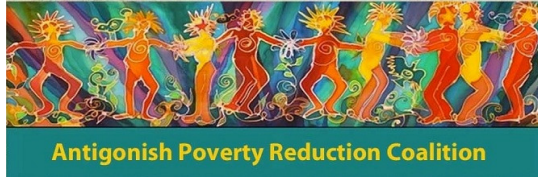


**5-Year Action Plan
To Address Poverty
in Antigonish Town and County**

March 2012



Thank you to our project sponsors:



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada



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What local community members have to say about poverty...

There are so many levels of poverty here in Antigonish. We look at our senior citizens, and they are going hungry. Because their money is going toward prescriptions, they are not getting enough to eat. But they are the silent people, right, they are the people in our community who aren't speaking up. People on assistance—the same thing. They are robbing Peter to pay Paul. So do you eat, or do you eat, or do you use the money for something you need besides the basic needs?

Poverty reduction has been going on for quite some time. I went down to Halifax and walked for the Poverty Coalition. I walked against poverty in Nova Scotia, in the 90s. We did. And what's happening? Nothing is happening.

I feel discriminated against because I live in poverty. I received clothing vouchers for a second hand clothing store. I needed clothes, but if I went to the racks that said \$2 and \$5, or a nice coat or a pair of boots that said \$5, [the workers there said] I wasn't entitled to have those. I had to have money. I would explain to these women, "The reason I'm here is because I'm living in poverty. It's not my fault I don't have \$5, this is just the situation." It's almost as if I have to tell people I am mentally ill over and over and over again. I feel discriminated against because I don't have money to buy clothing that I should be entitled to. I think we should all be entitled to the basic essentials of life.

You know why people smoke? Poverty. When you smoke, it cuts down on food cravings. That's why people smoke. They smoke because of anxiety disorder. That's why people smoke. They smoke because rich people make them.

Poverty is not having money to pay your bills. Living paycheck to paycheck. Not having enough money to support yourself. Not being able to afford the necessities. Not being able to work because of disability, and not having enough money for a normal life. Not having enough money to get the things you need, and to function properly in society. You need money to function in society.

Introduction

Between June and December 2011, the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC) conducted focus groups through Antigonish Town and County. Marion MacNeil, GASHA Public Health Nurse, and Paula Cameron, APRC Project Coordinator, asked over 100 community members:

- **How could your community be even better?**
- **What needs to happen for health and wellbeing to be equally shared by all?**

Sincere thanks to all who participated in the focus group process; we are grateful for your generosity and insight. Your perspectives and stories form the substance of this document.

As the breadth of the action plan reflects, there is room in this process for many kinds of work, from creating community art projects that explore local housing issues, to writing letters to government officials advocating for universal childcare or guaranteed livable incomes, to serving on an action committee for housing, education, health services, or childcare.

Some of this work has already begun, and part of the Coalition's work will be supporting and collaborating with initiatives under way on poverty related issues.

Although the APRC consists of over fifty diverse organizations and individuals, its members share a commitment to eliminating poverty in our community.

The action plan process has been guided by the idea that **poverty in Antigonish Town and County affects every single one of us**; similarly, addressing poverty at its root will require the support and commitment of all people living here.

This action plan was created by the community, for the community. It is a living document, open to change and improvement. It is meant as a starting point, a guide for work that needs to happen—work that requires the participation and commitment of every person living in our community, including our government and business leaders.

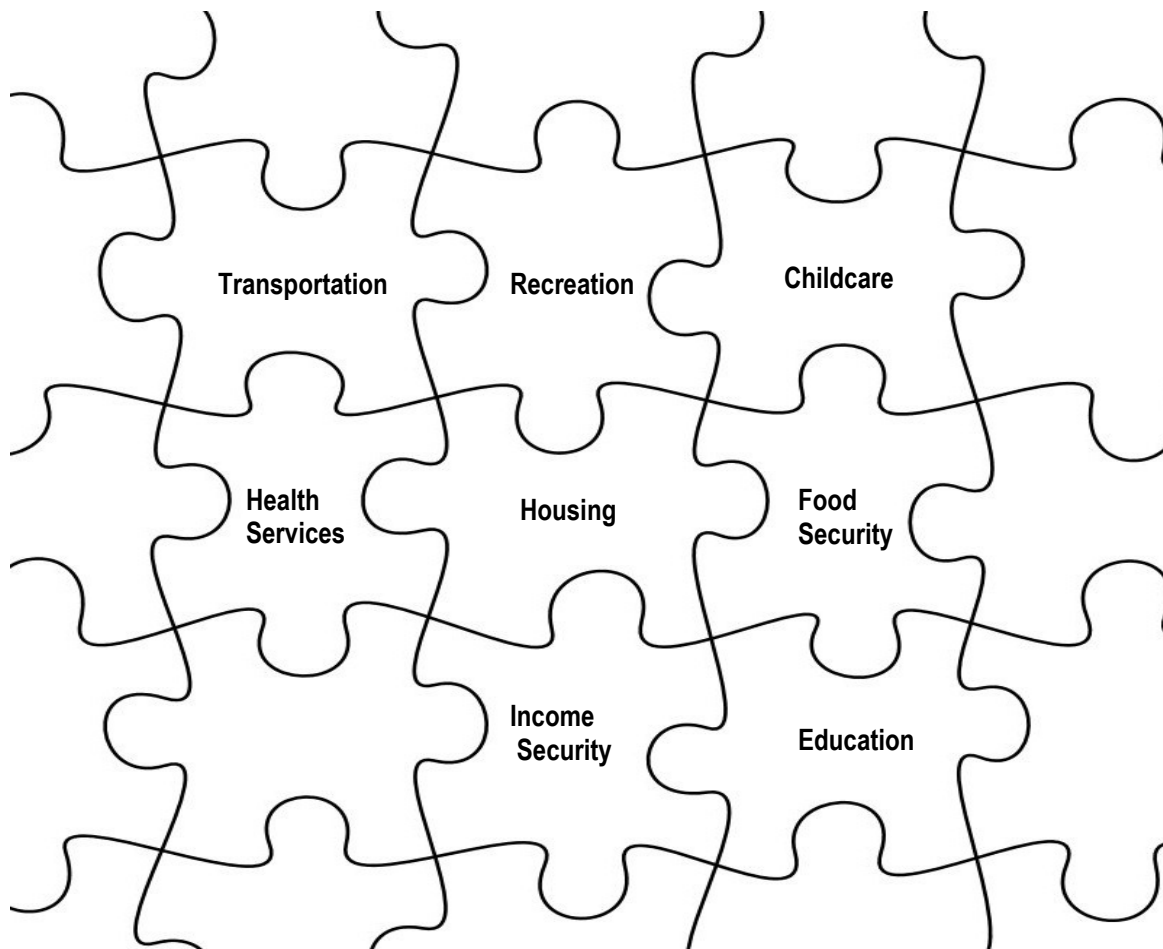
As the focus groups affirm, there is no “us” and “them” when it comes to these issues: taking on the actions suggested here will improve the well-being of all of us.

