

Meeting Minutes
Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
Wednesday, March 24, 2021
9:00 am to 10:30 am
Virtual Meeting

Attendance: Aidan Johnson (Chair), Jennifer Gauthier (Vice-Chair), Cassie Ogunniyi, Melenie Neamtz, Alexis Higginbotham, Andrea Waters, Ashley Chiarello, Becky Western-Macfadyen, Bev Bradnam, Carolyn Fish, Maya Mercier, Cheryl Kincaid, Catherine Livingston, Dave Wyllie, Deb Oglivie, Erin Walters, Glen Walker, Gracia Janes, Greg Shupe, Helen Costonguay, Jamie Miller, Jeffrey Sinclair, JoAnne Krick, Judy White, Kim O'Rourke, Laura Ciccone, L. Juras, Lori Kleinsmith, Marc Todd, Maxine Hutchings, Melissa Naso, Michael Mondloch, Michelle Norton, Natalie Chaumont, Robert Walker, Saleh Waziruddin, Sandra Lampman, Sarah Burtch, Shanza Khan, Susan Mifsud, Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, Terri Bruce, Tom Jakop, Ursula Hudson, Vicki Doidge, Julie Gregory, Daniella Liebrechts-Hamilton, Nel Scarry, Janice Cook, Scott Cronkwright, Jennifer Spear, Dorothy Prickett, Anne Watters, Rachel Gillmore

1. Welcome, Mindfulness Minute & Land Acknowledgement

- Minutes from January 27, 2020 and Agenda approved

2. Coordinating Committee Update

- Bank account: \$4,471.08
- **Vision:** All Niagara residents live above the poverty line
- **Mission:** Niagara residents, businesses and organizations working together to improve the quality of life in Niagara.
- REMINDER: It's that time of year again! We are renewing memberships for the next two years (January 2021-December 2022). Rachel has sent the membership form to all NPRN subscribers. Please complete and return. For ease, feel free to provide a digital signature by typing your name in the signature section.
- Priority Table Recruitment & Other Opportunities to Get Involved – Are you a member of one of our Priority Tables? We are always looking for more membership in these groups. If you are interested or would like to learn more about a particular Table, please feel free to connect with any Coordinating Committee member or the Convener.
- Honorary Membership Dues
 - Thank you to those who have supported us this year! It is deeply appreciated.
 - A reminder that if your organization has extra funds, you are always able to support NPRN by providing a volunteer membership due. That is how we've been able to maintain a bank balance. If you would like more information about this, connect with [Rachel](#).

3. Updates from NPRN Priority Tables

Affordable Housing

- Tenant rights and protections:
 - In the midst of organizing information sessions that will primarily focus on eviction prevention, changes to the Landlord and Tenant Board proceedings and access to technology in Niagara communities
 - Advocating for advancement of local *Lodging House Bylaw*
 - Scheduled to meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday of each month, from 1-2pm

Business Engagement

- Living Wage campaign work is now housed under the Business Engagement Priority Table, and still led by Lori Kleinsmith
 - St. Catharines embarking on living wage certification – coming in at supporter level with intention to raise wages for third party contract workers
 - This has spurred Niagara Falls to request staff report

- Tomorrow morning, we will see new release for newly certified employer – Lincoln County Humane Society
- We are asking community members to support our living wages employers that are posted [HERE](#) on the [NPRN website](#)
- Thank you to our new members for joining us! If you are interested in our work, please connect with [Rachel](#)

Health equity

The Health Equity Priority Table is currently focused on the following:

- Collaborated with the Affordable Housing task group to advocate for the advancement of the *Lodging House Bylaw*
- Developing educational resources about the rights of those living in support living/assistive living bylaw that will be targeted towards residents and their care givers, as well as service providers who are supporting residents of these facilities
 - Educational resources for those in supported and assisted living – not just those in residence, but also targeting care givers and those making decisions for loved ones, and service providers
 - Ensuring these resources are inclusive and include all different family structures and cultural practices
- Also looking at taking inventory about what services are available for people impacted by poverty in Niagara – new services and what has changed

Marketing

- The NPRN Marketing & Communications Priority Table aims to support the work of all other Priority Tables with marketing and promotional material, while coordinating NPRN's social media, website, and the Speaker's Bureau.
- Current work includes:
 - Rebranding NPRN and modernizing the NPRN website
 - A new brochure has been developed for NPRN
 - Updating the Speaker's Bureau presentation and system
 - Continued work on NPRN's social media graphics that highlight different national days (e.g. International Women's Day) and how they relate to poverty
- If there is something we should be communicating and sharing, please reach out to Rachel

