



12 BOLD

IDEAS

To Eliminate
Poverty in Saskatoon

It's time to end poverty together!

#EndPovertyYXE



Saskatoon Poverty
Reduction Partnership

The SPRP is a collaborative group of community partners from across sectors, demographics and experiences that works in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Saskatoon is a city with rich histories. It is located on the South Saskatchewan River in Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis.

We acknowledge the people of Nêhiyawak, Dakota and the Round Prairie Métis who played a key role in establishing what we now call Saskatoon.

We respect our ancestors and cherish our relationship with one another as we work together on a journey to end poverty in Saskatoon.

12 BOLD IDEAS

- 1 Income
- 2 Asset Building
- 3 Social Enterprise
- 4 Childcare
- 5 Education
- 6 Healthcare
- 7 Transportation
- 8 Good Food
- 9 Housing
- 10 Justice
- 11 Literacy
- 12 System Navigation



HOW to implement these ideas is often the first response.

*While considering the ideas we encourage you to focus on **WHY?***

We believe that everyone should be able to develop their talents & abilities, have the choice to actively participate in an economic, cultural & social life and enjoy a good standard of living on a sustainable basis.

We believe that there is urgency in this work, that we all have a role to play and that we can eliminate poverty in Saskatoon.

Poverty is Complex

Poverty looks different for everyone. What impacts some may not impact others, making poverty elimination difficult, but not impossible.

Poverty shouldn't exist in a country like Canada. We are one of the richest countries in the world. And in a country with such tremendous social investments, people should not be struggling to make ends meet.

Many argue that **poverty is a human rights issue.** This argument suggests poverty can be the direct consequence of government policy, or governments failing to act. Viewing poverty in this way requires a shift in our understanding about how current policies & practices address **equity.**

This is much more than the unequal sharing of resources. Access to enough money is only one part of eliminating poverty. It is important to understand the impact social isolation, trauma and personal circumstances play in causing the cycle of poverty.

END POVERTY SASKATOON

We can do better. We must do better. The time is now.

Poverty & Racism

Racism and poverty are clearly connected. Racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities have higher rates of poverty. Lack of education and good housing, paired with mental health challenges, addictions, trauma, and poor health can create a cycle of poverty that is passed from generation to generation. Further discrimination based on race, religion, gender, or culture increases social exclusion and limits access to essential services and basic needs.

The systems that are designed to help people often perpetuate systemic racism. System policies & practices have built a revolving door of poverty for those who fall into them. The cycle of poverty feels impossible to escape because the system was designed to discriminate, isolate, and often criminalize the people who exist within it.

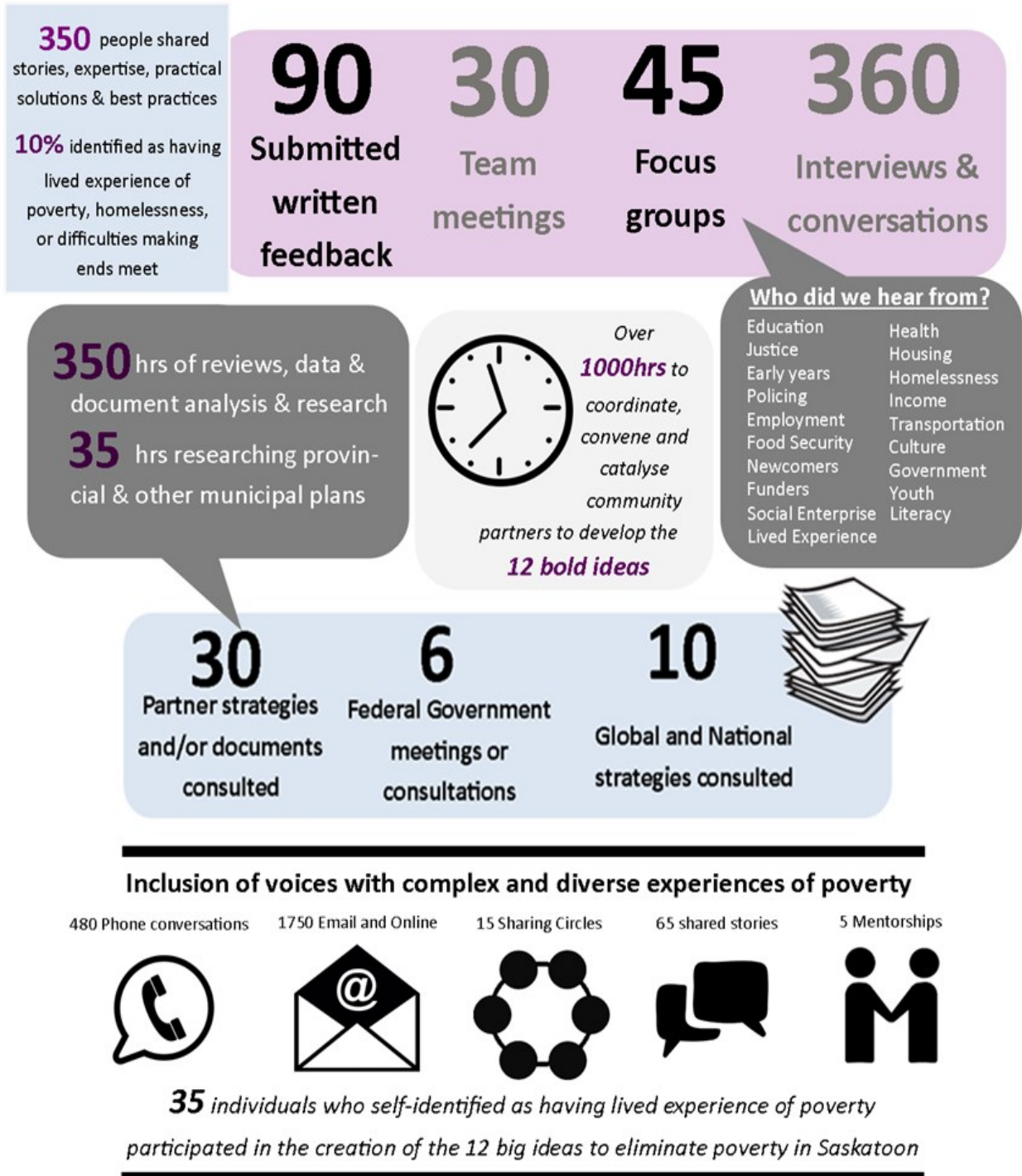
Saskatoon is on a journey of Truth and Reconciliation. There is broad multi-sector support for the commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Treaty relationships. This is a positive start, but we must continue to push for more understanding.