**Antigonish is talking about poverty;
it is time to join the conversation.**

The APRC appreciates its growing support from our community as we work to address these issues.

For example, this action plan was reviewed and workshopped by over 70 community members; **thank you** to each one of you for your valuable feedback.

The Issues



People living below the poverty line encounter multiple barriers to health and well-being. APRC focus groups identified eight major themes requiring action. Often these themes work together.

For example, here in Antigonish, high housing costs in the town cause many individuals and families to move to outlying areas in the county. Because our community does not currently have an affordable and physically accessible community transit system, many people rely on hitchhiking, expensive taxis, or occasional drives from neighbors. Transportation issues mean limited access to health services, employment, food, and recreation; when we pay for taxis, the money takes away from funds allocated for rent, heat, food, and prescriptions.

There are various patterns weaving through this puzzle: colonialism, systemic racism, discrimination against people living with disabilities, and gender inequality. A comprehensive action plan to address poverty must hold together these interconnected issues and their social contexts, each an important puzzle piece in the health and well-being of our community.

Transportation

People going to appointments were then told to take the Canso bus. If you've got an appointment at 3pm at the hospital in Antigonish, the Canso bus is back by 1pm. That's no good. It's just no good.

Transportation I think is a big issue, a central issue for other problems that we have. If we fixed that, then it would help with the rest.

I used to live out in the county, and it's hard to get into town. People have to drive you. And for university students, it can be hard to get to class, so it affects your education.

I know a lot of people complain about having to get to Superstore and Walmart. If there's something they need there, they have a very difficult time. They have to walk along a very busy highway, and cross it usually. Even going to Sobey's, even if you live on campus you have to take multiple trips if you don't have transportation. How are you going to get it home, if you don't have the money for a taxi?

Transportation, it really blows my mind. Even if you get a friend to take you, it's hard, people ask me, but I have to tell them, I'm not a taxi. With the cost of gas, what can you do?

I worked at the hospital but traveling back and forth and the wintertime made it even harder. From there I went to EI, from EI to social services. I'm just going backward now.

From this community, the taxi is \$60 per return trip to town. For a person who makes \$523 a month from community services and pays \$450 a month for rent, tell me what she has left for groceries and to get to the doctor?

We don't have good enough transportation at all. I see people hitchhiking. A lot of young people hitchhike. It's dangerous, especially on the Trans Canada.

Action Priorities: TRANSPORTATION

Leads: Town & County Council¹

Antigonish Public Transportation Stakeholder Committee (GASHA, ASD, ARDA, APRC, ACALA)

Town and County Recreation, St FX Students and Administration

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Develop statement of economic impact for transportation issues	Work with community members to research, collate, & present detailed report on the economic impacts of gaps in transportation services	Short term: Years 1-2
Conduct a feasibility study for a town & county transportation system	Apply for funding for a feasibility study & conduct the study	Short term: Years 1-2
Connect with other Nova Scotia transit networks	Build relationships & share resources with The Nova Scotia Community-Based Transportation Association, Acadian Lines bus company, & other community transit groups like Kings Transit Authority	Short term: Years 1-2
Coordinate current ad-hoc transportation initiatives ²	Create a website to facilitate ridesharing and existing services such as the VON CareVan and private taxi companies	Short term: Years 1-2
Create town/county transit authority	Coordinate & mobilize existing community networks & assets, APRC members & partners will work with the following groups in planning a county-wide authority for physically & economically accessible transportation	Medium term: Years 3-4
Lobby municipal, provincial, & federal governments for better rural transportation policies ³	Advocate for lower gas taxes, resources for bike lanes, paths, & other infrastructure	Ongoing

¹ Leads and stakeholders were identified through the focus group and community consultations. These are not comprehensive, but identify current leaders in these areas, and hopefully in some cases, future leaders.

