

IMPACT REPORT

Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force

380 9th Street East,
Owen Sound, Ontario
N4K 1P1
(519) 376-1560
povertytaskforce@unitedwaybg.com
povertytaskforce.com



@BruceGreyPovertyTaskForce



@BGTaskForce



brucegreypovertytaskforce

A NOTE ABOUT THE DATA

This Impact Report draws upon high level impact data currently being used by Statistics Canada and the Ontario government to measure low-income. (Statistics Canada, 2016; Government of Ontario, 2016). We also have diverse local organizations providing project data for this report.

Since 2013, the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force Progress Reports have focused on measuring and reporting progress in our local partnerships - how we are building relationships between stakeholders, communities and government to address poverty. And reporting on our joint activities - increasing community awareness, providing education, advocating for policy changes and seeking social justice to reduce barriers.

With this year's baseline report, we make the shift from communicating on our activities to reporting how the Task Force is contributing to IMPACT for people living in or at-risk of poverty.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted by the Task Force to guide our vision and inform the way we work on inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. As each issue is intertwined with the others, we recognize that it will require a similarly comprehensive response to achieve sustained progress in any one area.

The SDG universal framework and plan help us to understand our local outcomes and contribute to achieving a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bruce County and Grey County are situated on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabek Nation: the People of the Three Fires known as Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations. We further give thanks to the Chippewas of Saugeen, and the Chippewas of Nayaashiinigiing, as the traditional keepers of this land and water. We also recognize the traditional homeland of the Metis Nation.

Going forward, the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force is committed to working with partners to reduce poverty and ensure the well-being of all people in our respective communities.

ABOUT THIS IMPACT REPORT

Welcome to the first Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force (PTF) IMPACT Report. This is a new initiative to pull together poverty-related impact data across Bruce County and Grey county. It is also the first time we have attempted to set a baseline for our overall progress towards creating the conditions for reducing poverty.



We know that poverty is a very complex experience and that it is more than just measuring people by their level of income.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which our partners - as opposed to other external factors - have influenced the outcomes and impacts described in this report. This is particularly true for population-level poverty statistics, which are affected by dozens of factors outside of our network's control. Therefore, we shall focus on the *contribution* our partners have made to outcomes and impact. We will measure how the Poverty Task Force contributes to conditions that will make an impact.



OUR APPROACH

WHAT IS POVERTY?

The condition in which people are without the supports, means and choices needed to attain and maintain a basic standard of living.

WHAT ARE OUR VALUES?

Collaboration/Partnership

- Building trust and respect across community stakeholders through dialogue and purposeful partnerships.

Understanding poverty issues and each other

- Working together to educate each other, share creative solutions and develop a common understanding of issues related to poverty.

Equality/Justice

- Working to improve lives within the community, while ensuring the services are accessible, affordable, humanitarian, equitable, and provide choice.

Advocacy

- Acting in partnership to leverage our community knowledge and expertise to advocate for change.

Com(passion) for Change

- Acting with compassion to make meaningful change for individuals and families when they need it most.

Collective Synergies

- Recognizing that our collective energies are greater than that of any individual. Individually we can do little, together we can move mountains.

WHO ARE WE?

BRUCE GREY POVERTY TASK FORCE

Multi-sector leadership:

52+

partners
representing



The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force works in partnership with 52 community-based agencies, planning tables, community groups, universities, institutes and policy-makers.

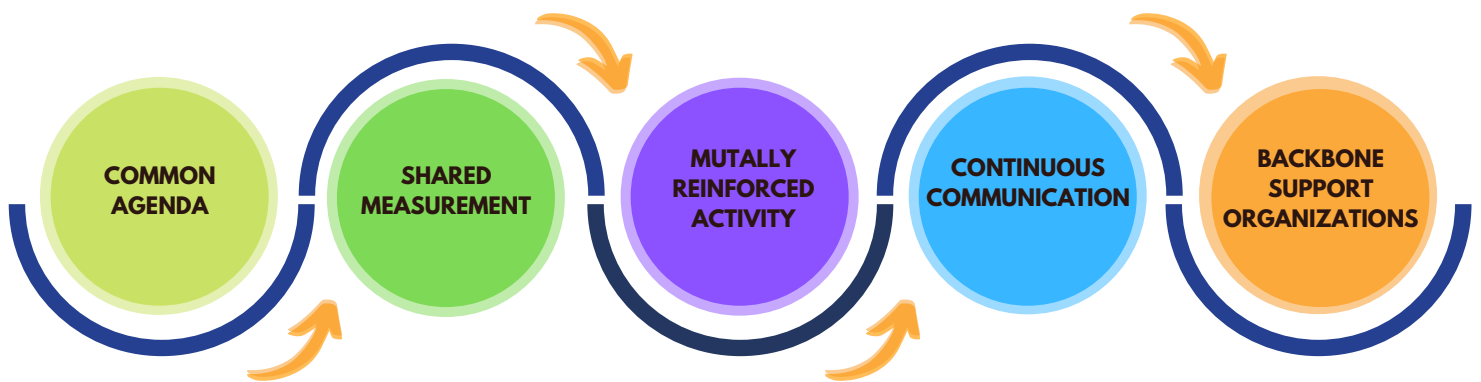
We are led by the United Way of Bruce Grey along with leadership from Bruce County, Grey County and the Grey Bruce Health Unit.