It's time to end poverty together!

In this document you will read about 12 connected, bold and complex ideas that could eliminate poverty in Saskatoon. Evidence, data and best practice is critical to the successful implementation of these ideas. We specifically looked to policies and practices that could be adapted in Saskatoon, keeping in mind jurisdictions, mandates and funding structures but also looking to challenge, disrupt and think differently. Many of the solutions to eliminate poverty are met with barriers associated with the current system structures. It may be necessary to think of ideas outside of the current system, and think about what could be — **If the intersection of the ideas are taken into account, if equity is the focus and if we don't allow systemic bias to influence our choices.** The best practices shared illustrate critical thinking, system change and intersectoral collaboration to address a complex social issue.





Who said these are the ideas we should work on?

Over the course of 2018, the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) spoke with numerous partners, agencies, government, leaders, policy makers and people with diverse experiences of poverty. Together, this group helped to determine the best equity and human rights-based approach to ultimately eliminate poverty in Saskatoon. Knowing that the elimination of poverty is a complex process, the following document outlines **12 Bold Ideas**. When approached as a collective, across sectors, including those with lived experience and focused on policy change, these bold ideas could put Saskatoon in a position to decrease and potentially eliminate poverty. If implemented using evidence-based practice, in a trauma informed way, with long term goals in sight, **Saskatoon could be one of the most equitable cities in Canada.**

Other strategies and work included in the research:

- Provincial & federal poverty reduction strategies
- Other federal strategies (early years, food, housing, social innovation)
- Other SK provincial plans (Early Years plan, Disability Strategy)
- Other provincial ministry plans and reports (education, health, justice, labour, immigration, etc.)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- SK Human Rights Commission reports
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)
- Other Canadian cities' poverty reduction strategies
- Saskatoon Local Immigration Partnership and other immigration strategies
- Other local community recommendations/reports (including: Kitaskinaw, health reports, other sector maps and strategic plans, Saskatoon Police Services publications, Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan)
- Academic publications and research
- Community based organizations strategic plans and recommendations

The Poverty Line

Market Basket Measure (MBM) refers to the measure of low income (**poverty line**) based on the cost of a specific basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living. It was developed by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). MBM is the amount a family of 4 spends in a month on food, clothing, transportation, shelter and other expenses).

What does an average month cost a family of 4 in Saskatoon?



on average, families in Saskatoon spend about \$1,200.00 per month on shelter



on average, families in Saskatoon spend about \$500.00 per month on transportation



on average, families in Saskatoon spend about \$900.00 per month on food



on average, families in Saskatoon spend about \$1,000.00 per month on childcare



on average, families in Saskatoon spend about \$145.00 per month on health related expenses



on average, families in Saskatoon spend about \$1,200.00 per month on other family expenses (including clothing, recreation, entertainment, & other unexpected costs)



on average, families in Saskatoon spend about \$5,000.00 each month making ends meet

Living Wage Saskatoon

calculated the cost of the basket of goods for a family of 4 (2 working adults & 2 children).

It is important to note that some families have much higher costs and some have lower costs. This is a representation of a sample average family.

**Nothing about us
without us !**

Poverty elimination policies and practices cannot be developed without listening to the stories, experiences and expertise of those who are most impacted.

The SPRP is committed to “**nothing about us without us**” - the inclusion of lived experience in all aspects of the development, implementation and evaluation of these ideas. This work would not be possible without the commitment and trust of the colleagues with lived experience of poverty. The partners at the SPRP would like to thank all those who contributed stories, expertise and vision to make this work possible.

Understanding & respecting the shared stories.

Throughout this document you will read the perspectives of a typical MBM family living in Saskatoon. At times, you will likely feel overwhelmed for the family. You may also feel angry, upset, worried or even confused. It is important to note that the circumstances do not represent an actual family but rather a compilation of many stories, situations & experiences of the people with lived experience who were consulted over the course of the development of these ideas. However, this doesn't mean that the circumstances shared in the story aren't possible for a single family, nor does it mean that the complexity of the circumstances for vulnerable families should be overlooked. For many people living in poverty day-to-day things pile up, making life a daily struggle. Often what would seem like a small bump for many, is a catastrophic event for people who are struggling to make ends meet. We encourage you to read the story with an open mind, free of judgement and aware of the privileges you may have in your life.