² Sustainable Antigonish hosts a rideshare page on their website: see <http://sustainableantigonish.ca/rideshare-antigonish/>

³ As an important vehicle for improved public policy, advocacy work weaves through this action plan. Advocacy actions are shaded grey.

Housing

I lived in a basement apartment for two years. The rent was \$700/month. Our landlord considered the apartment to be a 2-bedroom, but the "second bedroom" was so small that we couldn't fit a bed in it. So we had to use the other bedroom, which had no window. There was only one window in the whole apartment. And he could get away with that.

When we moved in, the first thing our landlord said, "The first time I see you have over five people visiting, you are kicked out right away. No drinking, no drugs, and if I get a first call from neighbors you're out." But then we had a baby, and these four or five girls moved in beside us. They were so loud that we couldn't sleep for a whole year. It was unbelievable. And he never once went there.

I know a young woman who couldn't get an apartment because she had a child. That's a human rights violation. But a lot of landlords put stipulations on their rental properties.

We take our seniors out of our community and we put them in the RK etc., and in Guysborough. I don't know why we can't keep our seniors here in the community in a nursing home. I don't know how many healthcare providers and personal care workers we have here. Why couldn't we build a little on, and hire people for the kitchen, grounds, housekeeping, a nursing home would benefit seniors, give them a place to stay, but then there are other spin-offs.

Housing is so expensive, because of the university. Apartments close to St FX are super expensive. And for low income housing, you wait on the list forever. There are still some St FX students who don't have a place to stay. It's a huge freshman class.

Action Priorities: HOUSING

Leads: APRC Housing Working Group

Stakeholders: People in need of affordable housing, municipal councils, financial institutions, businesses, community organizations, local seniors and youth, St FX students, Celtic Homes

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Form an Affordable Housing Society ⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stakeholders, including members with expertise in finance and disability issues and prospective tenants, possibly housing authority • Recruit society members • Develop a vision statement for local affordable housing • Draft an issues paper on local rental market (including tenants' rights, landlords, regulations, compliance with regulations, loopholes, etc.) (with St FX student?) 	Short term: Year 1
Strengthen partnerships between key stakeholders	Hold multi-sector roundtables to discuss housing needs & priorities for the Antigonish area, including the local business community	Short term: Years 1-2
Seek out successful models for rural affordable housing projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing similar projects in North America and beyond • Do site visits & meetings with founder/operators & inhabitants in Nova Scotia 	Ongoing
Support communities in developing affordable housing plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite community members to identify their needs & assets (e.g., existing housing projects, land, buildings, skilled workers) • Explore possible funding options & business plans • Collaboratively develop housing plans 	Ongoing
Plan & deliver a 10-unit green affordable housing complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding • Collaboratively design & develop a building plan , business plan, & project policies, including tenant criteria • Seek out other models 	Medium term: Years 3-4
Develop additional green, affordable housing in the Antigonish area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing equity, experience & partnerships • Conduct further needs assessments • Seek out new investors • Extend low-income & seniors housing options in Antigonish Town & County 	Longer term: Years 5+
Raise public awareness about local affordable housing issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish news articles & letters to the editor, do radio interviews • Collaborate with local artists on a public art project about local housing issues • Plan & deliver public presentations to local groups & organizations 	Ongoing

⁴ Katherine Reed, of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, is currently helping to form an Antigonish Affordable Housing Society. Contact her at 863-6221 if you are interested in participating or learning more.

Action Priorities: HOUSING

Leads: APRC Housing Working Group

Stakeholders: People in need of affordable housing, municipal councils, financial institutions, businesses, community organizations, local seniors and youth, St FX students, Celtic Homes

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Lobby for increased landlord accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold information sessions about landlord licensing • Lobby local governments to enforce standards for local rental housing 	Short - Medium term: Years 1-3
Deliver public workshops on tenant rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding to hire a tenant rights coordinator to develop & deliver a series of workshops on tenant rights issues, procedures, & supports 	Short – Medium term: Years 2 -3
Develop supportive housing for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing resources 	Ongoing

Food Security

We're told that we should have everything natural and organic, and I try to buy as much as I can, but it's very very expensive. And I think that has to be addressed. And trying to buy local—my family recently planted a garden, so I feel really good about that. We have chickens, and we're trying to do our best.

When grocery stores have sales, like ten food items for \$10? Those sales are for the middle class. Poor people don't have \$10 to spend on one item. That \$10 may need to go toward their entire grocery list for the week.

I pick fallen apples off crab apple trees to make apple sauce. What else can we do? There must be something out there. Why not put a food bank in Tracadie? At least a little closer for us.

We stock up on canned foods. My mom just can't afford [fresh produce] anymore. It's just been getting harder and harder. My parents will buy us one big thing a year, but basically we are living to paycheque to paycheque.

I've been here for 11 years, and we haven't gotten a raise in anything for food. Being a diabetic, I'd like more money for fruit and vegetables. But that's just me. If I had more money I would be interested in buying much healthier food.

