POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

Phase III Stakeholder Engagement Summary

August 2021

Background

The City of Winnipeg (City) is developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy (strategy), which will serve as the foundation of the City's work in poverty reduction. The strategy will clarify the City's role, identify and prioritize short and long-term actions to reduce poverty in our community, and set out an implementation plan.

Engagement

The City partnered with Make Poverty History Manitoba, the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (an initiative of United Way Winnipeg) and Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc. to co-create the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Representatives from each organization and the City formed a core working team to oversee and provide guidance on the project.

Phase 1 of stakeholder engagement occurred in fall 2020 and focused on setting the direction and creating themes for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Phase 2 of stakeholder engagement occurred in winter 2020 to confirm the direction of the draft strategy and to gather feedback on potential actions that were grouped into eight goal areas.

Phase 3 of stakeholder engagement occurred in spring/summer 2021 to get feedback on the draft strategy and draft actions for potential inclusion in the strategy's first implementation plan. The potential actions were informed by stakeholder feedback in Phase 2 and feedback from internal City departments. Meetings with stakeholder organizations and residents with lived experience of poverty were held where additional information was required to inform priorities for the implementation plan and where gaps were identified. Meetings were held virtually to comply with COVID-19 public health orders. A summary of Phase 3 stakeholder meetings is in table 1 below.

Engaging Lived Experience Advisors

It was important to engage residents with lived experience of poverty in order to build relationships and ensure the strategy results in meaningful impact. At the onset of the project, it was identified that the wisdom and knowledge from the community was invaluable and required to form the foundation of the strategy and the driving force behind the actions that the City will take to reduce poverty and make lasting positive change in Winnipeg.

For Phase 3 stakeholder engagement, the City involved three lived experience advisors. The advisors helped ensure that the perspectives of residents with lived experience of poverty and/or homelessness was included in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The three advisors were asked to review the draft strategy and potential actions, participate in a stakeholder session, and provide any additional input they had following the meeting. Honorariums were provided to the lived experience advisors in recognition of the time and knowledge they provided to the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Table 1: Stakeholder Engagement Meeting

Date	Meeting	Stakeholder Type	Attendees
May 19, 2021	Stakeholder session	Francophone organizations	6
June 23, 2021	Stakeholder session	Poverty reduction-related organizations and people with lived experience of poverty	15
June 23 - July 5, 2021	Lived experience perspective sharing and follow ups	Lived experience advisors	3*

*also attended June 23 stakeholder meeting

To learn more about the Poverty Reduction Strategy, please visit winnipeg.ca/povertystrategy

Winnipeg

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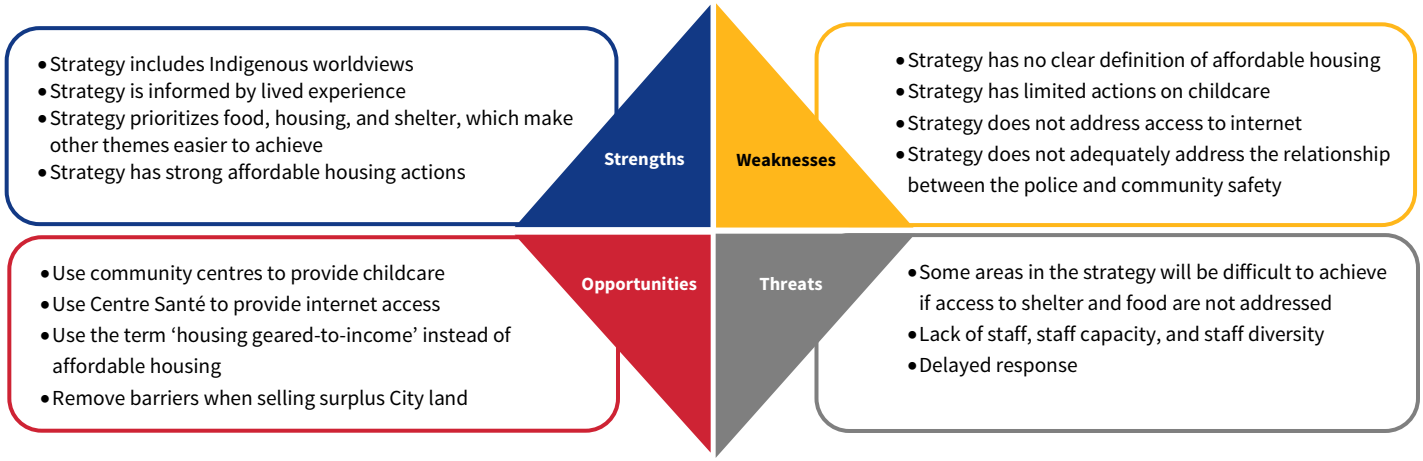
Key Findings – Initial Reactions to the Strategy