Meet the Family

Like many families in Saskatoon, Kevin & Carmen are struggling to get by.

*They live with their two children (Beth, 11 and Wyatt, 6) in rental housing in the city's core. Both parents are underemployed with no real options to get better jobs. As a teenager, Kevin struggled with alcohol abuse & dropped out of high school. He's been sober for 7 years, but his lack of skills makes it difficult to hold a job. Carmen graduated, but the pressures of being a young mom made it impossible for her to pursue further training. With help from a neighbour, Kevin was able to get a minimum-wage job as a labourer. Carmen does casual shift work at a fast food restaurant. Missing a shift is not an option, which means Beth & Wyatt often find themselves coming home to an empty house. Both children are struggling at school – Wyatt with behavioural issues, and Beth with the stress of being caregiver to her little brother when her parents need to work, **and they always need to work.***

While reading the family story it is important to reflect on how the proposed system changes will impact their situation. Remember the story is a compilation of actual circumstances and may be overwhelming to read. The reality for so many families who struggle to make ends meet.



Kevin and Carmen are fortunate to have a small community of support around them. Their neighbour, Al, was able to get Kevin a job at his workplace. They car pool to and from work together until Al has to move forcing Kevin to take the bus from their home in the core to the North Industrial area. Al's wife, Dorothy, likes to cook and shares what she can when there is extra.

Carmen has a co-worker who has older children who saves some of their clothes and toys to give to Beth and Wyatt.

*As they teeter on the edge of being able to provide the bare minimum, Kevin and Carmen are also trying their best to look out for their extended family. Kevin's brother Joel, who struggles with addiction, has been in and out of jail. He often crashes on their couch when he has no where else to go. Carmen's sister Crystal struggles with a disability. She is on income assistance, but it isn't enough to make ends meet. Carmen cares for Crystal's baby when she can, but if she has to work, Beth often misses school as backup. **For Kevin and Carmen, life is an exhausting balancing act.** If they keep their jobs, no one gets sick, and everything goes as smoothly as possible, they will continue to just barely get by.*

*But life happens whether we're prepared for it or not. And for families like Kevin and Carmen's, these unforeseen circumstances are more than just bumps in the road. **They are a matter of survival.***

1 Income

People need income to support their basic needs.

This looks different for each person and family.

We must design an equitable system that ensures everyone has the income needed to develop their talents and abilities, have the choice to actively participate in an economic, cultural and social life, while enjoying a good standard of living on a sustainable basis.

The concept of basic income has generated a lot of interest in the past few years. Essentially, it is a regular payment made to eligible families or individuals which **ensures everyone has the same** minimum level of income regardless of whether they are working.

But income is more than just money – it includes financial resources, assets, and social resources. If we set an equal minimum income amount without considering what people, as individuals, need to live well, we risk not lifting those who may need a little bit more than others to escape the cycle of poverty.

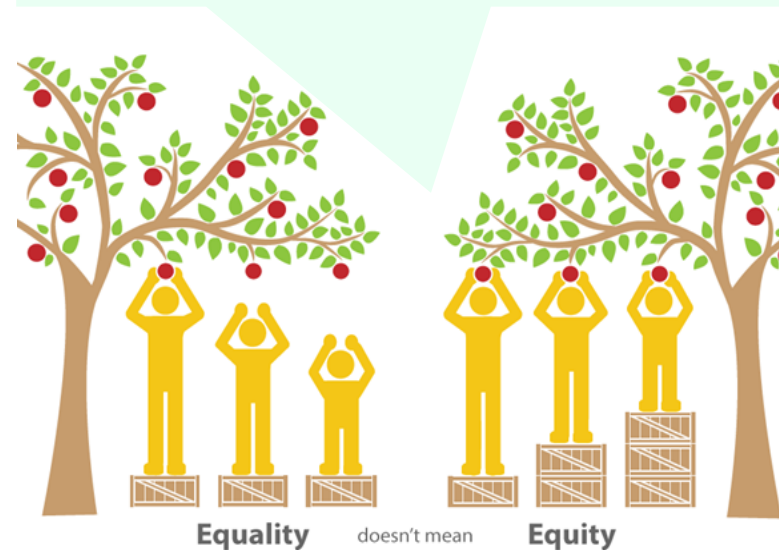
This is the difference between equality and equity.

Income Assistance must ensure policies and practices support the actual costs associated with living a healthy life, that address flat exemptions (called clawbacks by community members), and that encourage and support employment, when the ability to work is an option, and support true costs of living when employment is not an option.

Kevin and Carmen are careful budgeters – and they need to be. Their combined monthly income teeters around \$3000 (or around \$36K a year), hardly enough to afford the basic necessities of life with two children.

Kevin's job as a labourer pays minimum wage and offers little for benefits. Carmen's casual shift work is variable, though she picks up every shift she is offered.

They have no savings and no rainy-day fund. Their meager income is still too high to qualify for income assistance. Every dollar they make goes directly to their expenses. They always seem to fall short, and constantly must find ways to go without certain things to try to catch up.



Equality means giving everyone the same size box.

It's easy to see this solution doesn't take each person's individual needs into consideration.

Equity takes into account what each person needs.