Action Priorities: FOOD SECURITY

Leads: Antigonish Food Security Coalition (AFSC)⁵

Stakeholders: GASHA, APRC, St. James United SJC, Antigonish Downtown Development, local farmers & food providers, agriculture specialists, community members

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Build awareness at local levels about food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop educational materials about local food issues to supplement the <i>Thought about Food?</i> Workbook developed in Nova Scotia • Highlight budgeting constraints for people living on low incomes • Work with Public Health to share food costing data with community as it is released every two years 	Ongoing
Examine implications of food costing findings at local levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host workshops to examine the results of the report <i>Can Nova Scotians Afford to Eat Healthy?: Report on 2010 Participatory Food Costing</i> • Develop strategies for addressing rising food costs 	Short term: Year 1
Develop a 10-year sustainable food plan for the Antigonish area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan ways to address current & future barriers to nutritious, affordable food for all community members • Develop strategy to sell local food in big grocery stores 	Short term: Years 1-2
Establish affordable, locally grown food within downtown and county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support efforts to address the lack of local produce within Antigonish’s downtown and county • Provide input on ways to ensure all community members benefit 	Short – Medium term: Years 1-3
Create a gardening tool & equipment co-op	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with young & beginning farmers to identify equipment & supply needs & assets • Support fundraising & other funding efforts for equipment-sharing co-ops • Provide gardening education & mentorship 	Medium – long term: Years 2-5
Support farmers in supplying food banks , schools, and hospitals with fresh produce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate volunteer transportation service for delivery of unsold local produce to local food banks • Develop local infrastructure (e.g., food inspection) so local food can be used in large institutions 	Ongoing
Help develop “gleaning network” to identify & connect local families living on low incomes with local farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with local farmers & the Department of Agriculture to secure funding to link local sources of produce with families in need, with potential work/trade arrangements 	Medium - long term: Years 2-5

⁵ The Antigonish Food Security Coalition is leading food security work in Antigonish Town and County, and is already spearheading several of these initiatives. For more information, you can contact AFSC members Colleen Cameron (accamero@stfx.ca) or Debi Anderson (antigonish@kids1st.ca).

Action Priorities: FOOD SECURITY

Leads: Antigonish Food Security Coalition (AFSC)⁵

Stakeholders: GASHA, APRC, St. James United SJC, Antigonish Downtown Development, local farmers & food providers, agriculture specialists, community members

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Lobby government for equitable food-related policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand food allowances that mirror rising food costs for people living on social assistance & disability • Lobby for federal support for: a guaranteed livable income, universal childcare, increases in the child tax benefit, Aboriginal Head Start, & more • Investigate food vouchers as part of income support 	Ongoing
Attract & support new & returning community members to farm food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help create an equipment & seed co-op to help address high infrastructure costs; • Lobby provincial government for farm-friendly policies, particularly for small-scale farming; • Create mentorship program to link older farmers with emerging farmers • Support farmers in identifying opportunities to sell/donate food • Collaborate with organizations and networks such as WOOF Canada to provide farm workers 	Medium term: Years 3 - 5

Income Security

When you have a cheque for \$400 and you have to pay \$20 what do you have left? And then you've got your light bill—your light bill costs \$200 or \$300. As my mother used to say, you've got to rob Peter to pay Paul.

I am on disability and I get \$455 per month. \$200 on rent, \$55 for life insurance. Not to mention heat, electricity, food. What are you supposed to do? You tell us. How long would you last on \$200? Not long I bet. Not even a week!

Is there an opportunity to lobby for increased social assistance, increased minimum wage? Allowing people to work a decent number of hours before cutting their assistance, and not penalizing their child tax supplement until they're making \$50,000. We need well paid maternity leaves with full benefits. If we put money into these things now, down the road we will see reduced crime and many other outcomes. It would take a lot of money up front, yes, but down the road children would be educated and healthy. Healthcare costs would be reduced.

Jobs are another big issue. If we had jobs, we would have money, if we had money, we could buy nutritious food, we could afford housing, we could buy a car... We don't have any economic basis for within the Black community. If we could come up with an idea to build an economic base within the Black communities... We need to get a job creation program going for the Black community.

Most of our community is senior citizens. There are no jobs. I have a 34 year old daughter, She'd love to come home, but there's no job. And no housing. There is a rotating door- a little part time job, then you go on EI.

My mother went on disability a few years ago. She has MS. She is in constant pain. She spends \$700 a month on medication, and her disability doesn't pay for it. My father doesn't have the best job. He is looking at going out west to find work because it's just getting ridiculous.

