars to understand impacts of interest rates (1)

Business Infrastructure (5)
Reliable power to support development (2)
Another bank (1)
Industrial park (1)
Laundromat (1)

Transportation (5)
Allow low income residents to use Northern Health
 Bus to access regional supports (1)
Bus service to community events (1)
Local transportation supports to link with services (1)
Ministry of Social Development could create a pass
 to allow clients to use Northern Health Bus (1)
Transportation to regional centres (1)

Food and Nutrition (4)
Hot lunch program for daycare (1)
Meals on Wheels (1)
More resources for school hot lunch programs (1)
Redistribute outdated canned food items (1)

Financial Resources (1)
Daycare subsidies to enable residents to access
 regionalized supports (1)

General Issues (1)
Be more proactive in connecting supports with
 residents (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Social / Recreation

Table G1: Barriers to participate/access social/ recreational opportunities

Financial Barriers (15)
High costs for Roundhouse Theatre tickets (3)
High costs for hockey gear (2)
High costs for out-of-town hockey tournaments (2)
High costs to go on OAPA senior bus trips (2)
Costs of extracurricular activities (1)
Cutbacks to Beaverview Lodge resident activity
  coordinator (1)
Harvest Dinner ticket too costly (1)
High costs for entertainment – general (1)
High costs for equipment – general (1)
High costs for out-of-town school tournaments (1)

Lack of Activities (12)
Lack of activities for teens (1)
Lack of activities for young adults (1)
Lack of afterschool programs (1)
Lack of youth programs (1)
Lack of youth to complete teams (1)
Limited physical activity programs for seniors (1)
Limited physical activity programs for women (1)
Limited social / recreational opportunities (1)
No Lions Club (1)
No Moose Club (1)
No movie theatre (1)
No soccer leagues (1)

Transportation Issues (6)
No local transportation (2)
Transportation / gas costs (2)
No taxi (1)
OAPA bus trips only for seniors (1)

Closure of Groups / Organizations (3)
Girl Guides closed (1)
Legion closed (1)
Scouts club closed (1)

Lack of Interest (3)
Lack of interest in hiking (1)
Lack of interest in snowmobiling (1)
Slo-pitch does not appeal to everyone (1)

Health Issues (2)
Addictions (1)
Anxiety (1)

Human Resources (2)
Aging membership of local groups affects ability to
  organize activities (1)
OAPA lost senior activity coordinator (1)

Personal Barriers (2)
Shame about not having something nice to wear (1)
Uncomfortable walking into religious / church
  sponsored activities (1)

Facilities (1)
Mental health clubhouse is overcrowded (1)

Other (4)
Toy lending library not used to fullest potential (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table G2: Available supports to help low income residents access social/recreational programs

Affordable Activities (34)
Roundhouse theatre (3)
Lots of outdoor recreation (2)
OAPA monthly birthday lunch / tea (2)
OAPA monthly dinner (2)
OAPA senior bus trips (2)
Public skating (2)
Reasonable rates for community sports (2)
Softball league (2)
Badminton (1)
Basketball (1)
Card nights (1)
Church teas (1)
Dodge ball (1)
Figure skating carnival (1)
High school dances (1)
Hiking (1)
Hockey (1)
Ladies Auxiliary of the Legion bingo (1)
Monthly movie nights at high school (1)
OAPA activities (1)
Quilting (1)
RVSS mother goose program (1)
Volleyball (1)
Weekly penny bingo (1)
Youth fairs (1)

Financial Supports (32)
Concession volunteering in exchange for lower sport fees (4)
Old Timers sponsors low income families to participate in hockey (3)
Fit Pit provides seniors' rate (3)
Free drop-in sports (2)
Minor hockey sponsors low income families (2)

Financial Supports Cont'd
Reduced rates (2)
Senior rates for entertainment (2)
Volunteer fire department will sponsor youth in hockey (2)
Fit Pit has reasonable rates (1)
Free gym time for community sports (1)
Free showers at recreation centre (1)
Free skating (1)
Husky / BCAA card points can be allocated to youth sporting groups (1)
McBride Community Forest Corporation pays for insurance (1)
McBride Community Foundation provides grants (1)
Monthly senior dinner supported by Elks, Ladies Auxiliary, Hospital Auxiliary, and Scotiabank (1)
Recreation centre passes for mental health clients (1)
Regional District provides reduced rates for local clubs (1)
Royal Purple / Elks sponsors low income families for hockey (1)
Volunteer fire department covers pass costs for volunteers at recreation centre (1)

Sharing / Loaning Equipment (10)
Equipment loan programs (3)
RVSS toy lending library (3)
Informal gear exchanges / sharing (2)
Elks / Royal Purple purchased rackets / birds for badminton (1)
Skate swaps (1)

Transportation (1)
Informal ride network (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table G3: Recommendations to improve social/recreational programs for low income residents

Broaden equipment loan program (2)
Broaden financial assistance programs (2)
Transportation to events (2)
Acquire a bus to provide seniors' trips (1)
Develop a buddy system for mental health clients (1)
Develop theme bins for toy lending library to enhance usability (1)
Need an after school activity coordinator (1)
Offer free days for ice skating (1)
Offer more free community events to support networking (1)
Reduced rates to attend events (1)
Travel support (1)
Youth Committee trying to get free gym time donated for free events / activities (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Organizational Barriers