Does \$3000/month seem like a lot? There are many families in Saskatoon who make considerably less than this amount. If this family was on basic Income Assistance they would get approximately \$2300.00/month as a base amount.

2 Asset Building

People need to be able to build and accumulate assets to support themselves and their families.

We must encourage and support people to build and accumulate assets to help them reach a guaranteed minimum income and break the cycle of poverty.

Asset building is a regular part of life for people who don't face poverty.

The way our economy is structured now, the middle class can have as many assets as they are able to gather. Assets include physical resources such as housing and vehicles, financial resources such as income and investments, technology resources such as phone and computers, and/or social resources such as education & recreation.

Assets provide people with a safety net. For people living below the "Poverty Line," asset building can be next to impossible, often forcing people to use predatory loan services, pawn shops and other costly, less conventional or safe options to access resources.

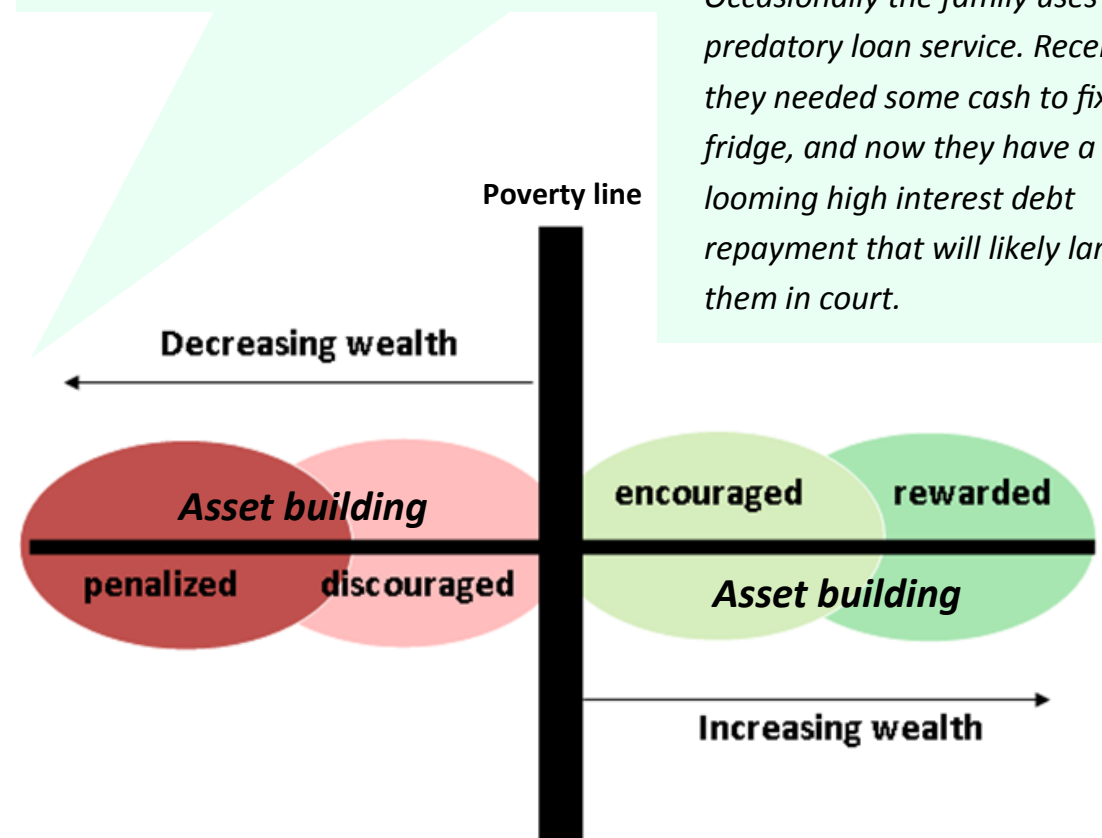
Currently, the system discourages, penalizes, and in some cases even criminalizes asset building for people living below the poverty line. This is even more prevalent for people who are on Income Assistance programs. Policies and practices that impose exemptions need to be modified to ensure they don't create a revolving door of poverty.

Like most families living in poverty, Kevin and Carmen don't have many assets. They rent their home, they don't own a car, and they have no savings. They do not qualify for a credit card or a loan.

*They do not have a computer, but they each have a cell phone. This is a requirement for their jobs, though they are not offered compensation to help pay for the expense. **School and library computers help fill the gap** for homework and other paperwork.*

Further education or recreation is unaffordable. Carmen would love to go back to school, but even if she did qualify for a student loan, the family could not afford to lose her income. Aside from a few family or free community events, there isn't time or money for outings with the kids or an evening workshop for parents.

Occasionally the family uses a predatory loan service. Recently they needed some cash to fix the fridge, and now they have a looming high interest debt repayment that will likely land them in court.



3 Social Enterprise

People need access to meaningful employment and training opportunities.

Social Procurement practices must be part of business decisions

We must encourage, develop, and support social enterprise systems that build individual and community success.

We must increase awareness about how consumers can support this practice.

Empowering people with education & the skills needed in the workforce is a strong pathway out of poverty.

Social enterprise can help fill this gap. A social enterprise is a for-profit business run by a non-profit organization. Their profits are invested into the non-profit and/or shared with the community, enabling them to tackle social problems, support communities, and improve people's quality of life. When a social enterprise profits, the community profits, too.

