

Meeting Minutes
Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
Wednesday, May 26, 2021
9:00 am to 10:30 am
Virtual Meeting



In Attendance: Aidan Johnson (Chair), Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, Glen Walker, Shanza Khan, Andrea Waters, Ashley Chiarello, Becky Western-Macfadyen, Bev Bradnam, Brandon Agnew, Carolyn Fish, Cassie Ogunniyi, Catherine, Cheryl Kincaid, Claudia Calabro, Catherine Livingston, Crystal Carswell, Daniella Liebrechts, Dave Wyllie, Denise Sterling, Emma Tracey, Erin Walters, Gracia Janes, Jeffrey Sinclair, Jennie Stevens, JoAnne Krick, Julie Gregory, Kim O'Rourke, Laura Martin, Laura Ciccone, Laura Ip, Lori Kleinsmith, Marilyn Obaseki, Marc Todd, Mary Wiley, Matt Cuthbert, Maurice Prindiville, Maya Mercier, Melenie Neamtz, Melissa Naso, Michael Mondloch, Michelle Norton, Natalie Vieno, Rebecca Raby, Robert Walker, Sandra, Sharlene Volpatti, Terri Bruce, Ursula Hudson, Valerie Leitch, Vicki Doidge

1. Welcome, Mindfulness Minute & Land Acknowledgement

- Minutes from March 24, 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](#).
- We would like to take a moment to acknowledge Glen Walker and congratulate him on his upcoming retirement! Glen has provided extensive service and leadership to NPRN, and we wish him very well

3. Updates from NPRN Priority Tables

Affordable Housing

- Focused primarily on 3 priorities:
 - Tenant rights and protections
 - Protection of existing deeply affordable housing and creation of deeply affordable housing

- Communication plan related to NIMBY in coordination with the Marketing & Communications Table
- Hosting a tenant rights session similar to what we held pre-pandemic through the library system – June 21, 1pm
- Still working on advancement of Lodging House Bylaw – did come forward in Port Colborne, now looking at how to advance the bylaw in different municipalities, and at a provincial level

Business Engagement

- Currently working to update materials in regards to the benefits of providing a Living Wage in the Niagara Region, and developing a Virtual Presentation to share with community partners. Hoping to have soft launch of material in late spring.
- Beginning planning for an event during the Living Wage Week, November 2021. We will use this time to have a more substantial launch of our new material
- Living Wage Update –
 - Have seen 5 new living wage employers: Lincoln County Humane Society, MarkMeldrum.com, Cultivating Hope Foundation, Niagara Regional Broadband Network, Cairnwood Homes
 - Now at a total of 51 certifications in Niagara to date. Provincially, Ontario Living Wage close to 400 total employers.
 - City of St. Catharines now working with OLW to work towards certification
 - Niagara Falls seeking more information and working with OLW to work through 3rd party contracts. However, NF have agreed to pay all full-time and part-time staff a living wage
 - Port Colborne bring forward living wage to their council in the next few weeks
 - The cost of living and living wage calculations for 2020 were paused last year due to the pandemic, but will be calculated this fall and released in early November 2021
 - Question: Lori can you speak to the discrepancy of the Living Wage amount between Niagara and other areas - where Niagara seems higher - Town of Fort Erie is also working on a report for Council
 - Part of this is due to the lack of transportation available in Niagara – Niagara cost of living amount calculated on owning and operating two cars

Health Equity

- Have been on an unintentional hiatus as the group is heavily comprised of health care workers who are now involved in pandemic related work and vaccine rollout
- Looking to refocus – the group has recognized that the health equity category is very broad, and so instead the group is looking to reach to people with lived experience off poverty to help guide the work of the health equity team
- Moving toward set meeting time, and once that is available it will be shared out to the network

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 – to launch in June 2021!
 - 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

Social Assistance

- Meeting again on June 18th
- Focus has been on income stability more broadly – with 2 key areas: Basic Income, and to OW/ODSP rates
- Have been working on letter to federal MPs related to basic income, social assistance, etc.
 - Geared to be constructive criticism of federal budget, and we are hoping that this will provide a bridge to better connect with our local MPs

4. Presentation – Future Black Female: Dr. Tapo Chimbanga, Founder & Executive Director, *Future Black Female*

Unfortunately, Dr. Chimbanga was unable to make this meeting. We hope to reschedule this for a later date.