Participants were asked to provide their initial reactions to the draft strategy. Initial reactions were categorized into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the strategy (Figure 1). *Figure 1 represents only the views of participants.

Figure 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats



Key Findings – Prioritizing Resources

A list of potential actions that could help achieve the strategy's goals and objectives was shared with participants of the June 23 stakeholder session. Many actions were identified as being within existing resources, while many others were noted as requiring additional resources in order to implement. Participants were asked to place stamps beside their top actions to help inform the first implementation plan for the strategy. Stamps were available using the virtual meeting platform's annotation tool. The top actions were:



1. Diversify the Winnipeg Police Board and appoint the full number of possible board member positions (nine) to ensure diversity (25)



2. Reduce barriers to recreation programs for Indigenous children and youth (15)



3. Front-line public service training (e.g. mental health, first aid, youth at risk) (12)



4. Shelter from Extreme Weather (9)

A complete ranking of priorities is available in Appendix B.

A discussion followed the stamping activity on why participants prioritized certain actions. One participant noted that a diversified Police Board should be inclusive of Indigenous people, people with lived experience of poverty as well as people who are from the 2SLGBTQ+ community because the experiences of mistreatment, violence and negative interactions with police need to be voiced in order for meaningful change to occur. The Police Board also needs more transparency around the application process. Applicants should receive confirmation that their application was successfully submitted, a timeline for the review process, and reasons why they were or were not selected.

Participants clarified that diversifying and increasing the number of individuals on the Police Board should not be confused with increasing the Winnipeg Police Service in either capacity or funding. One participant explained that more policing causes some in the community to feel less safe.

Another participant noted that training for front-line Public Service employees needs to be facilitated by those with lived experience. Training must include not only emergency situations but also poverty awareness. This will reduce the number of negative interactions between City staff and the public.

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POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

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Key Findings – Lived Experience Advisors

The City followed-up with lived experience advisors to get more detailed feedback on the draft actions.

Community-based Solutions

One common theme expressed by lived experience advisors was the importance of getting support from peers in the community instead of people from outside the community. One advisor provided an example of how resource centre staff were able to assist them in a time of need because the staff had lived experience and came from the same community. Having staff that are representative of the community and come from a similar background will lead to more successful outcomes.

Another advisor gave an example of the pilot Community Host Program at the Winnipeg Public Library. This program is intended to hire community members as community hosts to increase safety at the library which reduces the need for security guards and police that typically come from outside the community. Similar community safety programs could be used in other public buildings and outdoor spaces.

> ***The Community Host Program should be expanded throughout the community in places such as community centres, offices where people access services, and on the streets to provide an alternative to security guards and Police presence. This will increase trust and safety because community hosts have lived experience in the community.*** **(Lived experience advisor, July 5, 2021)**

The third advisor gave an example of how those with lived experience could help provide training to City staff to reduce the discrimination that exists towards unsheltered residents and residents in poverty. Training initiatives are better when supported by the community's expertise.

Housing

Another common theme expressed during the follow-ups was housing. Housing was a top priority during the first two engagement phases, which reinforces its importance in the strategy. One participant discussed using holistic approaches to housing where decisions are based on what works best for youth aging out of care. This includes access to intergenerational housing options that provide opportunities to for elders and youth to cohabitate and learn from one another. Another holistic model could provide opportunities for employment if the housing building was also an operational hostel.

Another participant discussed the problem that affordable housing is often not affordable to many in poverty. They recommended using the term 'housing geared to income' to ensure that even the lowest income earners can still have access to housing.