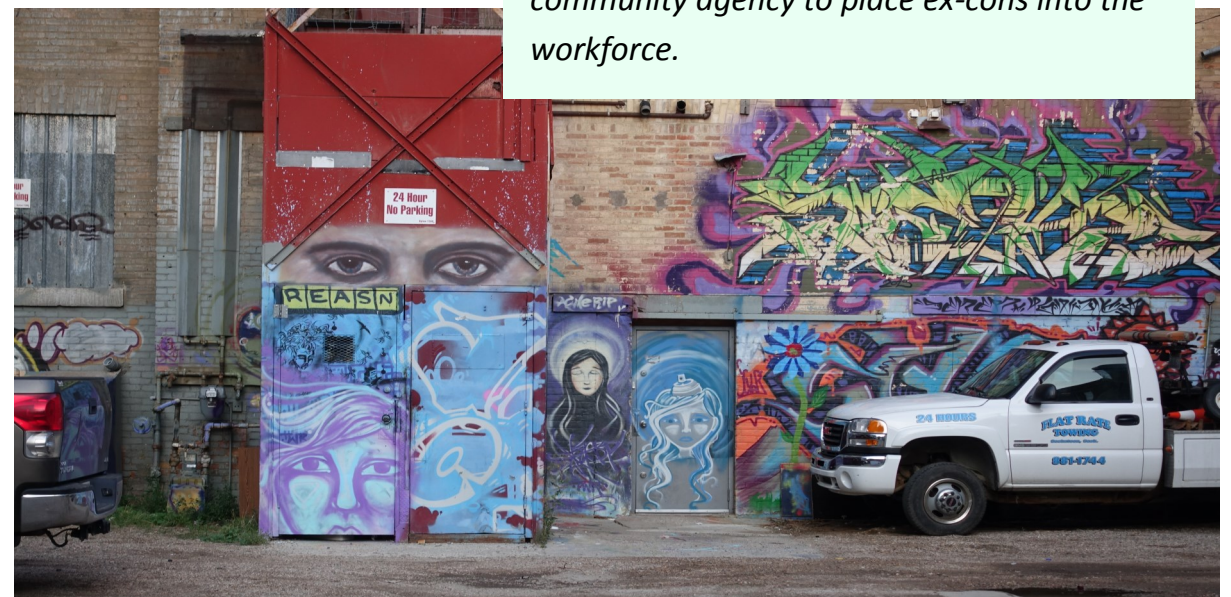
Social enterprises often hire and train people that face barriers to employment. This provides **innovative ways for under-employed or under-trained people to access new employment and training opportunities.** It also supports community with a sustainable funding model.

Social procurement practices encourage people to buy the products of social enterprise before buying from other, more common sources.

Carmen & her sister Crystal have been knitters since they were children. They've always enjoyed making gifts for family & friends, but recently have been able to start selling some of their pieces – when they can afford the supplies. Crystal is required to claim income from her knitting with income assistance. This may jeopardize her monthly cheque. Carmen would love to be able to focus on growing their little business, but her sister's barriers and financial restraints hold them back.

Kevin's employer understands the impact buying local has and tries to support community programs that have services/products he can use. Often it is difficult to find local options that are consistently offered, or affordable.

Crystal was working for a local non-profit in their kitchen, but the work also impacted her income assistance and she had to quit. The food they produced was being delivered to businesses like Kevin's employer. Kevin's brother, Joel, is hoping to find work with a local construction company that works with a community agency to place ex-cons into the workforce.



4 Childcare

People need access to flexible, affordable and reliable childcare that reflects their diverse needs.

We must develop a childcare system in Saskatchewan that includes parent choice. This system must be adequately funded and have a current market value subsidy system for low income families. Access must take into account the diversity of need.

Access to childcare of any kind can be difficult for parents.

It can mean the difference between being able to accept a job or not, or worrying about who will look after their children when they need to be at work for an evening or weekend shift.

To add to this pressure, **the childcare subsidy policies haven't been updated to reflect the current costs associated with childcare.**

So not only do families struggle to find good childcare, they also struggle to afford it.

Childcare access should be shaped by parental choice and need.

There should be 24/7 access to childcare and supports. This will require creative solutions, but regardless of the solution all childcare options should be eligible for subsidy supports.

Children under 3 who live in poverty have life long learning challenges. Evidence links adverse childhood experiences, poverty and learning. In fact, children who are exposed to poverty in the early years are less likely to be school ready, less likely to read at grade level and less likely to graduate on time.

*Carmen's sister Crystal has struggled to find childcare for her infant daughter, Rylee. The income assistance she receives isn't enough for most childcare centres, and **finding a place that accommodates her schedule and is safe, reliable, and affordable is almost impossible.***

Kevin must leave early in the morning to catch a bus to work, and Carmen's shiftwork means she could be gone at any time of the day without a lot of notice. There isn't enough money for before & after school care, so the kids often find themselves home alone. This puts a lot of pressure on Beth, who is only 11, to care for Wyatt, who is 6. If he is sick & her parents are working, Beth stays home from school to watch him. And if Rylee needs care on short notice, Beth must step in when Carmen cannot. At times when both parents are working late, the supper routine becomes Beth's responsibility as well.

Neither Beth or Wyatt had access to any early years programming or childcare before they entered the school system.

**In Saskatchewan
1 in 3 children
live in poverty**



**Investment in
the Early Years is
required to break
the cycle of
poverty.**

Quality childcare is more than just someone you can trust to watch your children.