Social Assistance

The Social Assistance Priority Table is currently focused on the following:

- Updating and completing a policy position statement for NPRN regarding Basic Income
- Sharing information regarding changes within the Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), as well as other government income/financial programs
- Developing strategies to advocate for better solutions in the development and administration of these programs, including advocating for increased rates
- The Social Assistance Table is meeting the third Friday of the month from 1-2:30pm

4. Presentation of the Strategic Plan, Jennifer Spear, *Clean Slate Strategies*

- Used 'How Might We' to try and challenge ourselves to solve problems – steering committee generated 71 HMW statements then asked 'why/what's stopping us' with the coordinating committee – helping us to establish what order our strategies needed to be, and how they are ranked
- Substantial conversation occurred at steering committee level, to challenge ourselves critically

- Strat Plan approved

5. Strategic Plan Discussion

Discussion Questions

- Are there any major questions or concerns with the strategic plan as it currently stands?
- How might we move the plan forward with action steps?
- Given our limited capacity, how might we identify our most urgent priorities as we set goals for the next year or two?

Question: How do we remain nimble when external events set deadlines (e.g., elections, budget setting)? E.g. if ___ happens, how might we respond? How might we use this information? How might we be able to respond?

- E.g. changes coming to federal funding re: housing – how does NPRN respond to these changes quickly? How do we establish protocol for quickly responding to social changes?
- Suggestion we facilitate preemptive discussions with priority tables to develop upfront positions and complete work ahead of announcements, etc.
- Suggestion that we work to develop a ‘plan of attack’ so that we are able to respond to budgets or an election
- Suggestion we look to what we have advocated for up to date – e.g. Basic Income, affordable housing
- Suggestion that for NPRN to choose the priority issues we want to advocate for, each table can identify 2-3 top issues and be the resource to provide the information to the community and to advocate for

Question: Has there been any discussion about the Network connecting with others to facilitate the development of local research/data in addition to sharing well researched community resources?

- Also, how do we look at action-ing and advocating best for the issues that we want to advance, and how do we leverage the work that we have done in the past?
 - NPI evaluation coming forward shortly from the Region – how do we jump off this information?
- There is depth of knowledge from agencies involved in our network, and we could use the stories from the frontlines, and compile and communicate it more broadly
- Suggestion that we can also rely on the Living in Niagara Report and Knowledge Exchange
- Part of the networks struggle has been ‘How do we use the available information?’
 - E.g. NFSN report (see below for link) – how do we use that work to leverage our advocacy
- Is there a point of contact through NPRN to have information and local research flow through? Definitely would be helpful to formalize information and research through Knowledge exchange and Niagara Food Security Network. Would the Steering Committee identify such a point of info flow through?
 - Reminder that information can be sent to info@wipeoutpoverty.ca or to the Priority Table Leads
- Suggestion that a chart of what issues are being brought forward by tables could be helpful
- Suggestion that it would be helpful to outline and formalize processes
 - What is required to have something happen within the Network?
 - Where does information need to go to be brought to everyone

Question: Is there a plan for connecting to political representatives?

- Leadership did reach out last spring to all of our constituent offices to discuss key issues, Coordinating Committee can do so again now
- Facilitating ongoing contact and relationship building with political representatives has been a challenge for NPRN, given the limited capacity of a part-time staff and volunteer membership

Overall suggestions/information/updates:

- Adding an anti-colonial lens to represent Indigenous peoples in our strategies
 - Can use the following document to help guide our work from an anti-colonial lens: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf
- CAEH (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness) has a very active Recovery for All initiative to shape the Federal Budget which the government will present on April 19. <https://www.recoveryforall.ca/>
- A report from the Niagara Food Security Network has been released that highlights lived experience of food insecurity. This report also helps demonstrate the need to address income security as fundamental when addressing food security. <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/niagara-food-security-network-lived-experience-engagement-november-2020-report-on-findings-february-2021/>

6. Questions & Chat Box Follow Up:

Woven into above discussion

7. Adjournment

Next meetings: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. online
 Wednesday, September 22, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. online
 Wednesday, November 24, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. online