> ***We need housing and rent to be 30% of income so people experiencing chronic homelessness can live in dignity without having to decide between food and rent, or end up back on the street because housing was not affordable.*** **(Lived experience advisor, June 24, 2021)**

Interconnectedness of Goal Areas

The advisors identified the interconnected nature of the goal areas which included the need for affordable transit beyond current discounts. The low-income bus passes currently available are only accessible to certain groups of people living in poverty such as the working poor. The connection of community safety, policing and poverty reduction was also heavily emphasized in its importance. One advisor explained that people with lived experience of poverty are disproportionately surveilled and the criminalization of survival activities for unsheltered people like panhandling, and sleeping in bus shelters is harmful and a different approach is needed.

More information on the lived experience advisor follow-ups is available in Appendix C.

Next Steps

The draft strategy will be presented to Council in fall 2021 for approval. Implementation of the draft strategy is divided into four timeframes. The first timeframe is from fall 2021 to spring 2023 and will include actions that can begin within the first 18-months of the strategy. Many actions in the first implementation plan can be undertaken within existing resources, but many significant actions require Council approval of additional resources or funding in order to implement. Timeframes of subsequent implementation plans should align with the multi-year budget process every four years (Figure 2). Additional engagement will occur as actions from the strategy are implemented, and as future implementation plans for the Poverty Reduction Strategy are developed.

Figure 2: Strategy Implementation



Appendices

Appendix A – List of Stakeholder Organizations
Appendix B – Stakeholder Session Meeting Notes
Appendix C – Lived Experience Advisor Follow-up Notes

To learn more about the Poverty Reduction Strategy, please visit winnipeg.ca/povertystrategy

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Appendix A – List of Stakeholder Organizations

List of Stakeholder Organizations

The City met (virtually) with representatives from the following organizations as part of Phase 3 stakeholder engagement for the Poverty Reduction Strategy:

Canadian Community Economic Development Network
Centre de santé Saint-Boniface
End Homelessness Winnipeg
Fearless R2W
Fédération des Parents du Manitoba
La Fédération des Ainés Franco-Manitobains
Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving
Organizations Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association
Solutions de Communauté pour les Personnes
United Way
University of Manitoba
West Broadway Community Organization
West Central Women's Resource Centre
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

City staff from the following areas were also included in the stakeholder sessions:

Community Services - Community Development
Community Services - Strategic Management & Business Support
Services Customer Service and Communications - Office of Public
Engagement Customer Service and Communications – French Language
Services Indigenous Relations
Property Planning and Development - Urban Planning
Winnipeg Public Library - La Bibliothèque de Saint Boniface

Appendix B – Stakeholder Session Meeting Notes

Poverty Reduction Strategy – Francophone Session

Location:	Zoom	**Date:**	May 19, 2021
Attendees:	6	**Time:**	10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

- If people have to make a choice between food and shelter, achieving the other thematic areas will be difficult
- Addressing food, housing, and transportation will free up time for people to address the other thematic areas
    - Once stable, people will be able to look for work
- There is a high demand for internet access
    - It is the only way a lot of people can communicate with their family, apply for assistance, and apply for jobs
    - Can people us the internet and toilets at the Centre Santé?
- Childcare is a barrier for a lot of new immigrants
- Metal health needs to be addressed
- Why are the City's libraries now included as a cold weather drop-in space?
- Can weather conditions be predetermined for drop-in spaces so they are automatically open when those weather conditions are met?
    - Currently, by the time a decision is made to open up drop-in spaces, it is often too late
- Can the City assist in any way with tiny homes?
- Providing access to water is important
    - Spaces where people can fill their water bottles are needed
    - Water fountain for dogs on Wellington Crescent was a questionable priority for the City
- Poverty and homelessness aren't just in Downtown and St. Boniface.
    - It is in all areas of the City
    - Are services available in all areas of the City or just Downtown?
- The City needs more diversity in their staff
- Newcomers are often francophone
    - These newcomers need to know what services are available to them in French
- The City should explore having a temporary washroom/porta potty in the St. Boniface area
    - Areas of need include near the riverbank/bridge or in Coronation Park
- The City needs to better promote existing supports and services (e.g. recreation fee subsidy program)
    - Many people are not aware
    - The WRHA Community Facilitators is a good network that can help promote existing supports and services

- There is a need for more outreach and assistance with systems navigation (i.e. helping people fill out forms to access benefits or programs)

Poverty Reduction Strategy – Stakeholder Session

Location:	Zoom	**Date:**	June 23, 2021
Attendees:	15	**Time:**	9:30 a.m. – 11 p.m.