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP + IMPACT

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force was formed in 2013. Our initial priorities were to develop a common understanding of poverty and a "common agenda" on poverty reduction for Grey Bruce.

We have benefited from several "back bone organizations" who have provided dedicated human and financial resources to lead our 6 Actions Groups and Community Voices. These groups carry out collaborative projects to increase our impact on food security, income and employment security, housing, health equity and transportation.

The inclusion of diverse voices across sectors, including those of people with "grounded expertise", is an integral part of reducing and eliminating poverty. People with grounded expertise deeply understand the realities of poverty. Their stories, experiences and knowledge serve as powerful tools in disrupting communities' current understanding, and offer a clearer perspective that raises awareness, builds compassion, and challenges stigma and stereotypes.



OUR IMPACT

OUR GOALS ARE TO:

- 1) Build partnerships with key community stakeholders and networks and work together to eliminate poverty.
- 2) Enhance our common understanding of poverty issues through solution-based research, knowledge development and information sharing.
- 3) Create opportunities for community stakeholders to become involved in poverty elimination efforts. To do this, we work under 4 main strategic directions.

FROM BAND AIDS TO BRIDGES

Moving forward with Community Food Centres

ENOUGH TO THRIVE ON

Seeking income security solutions for strong communities

FROM HOUSING TO HOMES

Prioritizing safe and affordable homes to create safe and healthy neighbourhoods

WE ALL LIVE HERE

Ensuring diversity, inclusion and engagement in Municipal decision making

BASELINE IMPACT DATA

1 NO POVERTY



BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY

of Getting Ahead graduates who report increased understanding of resources at program completion.

BRUCE	35
GREY	211
GREY BRUCE	246

Source: PTF/ALC, 2019

% of Getting Ahead graduates employed after 1 year.

NEW RESEARCH STUDY

Source: Bridges Action Group, 2020

DID YOU KNOW?

Bridges Out of Poverty is a comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamics that cause and maintain poverty from the individual to the systemic level.

Getting Ahead is a way for people in poverty to analyze their own life and to make plans for building resources.

2 ZERO HUNGER



FOOD SECURITY

% of households which are food insecure.

GREY BRUCE	20%
ONTARIO	15.5%

Source: Cdn Community Health Survey, 2015-2016

% of Grey Bruce households which consume fruits and vegetables 5 or +X/day.

69%

Source: Cdn Community Health Survey, 2015-2016

of municipalities in Grey Bruce that endorse Bruce Grey Food Charter.

6 MUNICIPALITIES

1 COUNTY

Source: PTF/GBHU, 2019

Although most food insecure households are employed, **70%** of households reliant on social assistance are food insecure.

Source: PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research

DID YOU KNOW?

Being food insecure has profound impacts on physical, mental and social well-being; Food insecurity places a person at greater risk of becoming a high-cost user of the health care system.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



HEALTH EQUITY

% of people (divided by income level) who rated their own health as very good or excellent in Grey Bruce.

37%
OF LOWEST INCOME

67%
OF HIGHEST INCOME

Source: Cdn Community Health Survey, 2015-2016

of system changes reported by providers in the health sector that have been trained on the GB Health Equity Tool.

START OF TRAINING PHASE

Source: Health Equity Tool Project PTF/GBHU, 2019

DID YOU KNOW?

Stigma and socioeconomic and cultural barriers prevent many of our neighbours from receiving the care they need. It is vital that the health services and resources available are provided in an equitable way to all our neighbours, to meet their individual needs and promote optimal health for everyone.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

Prevalence of low income households.

BRUCE	13.3%
GREY	15.5%
ONTARIO	14.4%

Source: PTF/ALC, 2019

Prevalence of children/youth living in low income households.