Action Priorities: INCOME SECURITY

Leads: APRC Income Security Committee

Stakeholders: Town & County Council, DCS, ACRC, Bergengren Credit Union, Coady International Institute, St FX Extension Department, ASD, ARDA, Chamber of Commerce, GASHA

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Form APRC Income Security Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify stakeholders Recruit society members Develop a vision statement for local income security 	Short term: Years 1-2
Develop & facilitate social enterprises in Antigonish town & county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out successful rural social enterprise models Identify possible social enterprise initiatives for Antigonish Conduct feasibility & marketing studies for proposed social enterprises (business students) Secure funding for starting social enterprises Look at relevant public policies (policy analyst) 	Ongoing
Raise community awareness around income security & related issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create public awareness campaign regarding local barriers to income security Host a full day Community Forum on local barriers to income security & possible solutions Develop & deliver workshops on successful strategies for income security in rural communities 	Ongoing
Establish a LETS system ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Antigonish is leading this work Study Tatamagouche's Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) & explore benefits & limitations for Antigonish 	Short term: Year 1
Advocate for better social assistance policies and gap support for low-income people	<p>The APRC Income Security Committee will advocate with all levels of government and political parties prior to & during the next provincial election to raise awareness about the impact of low social assistance rates. This will entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with people living on low incomes Identifying groups & possible leaders/facilitators Offering education/workshops on political advocacy Lobbying provincial government to raise social assistance rates to livable levels 	Ongoing
Recognize supportive employers & advocates for workers with special needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers with special needs includes youth without experience, workers without training, workers with physical and intellectual challenges Establish a "Champion" program to promote & celebrate employers who are supportive of diverse workers Work with the Chambers of Commerce to establish a social ethics award for employers addressing social injustices Work with employers to provide training, mentorship, and apprenticeship opportunities 	Short to Medium term: Years 2 - 3
Lobby for poverty reduction policies provincially & federally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate with all political parties for the creation of a national, integrated poverty reduction strategy including a guaranteed annual income & a national poverty strategy Review & implement changes to public pension systems to ensure income adequacy among seniors 	Ongoing

⁶ Sustainable Antigonish members are currently working on developing a Local Exchange Trading System (LETS), which would allow community members to use a local currency to exchange goods and services. See <http://sustainableantigonish.ca/> for more details.

Education

I don't know how people pay for school supplies if they don't have much money. There are 6 kids in my family, and when we were all in school, my parents would spend \$400-500 a year on school supplies.

People are criticized for buying cigarettes or KFC—they are human beings! They should not have to eat dirt because they are poor. There is still so much judgment.

It would be good for employers to go to a meeting about what it's like living with a mental illness. They could be educated and find out more, so they can deal with people who have mental illnesses. My boss is like that. He treats me very well. If I need to take time off, he lets me go. I'm fortunate.

I have heard community members complaining because they see fancy cars in the food bank parking lot and think that they shouldn't be there. But the cars belong to volunteer drivers! Do they really think that people who can afford their own food would go there, wait in lined for canned goods, if they really didn't need it?

I think they should have a program where you donate left over school supplies at the end of the year, and pool them together. Then when everyone starts school again, they can choose what they need. People throw everything out at the end of the year.

Action Priorities: EDUCATION

Leads: APRC Education Committee

Stakeholders: ACALA, SRSB, GASHA, Town & County Council, DCS, ACRC, Bergengren Credit Union, Coady International Institute, St FX Extension Department, Young & adult learners

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Develop grants/programs for families with school-aged children	Working in collaboration with local schools, create a fund to cover school-related expenses such as school supplies, sports equipment & fees, & musical instruments	Medium term: Years 2 - 4
Establish financially & physically accessible after school programs for local youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create out-of-school programs with affordable rates & scholarship opportunities • Coordinate rides so youth from outlying areas can attend 	Medium term: Years 2 - 4
Raise public awareness & knowledge about local poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a community media campaign about local poverty issues • Illustrate the multiple barriers experienced by community members, & effects from health issues to social exclusion • Support collaborate art projects in which people living on low incomes share their perspectives with the wider community 	Ongoing
Raise public awareness & knowledge about local mental health issues ⁷	Working with people living with mental health issues, develop & deliver workshops & materials to help community members understand what it means to live with a mental illness, and target employers as well as community groups & organizations	Ongoing
Raise public awareness & knowledge about First Nations treaty responsibilities	Drawing from the expertise of local First Nations community members, host workshops and information sessions on settler responsibilities in relation to peace and friendship treaties	Ongoing
Provide financially & physically accessible educational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & deliver free educational programming for local youth & adults • Deliver similar programming in outlying areas, &/or coordinate transportation for rural areas 	Medium term: Years 2 - 3
Develop & deliver skills workshops for un- or under- employed community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the “9 Essential Skills for Employability” model, create peer support & mentorship opportunities for young &/or returning workers • Provide additional supports for people with disabilities 	Medium term: Years 3 - 5
Lobby for more inclusive adult learning requirements	Lobby provincial government to lower restrictive entrance requirements for adult learners seeking further education	Ongoing

⁷ GASHA is currently developing a Mental Health Literacy campaign. The Park Bench Players community theatre troupe is part of this work.

Childcare

Childcare is a definite issue for people. For some, it's cost—most childcare places charge \$30 a day, and then depending on your income and how many hours you are getting... if your employer cuts back on your hours... Or is there a space for you? Sometimes that's an issue. Some people go the private route, but that's not always easy, not always reliable or easy to find someone responsible and with good references. I think that's another huge issue.

I wish we had universal childcare. I wish that every child had the best start. So that they are all at the same level. We know that county kids are not ready for school, but town kids are. Is it isolation, or maybe they can't get into childcare. I don't know.

Daycares usually run from 9-5. If you had someone working at Walmart, a shift from 2-8, where would they go for childcare? You have to be a teacher. You have to work 9-5, if somebody is going to fit into your schedule. And most daycares close for the summer, or do not take infants under a year. Or require that children be potty-trained. There are also specific subsidies—for example, part time daycare is not covered by subsidies.