Meeting Notes

Discussion #1 – What are your initial reactions to the Draft Strategy and the Life Poles?

- Appreciate that the strategy uses an Indigenous lens.
    - Can the source be cited for the Indigenous references in the strategy?
- The affordable housing actions are good.
    - Concern that a lack of staff capacity in the City will prevent any affordable housing actions from moving forward.
- When the City sells surplus land, how can barriers be removed so Indigenous organizations can acquire surplus land easier?
    - The City used to sell land surplus land for $1.
    - The City needs to consider if the land will be used for the betterment of the community.
- The strategy needs to provide a clear definition of affordable housing.
    - The term gets misused a lot.
    - Need to use the term housing geared-to-income instead of affordable housing.
    - What is the City's role in affordable housing?
- Appreciate that the strategy mentions that lived experience will inform the process.
- Appropriate and accessible housing are often the key issues for immigrant and refugee families.
    - Is this included in affordable housing?
- The Community Safety sectioned mentioned increasing the Winnipeg Police Board.
    - The Winnipeg Police Service needs to be decrease, not increase to make the community feel safer.
- Childcare is very limited in the strategy.
    - Childcare is a big barrier to residents looking for work.
    - Community centres could help provide childcare in communities.

Discussion #2 – What are the most important actions to do first?

- Transportation is important.
    - Not being able to afford transportation is a top barrier.
    - Individual transit tickets at a discounted rate is a good start.
- The City either needs free buses or a sliding scale for fares based on income.
    - The current discounted fares are still too much.

- The current discounted fares are benefitting the low-income residents but not the poor.
- This initiative needs to go even deeper.

- People who run resource centers need to have lived experience and come from the community.
  - Resource centre staff need to be representative of the people they help.
- Livable wage is important.
  - The new CERB has made a large impact.
  - There is now always food in the fridge and bill are paid.
- Housing is important so people can recover and get back on their feet.
- All actions identified in Goal 3: Employment & Income that don't need additional resources should be a top priority
  - Diversity hiring, cultural proficiency etc. will help change the culture and demographics within the City, which will help get more buy-in on poverty reduction
- The City hasn't raised taxes is a meaningful way for 20 years and police budget continues to increase.
- Mandatory PACA (Poverty Awareness & Community Action) workshops for the Winnipeg Police Service.
- Fearless R2W studies a lot of reports with even more recommendations.
  - Many reports only implement a fraction of the strategy.
  - Holistic solutions that address many issues at the same time are preferred.
  - Find community groups to work with on multiple areas at once to have most impact

Discussion #3 – Which of the following actions that require additional resources are most important?

Potential Actions that Require Additional Resources	Very Important
Goal 1: Strategy Implementation and Systems Change	
Reinstate Community Grant Funding Levels	6
Explore Task Force on Child Poverty and Youth Aging Out of Care	3
Goal 2: Affordable Housing	
Housing Partnerships with Other Governments	5
Increase Housing Staff	4
Establish New Affordable Housing Office: to work on programs and policies (e.g. HRIR and grants review, zoning by-law amendments, inclusionary zoning etc.)	5
Affordable Housing Strategy with targets and timelines	8
Financial Incentive Program for Affordable Housing	6
Shelter from Extreme Weather	9

- Reinstating community grant funding is important because things can't be done for free.
- Developing new offices takes years and might not result in a shift to the way things are done.

- Increasing staff and partnerships might be better than creating a whole new Affordable Housing Office.

- An Affordable Housing Office might work if the office is fully dedicated.
  - A monitoring system would be needed to ensure it is helping those most impacted by poverty.
- Extreme weather shelters are important because of our climate.
- Task forces aren't really a City function so the outcomes might not be achievable.
  - There would need to be a desire by the Province to increase EIA rates and change aging out of care for a task force to be effective.
- If a task force would act on finding solutions to child poverty and youth aging out of care, then it is very important.
  - Maybe it would be better to identify the gaps and develop the solutions with people at the table that are impacted by the gaps.
- The City should implement policies that ensure the preservation of existing affordable units (rooming houses, triplexes, lower rent blocks, etc).
  - This is a high-level observation but it would be amazing if the City could reinvigorate its commitment to the provision of public services: public housing, washrooms, water access, transit, community rec centres and green spaces, splash pads, play grounds, after school programming - rather than offloading this work to nonprofit and community-based organizations.
  - The City has unionized workforce, insurance, vehicles, facilities, capacity.