BRUCE	17.9%
GREY	15.5%
ONTARIO	14.4%

Source: StatsCan, 2016

Prevalence of older adults living in low income households.

BRUCE	11.5%
GREY	13.4%
ONTARIO	12.0%

Source: StatsCan, 2016

% of eligible residents in Grey Bruce accessing Community Volunteer Income Tax Program filing.

2% OF 45,000 RESIDENTS

Source: CRA, 2019

of certified Living Wage Champions in Grey Bruce.

1 STARTUP PHASE

Source: United Way Bruce Grey, 2019

Almost **1 in 5** children across Grey & Bruce live in a low-income household.

Source: StatsCan, 2016

DID YOU KNOW?

Basic needs are increasingly out of reach for people living on low-income. People with insufficient income face impossible choices every single day.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



HOUSING

% of households in core housing need.

BRUCE	9.3%
GREY	11.4%
ONTARIO	15.3%

Source: StatsCan, 2016

% of renters in core housing need.

BRUCE	29%
GREY	30.5%

Sources: Bruce County Housing & Homeless Plan Update, 2019, Grey County Housing & Homelessness Plan Update, 2019

% rental vacancy rate

GREY BRUCE	1.7%
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Source: Cdn Mortgage & Housing Corp, 2019

1 in 4 households are not affordable, and more than **1 in 7** residents live in low income homes.

Source: StatsCan, 2011

DID YOU KNOW?

A household is in core housing need if housing is not of adequate size, not in adequate condition, or costs more than 30% of before-tax household income.

With a vacancy rate of 1.7% (3% is considered optimal), many of our neighbours are unable to find safe, secure, and affordable housing.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

There is a trend of governments flowing more income to low income households through tax credits. Because of this, it is paramount to keep promoting the use of free income tax clinics, including expansion to low-served areas and year round services. Some 45,000 people in Grey Bruce are eligible to use the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program but only 2% are doing so. (CRA, 2019)

Since 2017, the Income & Employment Action Group and Community Voices – some 12 to 15 social agencies and people with lived experience – have focused on public education to people with low income on ways to increase household income. In partnership with 2-1-1, we maintain a free clinic listing online and via telephone. The information collected also informs us where the geographic gaps are in free services and barriers to accessing clinics. Creating the conditions for more free services that increase income can change lives.

Jean¹ was 72 years old and has been widowed for 6 years. When her husband passed she lost her companion of 47 years, all of the household management skills and more than half of her household income.

CPP and OAS totaling \$962.00 monthly were the only 2 incomes that Jean received. Thankfully, the house is paid for but she struggled to pay the home bills and property taxes, which were in arrears. The house is older and needed work. She is partially disabled and had not had the money to prescribed orthotics or a rollator. She needed dentures but could not afford them nor could she buy eyeglasses. She didn't eat properly, seldom left home, could not afford basic medical needs and felt very isolated. She could not afford to get her income taxes done since her husband passed.

After a gentle urging and referral to her nearest CVITP Clinic, Jean was able to get her taxes caught up. It was suggested that she start with the taxes of 2 years overdue and work backwards. This gave her substantial lump sums representing GST and OTB. With those funds in hand, she paid up her property taxes and then completed the current year. This filing now gave her the Seniors Property Tax Credit in addition to the other incomes.

Since Jean had paid her Property Taxes, she then qualified for The Ontario Renovates program which gave her all new windows for the home and fixed the hole in the roof. The CVITP Clinic also had her apply for her Survivors Pension and a small top up from the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Jean's lump sums were able to purchase a rollator, orthotics, glasses, dentures, and, indirectly, bring the house up to standards. Her monthly income has increased to just under \$1,500.00.

Jean is now warm, safe, healthy and connected.



¹ Name and photo have been changed to protect identity.

2 ZERO HUNGER



FOOD SECURITY

Food is integral to our health and well-being. It is a vital way we express our cultures, nourish our bodies and celebrate together. Food also represents a significant portion of everyone's budgets and continues to rise. In 2019, Grey Bruce reported its lowest unemployment rate in 19 years of 2.4%^[1] but we know that 20% of households are still food insecure^[2]. We can't talk about food security unless we talk about income security.

Annual Food Security Conversations and Fall Food Gatherings/Food Bank Summits - organized by the Food Security Action Group since 2016 -contributed to an increase in community understanding of what is food security. Collectively we examine ways to improve local food systems and envisioned changes for our communities. In our work, we recognize that food banks and hot meal programs will not solve peoples' income and food insecurity problems. But we do work to increase community-based food organizations' capacity to offer healthy and dignified emergency food programs.