Table H1: Describe program restrictions / eligibility criteria for services

Must be a youth (4)
Must be an infant (2)
Must be a senior (2)
Must be unemployed or underemployed (2)
Need referral from Ministry of Children and Family Development (2)
Clients are screened for their potential to succeed (1)
Must be 60 years of age (1)
Must be a former forest worker (1)
Must be a member (1)
Must be certified (1)
Must have been laid off within last 18 months (1)
Must be registered with professional organization (1)
Not eligible to complete program twice (1)
Program restrictions change due to government funding criteria (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table H2: Describe how services are delivered to low income residents

Venues (13)
Meetings (4)
Office-based (2)
Outreach support (2)
Beaverview Lodge (1)
Clinics (1)
Facilitate groups (1)
Neutral meeting place (1)
No office (1)

Processes (6)
Referrals to link clients with resources (2)
Motivated clients approach organization (1)
Open door policy (1)
Programs are free (1)
Waiting lists maintained (1)

Communication (2)
Internet / e-mail (1)
Phone (1)

Schedule (2)
5 days per week (1)
Emergency service available during evenings and
  weekends (1)

Other (4)
Volunteers (2)
Free access to equipment (1)
Through networking / partnerships (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table H3: How does your organization promote programs/services?

Newspaper ads (3)
Word of mouth (3)
Long-term programs are well-known by residents (2)
Meetings (2)
Posters (2)
Referrals (2)
Website (2)
Brochures (1)
E-mail (1)
Monthly calendar (1)
Newsletter (1)
Newspaper stories (1)
Phone chain (1)
Walking around town (1)
Welcome Wagon approach to introduce new residents to services (1)
Not promoting yet (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Table H4: Challenges to delivering support to low income residents

Human Resources (13)
Lack of volunteers (4)
Volunteer burnout (4)
Aging volunteers (1)
Aging workforce (1)
Little participation by volunteers (1)
Need for committees for specific tasks (1)
Reduced staff hours (1)

Attitudinal Barriers (12)
Stigma attached to accessing supports (4)
Unrealistic expectations about programs / support (2)
Fear of business risks (1)
Lack of interest (1)
Misunderstanding of role of organization (1)
Perception receiving help is admission of failure (1)
Resistance to change services / processes (1)
Resistance to use technology (1)

Operations (9)
Collecting fees to cover management costs (1)
Confidentiality issues (1)
Difficulty coordinating schedules / programs with other regional groups (1)
Lack of clients (1)
Lack of input from key players / stakeholders (1)
Not open on weekends (1)
Restrictive staff roles / responsibilities (1)
Time to assess short-term workers' qualification (1)
Too busy (1)

Government Programs / Support (8)
Change in government mandate (1)
Federal programs downloaded to provincial government (1)
Fewer grant programs (1)
Limited power / influence with bureaucrats (1)
Poor deadlines to apply for summer student employment programs (1)
Regionalized ministry staff no longer visit (1)
Strict criteria for ministry support / programs (1)
Unrealistic understanding rural operating costs (1)

Financial Barriers (4)
Lack of funding (2)
Limited access to financing for entrepreneurs (1)
Residents lack benefits to cover costs of therapy (1)

Education / Training (3)
Clients have limited financial management skills (1)
Lack of general literacy (1)
Limited computer literacy (1)

Lack of Complimentary Supports (3)
Couples' counseling not available (1)
Lack of programs to treat whole households (1)
Lack of support programs for men (1)

Communications (2)
Lack of time to pursue / distribute information (2)

Infrastructure (1)
No washroom available at meetings (1)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.

Community Responses

Table I1: Barriers that impact community responses to living with low income

Attitudinal Barriers (38)
Poverty not perceived as an issue (7)
Potential clients reluctant to pursue supports (4)
Poverty viewed as a personal problem (5)
NIMBYism (5)
Perception that people could abuse the system (3)
Strong self-help ethic (3)
Stigma attached to poverty (2)
Fear of an increase in alcoholism / addictions (1)
Fear of change (1)
Low morale (1)
People fear the look of poor individuals (1)
People will not admit they are living in poverty (1)
Perception that poverty services and infrastructure
  will lower property values (1)
Policy attitude that the poor will just go away (1)
Preference to police problem (1)
Professional frustration with client progress (1)

Financial / Economic Barriers (9)
Resources for programs are reduced / eliminated (4)
Lack of resources (3)
People want careers not contracts (1)
Poor economic / market conditions (1)

Information (4)
Limited understanding of scale / scope of poverty (4)

Planning (4)
No support to allocate taxes for poverty initiatives (2)
Competing visions / priorities amongst local groups
  and residents (1)
Limited vision to look outside of the box (1)

Availability of Supports (3)
Temporary provision of supports (3)

Human Resources (3)
Lack of leadership (2)
Burnout (1)

Lack of Power / Influence (1)
Lack of local authority to address poverty issues (1)

Other (2)
Limited use of job training / placement programs (2)

Source: Rural Poverty Study 2011.