Potential Actions that Require Additional Resources	**Very Important**
Goal 3: Employment & Income	
Funding and Staff for Indigenous Youth Strategy	3
Youth Aging Out of Care: City Job Opportunities	7
In-House WFPS Training to Diversify Recruits	4
Bridging Program for New Transit Operators	3
Aquatics Leadership Program (e.g. training and certification to become a City lifeguard)	4

- The term 'lived experience' can be co-opted really easily, specifically with diversifying the Winnipeg Police Service.
  - Does that consider those with lived experience of police violence?
  - Those with lived experience would probably not want to join the Winnipeg Police Service.
- Retention of Indigenous people is just as important as recruitment.
  - The City can't just put all money into recruitment.
  - Need to look at the internal culture.
  - Indigenous people need to feel welcome and included.
  - What training do City staff get on racism?

Potential Actions that Require Additional Resources	Very Important
Goal 4: Community Well-being Supports	
Public Restrooms – temporary and permanent	8
Access to Drinking Water – temporary and permanent	7
Explore Partnerships for Wrap-around Support to Youth Aging Out of Care	5
Front-line Public Service Training (e.g. mental health first aid, youth at risk)	12
Naloxone Training for Front-line Staff	4

- Training for front-line public service employees need to be facilitated by those with lived experience to reduce those negative experiences that have occurred between staff and public.
    - Training must not only be about what to do in emergencies but also cover poverty awareness.
- Washrooms are really needed Downtown
    - Currently most washrooms downtown are not for public use.
    - Washrooms downtown would save people dignity.
    - Smell of urine downtown is horrible.
    - Washrooms need to be gender neutral.
- A lot of these actions are currently criminalized by the Winnipeg Police Service.
    - The City needs to advocate to decriminalize survival actions.

Potential Actions that Require Additional Resources	Very Important
Goal 5: Transit Equity	
Transit Pass Pilot Program for Youth Aging Out of Care	6
Goal 6: Equitable City Services	
Reduce barriers to participation in Recreation programs for Indigenous children and youth	15
Expand third party referrals for Recreation Fee Subsidy Program	4
Goal 7: Food Security	
Affordable Housing Strategy with targets and timelines	7
Goal 8: Community Safety	
Ongoing funding and support for 24/7 safe spaces	8
Increase & diversify Police Board	25

- Police need to support those who are healing.
- Police is a systemic oppressive barrier to anyone who is Indigenous.
    - More policing makes our community less safe.
    - Police need to be more transparent with Police Board applications.
        - No confirmation that application was received, timelines, or reasons for not being accepted.
    - An Indigenous person with a PhD isn't necessarily the experience that the Winnipeg Police Board needs. They need lived experience.

Appendix C – Lived Experience Advisor Follow-up Notes

Poverty Reduction Strategy – Lived Experience Advisor Follow-up
June 24, 2021
Written Submission

Notes:

First of all thanks for allowing People with Lived Experience to participate in this discussion.

I have however stated before that we (Pwle) should have been involved in the development phase of this project along with MPHM , WPRC , and KaniKanichic. .This is the one overarching major flaw, not of the document (which is very good) but of the process. There are a number of us truly capable of being at these tables. We should NOT be standing behind the masters degrees but standing beside them.

This is another day in the life of lived experience . For future references for future projects , it may be worth it to look internally and ask " Do I have an unconcious bias that won't allow me to accept the fact that pwle belong at development and working tables "

I think it might be worthwhile to think about my community engagement training program that includes " Unconcious biases " . I am doing the same training in the healthcare systemand other cities and municipalities. because " everyone has them" and with WPS recruits etc. We will never get over that barrier unless it is recognized. Think about how you would feel being dismissed from decision making tables because of a stigma people have against you .