At the Fall Food Gathering 2019 we advanced our Second Harvest Grey Bruce program with a new partnership with FoodRescue.ca FoodRescue.ca is a free online platform that connects food donors with non-profit community food organizations. 58% of food produced in Canada is lost or wasted annually. Second Harvest heard from businesses that they're willing to donate their surplus produce; They just needed a system to make it easy and safe to connect with social service programs in their own communities.



OSHaRE in Owen Sound provides hot meals for 100 people/day (M-F) and packed lunches on the weekend. The involvement of FoodRescue.ca means a steady supply of fresh produce from Zehrs to OSHaRE.

This opens up opportunities for OSHaRE to offer a fresh food market and a food distribution hub with other emergency food programs in Grey County and Bruce County.

FoodRescue.ca positively impacts our environment and ensures good food gets to people who can use it.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Housing is a basic need and a human right. Prioritizing safe and affordable housing creates safe and healthy neighbourhoods. Rental vacancies are low in Bruce County (1.4%) and Grey County (1.7%). A healthy vacancy rate for any community is 3%. The percentage of renters in core housing need is high in Bruce County (29%) and Grey County (30.5%).

Understanding the realities of creating safe and affordable housing in Grey Bruce draws upon the invaluable expertise of our Community Voices. Their first-hand knowledge of systemic barriers is contributing to co-creating innovative solutions with members of our Housing Action Group. Multi-sectoral collaboration between social service agencies, governments, businesses and people with lived/living experience of poverty has been recognized as a core principle of effective poverty-reduction work. The recognition of people with lived/living experience or “grounded expertise” as context experts alongside government, business, and non-profit counterparts challenges power imbalances.

RentSafe EquiP (Equity-focused intersectoral practice) created safe and creative spaces for people to come together – as human beings and neighbours rather than as service providers, decision-makers or clients – to generate the kind of understanding and commitment that is needed to tackle the significant and urgent problem of housing inadequacy.

Giive Project is an inter-agency collaboration led by M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre to reduce off-reserve Indigenous homelessness. Giive Circles brings together 20 organizations to strengthen relationships, promote culturally safe practices and trust. It incorporates cultural safety training, collaborative case management and relationship building to increase Indigenous leadership within the homelessness sector. This has led to improved collaboration and understanding of Indigenous practices, and a reduction in Indigenous homelessness.

The role of Community Voices and Indigenous community voices in Giive Circles counters the tendency for housing service providers in leadership positions to dominate agendas, discussion, and ultimately, decisions. The grounded expertise of these individuals adds strength and resiliency to poverty-reduction work. Their first-hand knowledge of systemic barriers is invaluable in co-creating innovative solutions to overcome them. Such diverse involvement can also help to identify the issues simmering below the surface, that impede positive change.



“My voice is power. Part of each person’s story comes from the past, from where and how we live, from the people in our lives. We are all creating our future stories right now.”

Co-chair, Community Voices

WHAT'S NEXT?

Not everyone experiences life in the same way. Our community can only be as healthy as its most vulnerable community member. And today, our statistics and stories tell us we're falling short on some key measures of community health and wellbeing.

WHAT ARE OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR 2020?

- **From Band-Aids to Bridges:** moving forward with Community Food Centers.
 - Rural FoodRescue.ca distribution hub model Pilot
 - Endorsement of Bruce Grey Food Charter
- **Enough to Thrive On:** seeking income security solutions for strong communities.
 - Training opportunities on Health Equity Tool
 - Oral Health promotion
- **From Housing to Homes:** prioritizing safe and affordable homes to create safe and healthy neighborhoods.
 - Intersectoral action to address housing crisis such as RentSafe Project
 - Giiwe Circles to address Indigenous Homelessness
- **We All Live Here:** ensuring diversity, inclusion and engagement.
 - 5 Getting Ahead 8 week courses in 2020 in 2 Counties
 - Active Community Voices
 - Circles Pilot Fall 2020

HOW WILL WE EVALUATE SUCCESS?

- Increased public awareness and support for tackling the causes of poverty.
- Increased income through tax filing and accessing other supports.
- Increased access to a Living Wage.
- Decreased percentage of households in Core Housing Need.
- Increased life stability of Getting Ahead graduates.
- Improved health and well-being.
- Changes made to policies, regulations, structures and practices that increased local capacity to work together and develop concrete initiatives to reduce poverty.

January 2020