Just this year, childcare went up \$3 a day. By the time my kids are in school, I will be paying \$45 a day. And when was the last time our wages went up?

Think of the single mom who stays home because she can't afford daycare. If she were working minimum wage and paying for childcare, she'd be in the hole. And think if she could afford daycare, if it was subsidized, she could go out and get her education or get a decent full-time job. But there is the stereotype—there is the judgment call that she just doesn't want to work.

Action Priorities: CHILDCARE

Leads: APRC Affordable Childcare Committee (AACC)

Stakeholders: Local businesses, other large employers (e.g., GASHA, St FX), Kids First, local childcare providers, local parents, St FX early childhood researchers

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Establish an Antigonish Affordable Childcare Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stakeholders • Recruit committee members • Develop a vision statement for high-quality, inclusive & affordable childcare based on multiple childcare philosophies • Ensure AACC meetings & events are child friendly 	Short term: Year 1 - 2
Raise awareness about local childcare-related issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create media campaign to highlight local need for high-quality, inclusive & affordable childcare • Advocate for more child friendly events in town and county • Provide information to local organizations, groups, and employers on how to make their activities more child and family-friendly 	Ongoing
Lobby federal government to establish universal childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate with all political parties prior to & during the next provincial election to raise awareness about the need for Universal Childcare policies 	Ongoing
Develop a local childcare resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with St FX Service Learning students, develop & distribute a map and directory of local childcare resources according to location, age range, & cost 	Short term: Years 1 -2
Lobby provincial government for increased childcare subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate with all political parties prior to & during the next provincial election to raise awareness about the need for an increase in childcare subsidies from the current provincial number (250) 	Short term: Years 1 -2
Conduct a local needs assessment for local childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify needs, assets, & barriers to affordable local childcare, attending to factors such as minimum age requirements, summer programming, & shift work-friendly childcare services 	Short to Medium term: Years 2 - 4

Health Services

This summer, I had a toothache where a filling fell out. The tooth was completely savable, but it would have been \$900 and it wasn't covered by the province. But extraction was covered, so I lost my tooth. The whole idea that dental isn't included in medical care... Strangely enough, my mouth is connected to my body. If I hadn't taken care of the tooth, it could have led to other health issues.

I feel that the healthcare system is too focused on treatment. We know that poverty is responsible for poor health, but we are doing such minimal work on poverty. And then the healthcare system has to absorb the costs of treating chronic illness and such, but we're not putting anything in prevention.

Health issues here: Diabetes, hypertension, high blood pressure, the works. We got it all. People have all these health conditions but no transportation or private health plans. Some people are in the bracket where they don't yet get a pension. Many don't get CPP so they're on social assistance. They have high cholesterol, hypertension, this or that, so they're on social assistance and trying to live off \$400 a month.

Are there mental health issues here? Yes. Schizophrenia, bipolar. There is no support for mental health issues. People don't want to go to the doctor. Some times you have to wait 3 hours. And emergency, 4 hours. And if you get a drive, they are waiting for you for three hours. So when you get in, you are so aware of that you forget what you wanted to ask for. It's hard to concentrate.

Why don't doctors step up to the plate and speak up for us? For awareness in the community?

You know how valuable ordinary people are to me? They may clean the garbage at the hospital, or they may sweep the streets, but if they have something positive to say, or a joke, it makes me feel like people care. And there are nurses and doctors too that are losing a lot, not accepting other ways. There are negative people, but I just need to talk myself through it. I don't need to feel it, what they say about a mental patient. But there are people who are a big help, like people who work with people with disabilities.

Action Priorities: HEALTH SERVICES

Leads: GASHA Social Justice Committee, Health Connections, APRC Health Committee, Department of Community Services, GASHA Public Health, local healthcare providers, Pharmacies & local health-related businesses, Antigonish Town & County Community Health Board

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Create a Health Equity Facilitator position ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a position to research the impacts of systemic racism on healthcare delivery in GASHA • Design & deliver training workshops to support local healthcare providers & administrators in developing inclusive policies • With Aboriginal, African-Nova Scotian, & immigrant community members, identify strategies for improving health outcomes for these groups, including training, advocacy, & program/policy development 	Ongoing
Develop a “Free Clinic” to provide alternative health care to people living on low incomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local health providers in developing a weekly free alternative health clinic (e.g. Halifax’s Saturday Free Clinic) to offer treatments including acupuncture, homeopathy, massage therapy, naturopathy, osteopathy, & physical therapy 	Short to Medium term: Years 2 - 4
Improve outlying community access to healthcare & support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of telehealth sessions • Incorporate free technology such as Skype in telehealth initiatives 	Medium term: Year 3
Establish a peer mentorship patient program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner patients with new diagnoses with patients with similar issues as a “buddy” system • Train more experienced patients to provide phone support in navigating diagnosis, treatment, & the wider health system 	Medium term: Years 3 - 4
Create a “Navigator” position in community health centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & deliver training for a health navigator so that people in crisis receive better care sooner 	Medium to Long term: Years 3 - 5
Initiate a free dental & eye clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit local healthcare providers to deliver pro bono services to people living on low incomes in a monthly day-long free health clinic 	Medium term: Years 2 -3
Lobby provincial government for better drug coverage for people living on low incomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & distribute information materials about current gaps in medical coverage • Raise awareness about how low income community members must choose between medication & food, transportation, housing, etc. 	Ongoing

⁸ GASHA (Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority) currently takes a lead role on many of these items. It has formed a Social Justice Health Equity Committee and works closely with First Nations, Acadian, and African Nova Scotian communities on various initiatives, including cultural safety training. GASHA has a process to refer people to Family Pharmacare and provides other pharmacy supports including advocacy for coverage. Two GASHA representatives also sit on the Coordinating Committee of the APRC.