5. Presentation – Social Justice Research Institute: Julie Gregory, Project Facilitator, *Social Justice Research Institute, Brock University*

- Please email us at sjri@brocku.ca if you are interested in becoming a participating member of the SJRI.
- Question about whether there is any conversation about updating indices used in the PEPiN report related to impacts of pandemic, as well as work related to pay equity
 - Not currently, but adding this to suggestions for future work
 - There are professors at Brock doing research on precarious work, so potential to tap into those

6. Outstanding Items, Questions & Chat Box Follow Up

Endorsement of Niagara Food Security Network – Lived Experience Engagement, November 2020 Report on Findings – February 2021 Report

- United Way has worked with Niagara Connects, Community Care West Niagara, and Community Support Services to facilitate a lived experience engagement project
- Report does directly tie food security to income stability – NFSN is asking for NPRN's endorsement of this report and NFSN advocacy related to income stability/Basic Income
- NPRN unanimously endorses this report and ongoing advocacy

Participant Updates, etc.:

- Niagara Community Garden Network came under United Way umbrella this past year
 - One of main barriers to expansion and improvement of food security through community gardens is related to municipal bylaws and policies
 - Tamara and Erin Riseing are working together to develop a position paper to be released to municipal representatives
 - More information about this and an ask for endorsement from NPRN – watch your inbox!
- outNiagara update –
 - working on advocacy and connecting/supporting 2SLGBTQA+ people in Niagara

- Received about \$300,00 from Women and Gender Equality Canada, to help build policy and strategy for outNiagara and to develop a needs assessment related to what Niagara needs for 2S.... for people in Niagara
- Have developed a group of 20 individuals on Advisory Community as community members to help guide and advice the consultant that has been hired to develop this needs assessment
- Hoping that we can partner with NPRN via surveys, etc. to get a sense of what does/doesn't exist in Niagara for 2S_ people in Niagara to help inform what is most needed in the region
- Email Laura Ip at laura@outniagara.ca for more information
- Update from MPP Stevens re: Queens Park
 - All MPPs are available for communication throughout summer even through parliament is on break
 - Please reach out to all your constituency offices about what is happening in the community
 - Please feel free to reach out to MPP Stevens anytime, JStevens-co@ndp.on.ca
- Niagara Falls Public Library
 - Working with partners to use the Victoria Ave. library space to better serve this vulnerable community
 - During early pandemic, NF Library reached out to the Region about what they can do, and now are well partnered with the NASO team
 - Have built 3 offices that are now available to be booked by community partners to help support connecting with vulnerability community members, and community members as study spaces/private access to internet if needed (e.g. accessing court, etc.)
 - As we saw the needs of our vulnerable community increase around the City of Niagara Falls, we put a call out to our partners to come together and discuss ways we can fill the gaps of need. We call it the Niagara Falls Community Conversation and we now meet quarterly to collaborate and network, and work together to support our vulnerable community. Partners include: NRPS, Project Share, Niagara Community Legal Clinic, Niagara Region, John Howard Society, Streetworks / Positive Living Niagara, Niagara EMT, Out of the Cold / Start Me Up Niagara, The Soup Kitchen, Grand River Employment and Training, Gateway / NASO and the Niagara Falls Public Library. The Library sits as a partner, and I facilitate the discussion of the group.
- Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Center
 - Have worked to develop programs to virtually engage newcomers into the community during the pandemic
 - For more information on services for newcomers, please call 905-685-6589

7. Adjournment

Next meetings: Wednesday, September 22, 2021	9-10:30 a.m.	<i>online</i>
Wednesday, January 26, 2022	9-10:30 a.m.	<i>online</i>
Wednesday, March 23, 2022	9-10:30 a.m.	<i>online</i>
Wednesday, May 25, 2022	9-10:30 a.m.	<i>online</i>
Wednesday, September 28, 2022	9-10:30 a.m.	<i>online</i>
Wednesday, November 23, 2022	9-10:30 a.m.	<i>online</i>