1 Only twice I think in the document is the term " Housing geared to income " used or 30% of income .

It is so vital to change this tetminology . The city is putting housing out there at 75% of market and calling it affordable . Affordable to who ? We need housing and rent to be st 30% of income so people we are housing out of chronic homelessness can live in dignity and without having to decide between food and rent ,or end back on the street because housing was not affordable. My partner (who suffers from mental illnesses) and I went through that spending a number of days with our cats in a burnt our garage after being evicted . Only a fundraiser by two if my friends saved us and hot us back into housing. This was three years after escaping the streets .

2 Transit : I think a real push to do anything to radically reduce bus fares is needed and immediately. As was brought up at the meeting 30% reduction does not cut it.I still believe a free bus around the original route and perhaps extended to the Osbourne area would be well accepted .

Single tickets reduced fare should be also brought in, as many can not afford a pass. "I still have a fund in place for transit" that I can activate if the city chooses to come up with an acceptable plan.

I also think a strong mandate that gives transit driver to allow people who cannot pay on for free should be put in place , if it is not already. Over all free transit could be achieved by raing property taxes as well , which would also help the environment .

3 Training : As mentioned above Lived experience and peer and community training by lived exp. To reduce discrimination that exists now towards lived experience . As I push and train orgs and cities on lived experience leadership as well , we need to develop that mindset “Yes lived experience can lead “

I can answer any questions .

4 Hiring : In your document you bring in all demographics in hiring but not lived experience , this needs to be added .

5: Mandate RHI funding to be Housing geared to income and place pwle in the decision making mix. We are more than capable . (I am vice chair of the CAB)

6: Affordable??? Housing office : If the city is serious and can dedicate personel to have a 100% focus on housing with progress monitoring built in , I think it would work.I think coming up with innovative ideas like I have brought into the picture using financialized housing to house chronically homeless and using a “ Lived experience led and empathy driven “ housing model that is unparalleled needs to be utilized , AND having lived experience in that office Again stressing 30% of income or less. Establish a threshold of 30% of income mandate for ALL city housing programs , working with WRzHA to achieve this goal.

7 If possible , and if it is in city purview ,**free payphones .Communication** is so important but not easily attained.

8: Free kitchen usage for places like Knox United or West end Commons to prep meals .The city can do this.

9 Where possible as stated Create Culterally appropriate housing (indiginous , newcomer lived exp led) and Culterally appropriate good programs , that is now overlooked .

10 A pay for I D program. : Way back when I was still homeless I changed provincial policy on MB IDs. They used to come with barriers to getting them , and they used to be $20 . They are now free to all low income or welfare recipients. If I (a homeless nobody could change policy , well the city can do the same for social insurance numbers etc. as well. ID is so important for even many little things. The city can work with community to get this done .

I could go on but I will settle on these points .

Poverty Reduction Strategy – Lived Experience Advisor Follow-up
July 5, 2021
One-on-one interview

Notes:

- Task force for child poverty and youth aging out of care
    - More information is needed on the role of the task force
    - Is 'task force' a good name for this group?
    - Could it be called a 'circle' instead?
- Housing Solutions for Indigenous Youth Aging Out of Care in Winnipeg report
    - Look for community partners in this report
    - Look for information on youth aging out of care in this report
    - The report touches on holistic approaches to housing
    - Housing decision need to be made based on what works best for youth aging out of care
- Housing
    - Hostel-style projects
    - Intergenerational housing with opportunities to engage with elders and employment opportunities
- Community safety host program
    - Expand beyond libraries to public spaces
    - Replaces security guards and police
    - Reduces police intervention
- Emphasize connection between community safety and the other thematic areas like transportation and food security
    - Other areas all have safety risks
- Criminalization of homelessness
    - Fearless R2W is doing research on this topic
    - Daily survival activities are not allowed like going to the bathroom, sleeping in bus shelters, pan handling, etc.
    - Need to hand out information and dispel myths around survival activities
    - Certain laws are more likely to impact people in poverty
- Accountability
    - There needs to be third party accessible reporting that holds police accountable
- Health Buddies
    - Provides advocacy and support for people accessing the health system
    - Health crisis line 24/7 for deescalating mental health issues
- City providing access to land for cultural spaces
    - Good action in the strategy
    - Our food is medicine – access to land for food security

- Decision-making that happens at the City should involve Treaty 1