Childcare & early years programs provide children with the best possible start in life, helping them eventually succeed in more formal school settings.

5 Education

People need a school system that is youth centered and responsive to the needs of families and communities.

We must encourage an education system that is designed to maximize participation, create diverse learning opportunities and support all youth and their families' complex needs.

Over the course of the last decade, things have changed. Families & households look different, and the demands on families have changed dramatically.

There are many reasons why the current school model doesn't fit the needs of youth and their families. Schools are often the only safe, reliable, consistent and supportive environment for students. Long summer breaks create many challenges for families who get essential services at the school on a daily basis.

These supports are critical all year round.

In other families, the inability to secure housing creates a situation where students bounce from school to school all year round, sometimes attending 6 or more schools in a year.

Changing schools has a direct impact on learning.

In other families, getting to school on a regular basis is a constant struggle. The day to day activities of a family living in poverty are often so uncertain that the task of getting children ready and out the door is so difficult that they just don't go.

Attendance has a direct impact on learning.

Education can break the cycle of poverty.

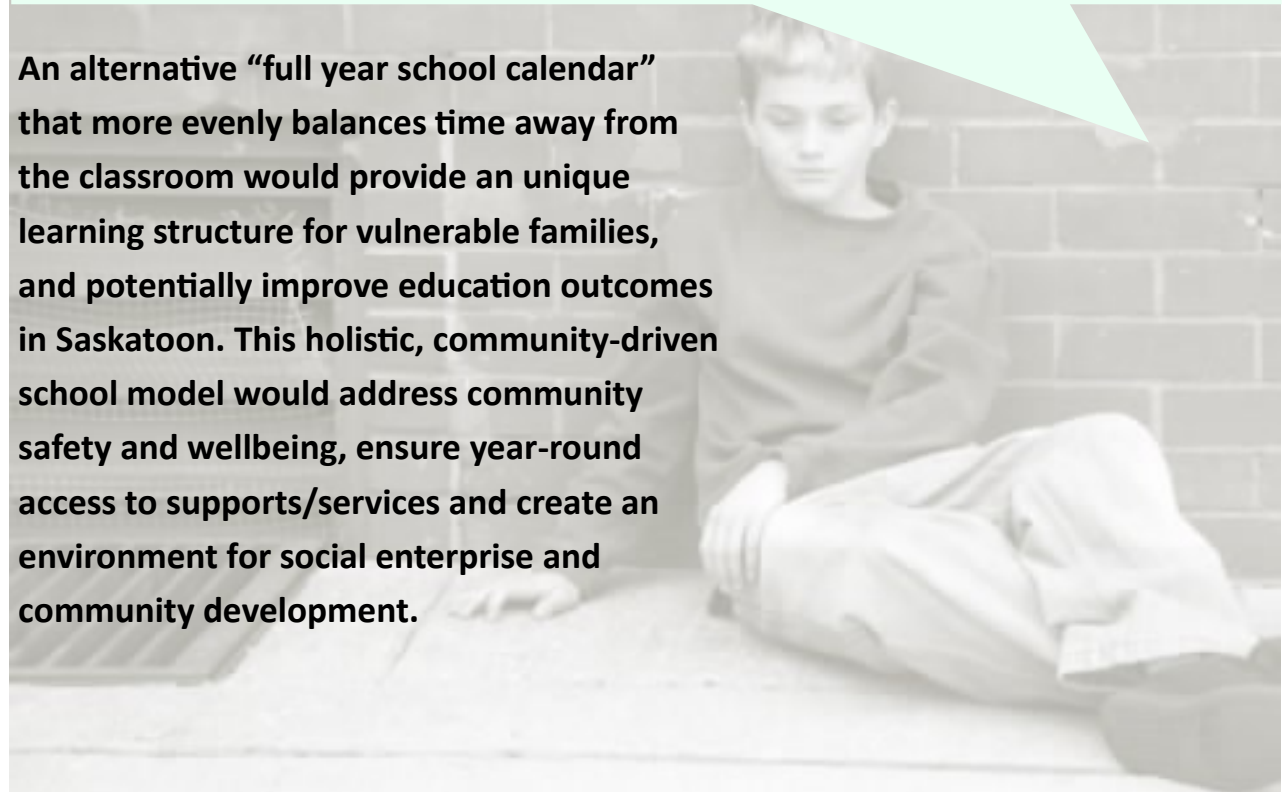
*School is a sensitive topic at Kevin & Carmen's house. Wyatt is currently in grade 1 but is already falling behind. **He struggles with learning disabilities** and a behaviour problem, which makes convincing him to go to school difficult.*

*Beth, who is in grade 6, is a good student, but her struggles with anxiety also make school difficult. **Her attendance is also an issue**, as she often misses class if her brother or baby cousin need to be cared for. She is worried her friends won't like her if they know about her family situation. She feel isolated and alone.*

*Despite the struggles, **school does offer some stability**. They can bus to and from school or ride their bikes if the weather is nice. Their school also offers a lunch program, which sets Carmen's mind at ease when planning meals. They also receive other services, such as counselling, speech/behaviour support, & public health visits. Some of these services are only available during the school year – **in the summer, they must go without**.*

With Kevin losing his work transportation, the family contemplated moving. But rental rates, changing schools and other barriers made that decision impossible.