Recreation

There is literally nothing to do. Should we see a movie or go bowling? We should have an entertainment centre, like the library, but has pool tables, where everyone takes turns to play, and volunteers run it. It wouldn't cost anything.

It's way too expensive to play sports. I stopped playing volleyball because I just couldn't afford to pay to go on some team. There should be a team where you don't have to pay money. Even on our town team you have to pay money. I think teams should have fundraisers to go on trips, and it shouldn't cost anything. A trip costs \$300-400 to go on a trip, plus the time to drive there, and gas.

Because I'm a single parent, I don't have time for sports or that stuff. But it's expensive if you do.

I was never allowed to play sports as a kid. Transportation stuff, and my mother just couldn't afford it. My brother and I were denied it from the time we started school to now. I tried to get into soccer when I was younger, the school tried to help out, but it just didn't work. When I was in elementary at the Education Centre, there was a free after school program that involved learning about sports. I did that. Then we moved out into the county and it was impossible.

There should be a place where you can get second hand equipment. It's so expensive. You can't get hockey gear if you buy it or get it from a family member.

I want to get a Boys and Girls Club built and see if somebody can donate a piece of land for all the teenagers who are looking for places for skateboarding and bike tricks.

I tried out the gym for a free week, but then they wanted me to come back again and again. And I couldn't afford it.

I think part of the problem about getting youth out, there are not many kids still out here. We used to have a soccer field and recreation out here, but instead of having events here, everything happens in town.

Action Priorities: RECREATION

Leads: Antigonish Inclusive Recreation Committee (AIRC)

Stakeholders: Community members requiring affordable and physically accessible recreation, local schools, St FX, GASHA, Municipal Recreation Departments, People’s Place Library, 4H, Culture Alive, International Film Festival, Antigonish/Guysborough Seniors Council, Creative Dance, Skateboarding Association, local recreation organizers & instructors, Fresh Air Society, Antigonish Youth Network, sports groups

Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
Lobby for an inclusive recreation committee for Antigonish Town & County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify stakeholders Recruit committee members Develop a vision statement for inclusive local recreation programming & policies (including physically accessible facilities, providing accessible transportation, scholarships, childcare & transportation vouchers) Require municipally funded groups to join AIRC 	Short term: Year 1 - 2
Conduct asset mapping of recreation in Antigonish Town & County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding to conduct a needs assessment to determine gaps, assets, & best practices in recreation for all community members, regardless of age, physical ability, geography, income, & access to transportation 	Short term: Year 1 - 2
Support the funding & development of financially & physically inclusive recreation programming for town & county ⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate volunteers to help develop funding applications for inclusive recreation planning Prepare resource materials for low-cost or free recreation and physically accessible opportunities in Antigonish Town & County 	Short – Medium term: Years 2 - 3
Develop & deliver recreation programming to Antigonish County communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local communities to return recreation programming to rural areas (in churches & community centres) Develop a circuit schedule of traveling recreation programming to visit outlying communities Support existing accessible, barrier sensitive programming led by the Fresh Air Society 	Short – Medium term: Years 2 - 3
Establish financially & physically accessible recreation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and develop out-of-school programs with affordable rates & scholarship opportunities (like the Fresh Air Society) Support and enhance existing recreation programs for seniors 	Medium term: Years 2 - 4
Build an all-ages community gym facility with a youth centre & skateboarding park in downtown Antigonish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct asset mapping with local community members to determine needs & priorities for gym facilities for non-student community members Research successful and unsuccessful community centre models to determine challenges and best practices 	Medium to Long term: Years 2 – 5 +

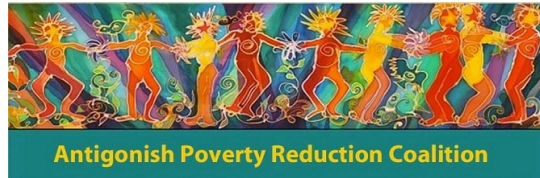
⁹ Free Play, led by the Fresh Air Society, is one example of a local inclusive, free recreation program.

Action Priorities: RECREATION

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Action Item	Strategy	Timeframe
	<p>(continued from previous)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local youth to determine needs & priorities & for a youth centre to host arts, educational & recreation programming • Establish a steering committee to lead fundraising & planning efforts • Involve youth in all stages of youth centre development from planning to building 	
<p>Support development of bike paths in rural communities, create subsidized/free bike program</p>	<p>Drawing from past projects by the Ecology Action Centre & programs such as Bike Again in Halifax, the APRC will help establish environmentally & economically sustainable solutions for transportation & recreation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Medium term: Years 3-4</p>



About Us

In 2010, the **Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC)**, an alliance of about 50 individuals, groups, and organizations concerned with poverty alleviation, was formed to address how poverty affects the health and well being of our community and each of us.