An alternative “full year school calendar” that more evenly balances time away from the classroom would provide an unique learning structure for vulnerable families, and potentially improve education outcomes in Saskatoon. This holistic, community-driven school model would address community safety and wellbeing, ensure year-round access to supports/services and create an environment for social enterprise and community development.



6 Healthcare

People need access to a healthcare system that focuses on what they need to be healthy.

We must develop tools for healthcare professionals to better identify and support vulnerable people. Response to their immediate health needs & the social determinants of health is a key preventative strategy that will break cycles of poverty.

We know that people who live in poverty are more likely to have chronic diseases, mental health & addictions, and have higher risk of accidents and trauma.

Health professionals are often the first point of entry into systems for vulnerable people. The healthcare system is expensive, and typically focuses on illness and supports the needs of people who are already sick.

Policies and practices are changing to include more preventative strategies. These aim to keep people healthier, and lessen their need for more costly health services.

Family physicians and other health care practitioners can help.

**Poverty is a risk factor for poor health
AND
Poor health is a risk factor for poverty.**

The unthinkable yet inevitable happens. Kevin is injured at work and is sent to the emergency room with a broken leg.

After a long wait to see a doctor, his leg is casted, and he is offered a prescription for pain medication & crutches that he cannot afford. Then, he is sent out to find his way home on the bus. Kevin's leg has been treated, but the consequences of his injury leave him stressed, in pain and worried...

***How long will I be without work?
What will we do?***

***Do I qualify for disability?
Will I lose my job?***

He hasn't been able to reach Carmen to tell her what has happened. On the way home, the bus makes a stop near the bar he used to frequent when he was still drinking. It pauses there just long enough for Kevin to consider getting off the bus.

The Social Determinants of Health

are the conditions in which we are born, grow and age; and in which we work, learn and live. They contribute to the overall health & well-being of people & communities.



education



supports



community



health



childhood experiences



housing



income



employment

A poverty screening tool would help identify risks of poverty and connect people to appropriate supports. There would be questions to assess a patient's living situation, current supports & offer information about community resources. The assessment and connection to service would happen in real time, with minimal delays and in a way that is supportive.

7 Transportation

**People need to move around their community.
People need barrier-free public transportation.**

We must work to create a free-to-use public transit system.

Transportation, including public transit, cars, walking, and biking, is key to community connectedness & inclusion. **For many people living in poverty, transportation remains a massive barrier.** There are some ways to help improve access. However most attempts to solve this problem are costly, inefficient, and can end up creating even more barriers for vulnerable and/or low income people. Often too, vulnerable people must to prove their need, creating stigma, social isolation and fear.

Free public transit would eliminate this barrier.

Of course, free to the user doesn't mean free to implement. Costs associated with free transit could be covered by costs associated with other policies and practices. For example, some government programs and services provide subsidies for transit passes, but these passes are distributed on an individual basis. This may mean that not everyone who needs a pass will get one, or discretion and/or proof of need play a role in access. By moving to a free-to-use transit system, these subsidies would support the whole system, rather than just individual users.

This change could happen gradually, by making certain routes, or certain times of the day free for users. Implementation could also look at making it free for all youth. There are numerous examples of free use transit across Canada and the world. Free access in winter months would serve as a valuable cold weather strategy option.

Life without a car makes the city difficult for the family to navigate.

Reliable transportation is a requirement for most jobs, and Kevin was fortunate enough to be able to car pool with Al to work. However, since Al moved, they have the added expense of a transit pass so that Kevin can continue to work in the north end of the city.

*Carmen's workplace is close enough that she can walk, but her shift work finds her walking in all kinds of weather, at any time of the day or night. **She often feels unsafe.** She only uses transit when she must shop for groceries, which makes the convenience of bulk shopping impossible.*

The kids are able to bus or bike to school, but the lack of car makes family outings, appointments, or visiting friends in other neighbourhoods difficult.

*Occasionally, Crystal lets her sister use her bus pass, but **they both fear that if they are caught sharing** there will be consequences with income assistance. In the winter, it's a risk that Carmen has to take because getting groceries, or to medical appointments with the kids, without transportation is impossible.*



8 Good Food

People need access to healthy, affordable food in the neighbourhood they live in.

We want Saskatoon to become a leader in healthy & sustainable food policy. The connections between city planning, government policies and community delivery models are key to building equitable access to healthy, appropriate & affordable good food.

Food is one of the most fundamental basic needs, but not everyone in Saskatoon has access to fresh, appropriate and/or affordable food. The appropriateness of food for families is determined by many things including culture, allergies and other health issues, likes/dislikes and religious beliefs.

Healthy food is expensive, and for people living in poverty, it can be inaccessible. Making food more affordable includes a combination of reducing food costs, ensuring people have more income to buy food, and ensuring everyone has access to the foods they need, where they live.

Building **food assets** in every Saskatoon neighbourhood would improve access to healthy food, reduce social isolation, drive local economic development, and address food insecurity for many vulnerable families.

Improving access to food assets means it is time to **explore zoning regulations, tax policies, consumer/producer incentives, social enterprise & procurement, and support for community organizations to make access to food equitable for all.**

For Kevin and Carmen, good food is a long bus ride away. Carmen does her best to go on a regular basis, but time and money are a factor, plus hauling groceries for a family of four on a crowded bus is no easy feat.

In the winter, the cold can spoil produce, so Carmen only buys small quantities or settles for less-healthy options.