On May 2nd, 2011, The Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition launched a new project called **"Poverty Reduction Begins with Each of Us."** We thank the generous project sponsors: Agriculture Canada, The Bergengren Credit Union, and the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA).

APRC Member Groups

Antigonish Municipal Council
Antigonish Career Resource Centre
Antigonish County Adult Learning Assoc.
Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund
Antigonish Farmer's Market
Antigonish Food Bank
Antigonish Harbour Watershed Assoc.
Antigonish People's Place Library
Antigonish Regional Development Authority
Antigonish Sustainable Development
Antigonish Community Health Board
Antigonish Town Council
Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
FreePlay

GASHA Public Health
GASHA Social Equity Committee
Kids First
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Sisters of St. Martha Social Justice Committee
St FX Associate Vice-President Research
St FX Education Department
St Vincent de Paul Society
St FX Service Learning
St. James United Church Social Justice Committee
St FX School of Nursing
Upper Big Tracadie Parish Nurse Program
Victorian Order of Nurses
Voices Antigonish

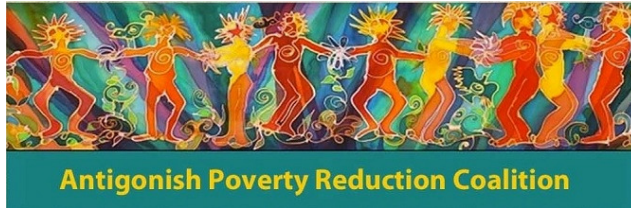
APRC Coordinating Committee Members

- **Jerome Grant**, Antigonish County Council, Councilor, jgrant@antigonishcounty.ns.ca
- **Cheryl Jennings**, GASHA Social Equity Committee, Member, nfoshay@eastlink.ca
- **Marion MacNeil**, GASHA Public Health, Public Health Nurse, marion.macNeil@gasha.nshealth.ca
- **Sister Marion Sheridan**, Sisters of Saint Martha Social Justice Committee, Member, msheridancsm@yahoo.ca
- **Heather Mayhew**, Antigonish Harbour Watershed Association, President, hmpmayhew@hotmail.com
- **Wyenne Sandler**, Community Member, Social Justice Advocate, wyannesandler@gmail.com
- **Tara Sutherland**, Community Development Worker, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, tarasutherland1973@hotmail.com
- **Jack MacPherson**, Antigonish Town Council, Councilor, jmacpherson@townofantigonish.ca
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- **Lise de Villiers**, Antigonish County Adult Learning Association, Director, acala@strait.ednet.ns.ca
- **Debi Anderson**, Kids First, Program Coordinator, antigonish@kids1st.ca
- **Colleen Cameron**, Voices Antigonish, Co-Chair, accamero@stfx.ca
- **Gina Sampson**, St. James United Church Social Justice Committee, Member, gsampson@stfx.ca
- **Sionnach Lukeman**, Antigonish Town & County Community Health Board, Member, sionnachlukeman@gmail.com
- **Mike MacDonald**, Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund, mr_slow47@yahoo.ca
- **Katherine Reed**, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Housing Project Coordinator, housing.awrc@bellaliant.com
- **Lucille Harper**, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Executive Director, lucilleawrc@ns.sympatico.ca
- **Paula Cameron**, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Poverty Reduction Project Coordinator, aprc.awrc@bellaliant.com

History

Poverty is not a new issue in Antigonish town and county. Community groups and individuals have been working to address gaps in wellbeing for several years. These are only a few of the groups and initiatives that are part of this rich history. Please let us know if you would like to add to this timeline.

- 1904 St. Vincent de Paul organization founded
- 1992 Antigonish Women's Resource Centre publishes report: *No Place For Home: Women and Housing in Antigonish*
- 1994 Establishment of the Society for Affordable Community Housing in Antigonish (SACHA)
- 1994 Kids First incorporated
- 1996 Sisters of St. Martha Social Justice Committee formed
- 1996 *Community Response to Women's Poverty Report* launched
- 1999 Provincial WIT (Women in Transition) social assistance policy project published
- 2000 Sisters of St. Martha are granted NGO Liaison status at the UN as part of the Federation of the Sisters of Charity
- 2000 Antigonish Affordable Housing Society established in Antigonish
- 2001 Sisters of St. Martha fund a project, *Women examine alternatives to market housing*
- 2002 *Ways and Means Project*: Antigonish Women seek strategies to address affordable housing need
- 2004 Voices Antigonish forms
- 2005 Face to Face, social assistance policy-focused project
- 2007 St. Joseph's Social Justice Committee formed
- 2008 Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund established
- 2009 St. James United Church Social Justice Committee formed
- 2009 Antigonish Food Security Coalition formed
- 2010 Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC) formed
- 2010 GASHA Social Justice Committee formed
- 2011 APRC receives housing project funding from the Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia



*We need more than one conversation. It will take more than one meeting.
We need to be gathering again and again and again, whatever it takes for
changes to occur.*

– Focus group participant

We would love to work with you!

To learn more about this project, and/or to participate
in the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition,

email aprc.awrc@bellaliant.com

or call 863-6221