They do have access to a neighbourhood convenience store, but this has limited options at premium prices. Still, sending the kids to the corner store for expensive milk and bread when they have little else in the house is much easier than taking the bus to the grocery store.

Carmen used to enjoy when neighbour would share homemade foods, canning & garden produce, but that ended when they moved away. Carmen doesn't know the new family next door.

The kids know that food is scarce and leave school to attend a local meal program for lunch. This means they can bring the lunch provided by the school home for supper.

Food Asset Examples

household gardens

supportive policies

urban agriculture

grocery stores

collective kitchens

community supports & food education programs



community meal programs

emergency food assistance

hunting & fishing

school food programs

healthy vegetable & fruit markets

connection to food production

9 Housing

People need support to find safe, affordable, appropriate and adequate housing.

We must ensure that homelessness is not created or perpetuated by system policies and practices.

We must create a system with adequate, safe and appropriate transitional, supported housing options for people leaving systems.

In Saskatoon, most housing is extremely unaffordable. Too many people simply can't afford housing at all, and often find themselves homeless.

Many vulnerable **people find themselves “housed in a system”** which means that wherever they are currently living is not their house. Resources are provided by a system, and if they were released, they would have nowhere to go.

It is critical that systems stop perpetuating poverty by “releasing” people into homelessness. Systems know when people are leaving, it is time to stop thinking that release from jail to a friend's couch, or to nothing at all is reasonable. It's time to stop letting youth age out of a system into nothing, it's time to stop thinking that another system is filling the gap. Gaps are not being filled and people are being thrown into the perpetual cycle of poverty, incarceration and/or misuse of services. **It's hard to blame them, when they have no other option.**

A coordinated system, with real time data, would help connect people to the things they need. We could work faster to move people off the street or from emergency housing and into permanent housing with the supports they need.

*Kevin and Carmen's rental home was barely affordable to begin with. With Kevin unable to work because of his injury and the uncertainty of disability coverage, **how will they afford rent?** They need to keep their place, which means serious cuts to other expenses.*

*Carmen is still trying to help her sister, who lives on her own. Crystal struggles to maintain a good home for her & her daughter, **living in constant fear** that any unexpected knock at the door could land her daughter in foster care.*

*In the midst of all this pressure, Kevin's brother Joel is released from jail and has no where to go. Carmen is uncomfortable with the idea of Joel, who is an addict, **sleeping on their couch**. But the couple agree that even the slightest bit of stability their home provides Joel is **better than the alternative** – Joel going back to the streets, back to using drugs, and likely right back in jail.*

HOUSED IN THE SYSTEM

Foster Care System

Criminal Justice System

Health System

Education System

Community System



**Where
does
this
door
lead?**

***People living in systems are often invisible.** People with complex needs including physical & intellectual disabilities, mental health & addictions and/or those who regularly call systems home are not included in the definition of being homeless.*

If the system supports stopped, they would have nowhere to live.

10 Justice

People need support & understanding to break the cycle of poverty.

We need poverty elimination policies that work across systems, breakdown stereotypes, address systemic racism, have mental health, addictions & trauma supports, and keep families together.

Many people who live in poverty find themselves stuck in a **revolving door** between justice, health, social services, and other systems. Certain groups of people living in poverty are disproportionately impacted.

For example, we know that in Saskatchewan, Indigenous youth living in poverty are over-represented in the justice system. We also know that **almost all crimes committed by women in SK are the result of living in poverty** & that the apprehension of their children causes trauma, intensifies substance abuse & reinforces the revolving door of poverty for the next generation.



For people like Crystal and Joel, where does the door lead?

*Crystal lives in constant fear that Rylee will be taken away from her. She is cautious but knows one wrong step could cause her baby to be apprehended and put in foster care. Beth is told to keep the fact that she cares for her cousin Rylee a secret. **She is anxious** that it will be her fault that Crystal loses Rylee.*

***Joel's situation is even less stable.** Most of his life has been a revolving door of foster care homes, rehab, jail, couch surfing, hospital & homelessness. Joel has a history on the streets, even if he tries to stay out of trouble, a minor issue could send him back using drugs, back to a life of crime and ultimately back to jail.*

Kevin & Carmen can support their siblings the best they can, but they can't keep Joel clean, they can't provide 24-hour care for Crystal. They can only hope that no one finds themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time and that it doesn't have a ripple effect for their family.

When **circumstances of a person's situation are understood & respected**, systems' staff (law enforcement, case managers, community supports, health staff, teachers, etc.) can connect people to what they need, de-escalate situations, avoid criminalization, improve service delivery and save resources.

These system staff need tools, insight, understanding & competencies to work with vulnerable people, to understand situations & to apply the discretions that are allowed to them within the system policies & practices **in an equitable & fair way.**

Systemic Racism includes the policies & practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of specific groups. It differs from overt discrimination in that no individual intent is necessary.

11 Literacy

People need skills and knowledge to improve their circumstances to break the cycle of poverty.

We must develop, recognize and adequately fund a variety of non-formal educational programs and services that give people access to the ongoing skills they need to succeed.

In an ever-changing world, people need tools to keep up. While literacy is traditionally understood as basic reading and writing skills, it has grown to encompass how we learn, understand, and adapt to the world.

Literacy is also a driver for sustainable development. It enables greater participation in the labour market, it improves family health and nutrition, it reduces poverty, and it expands opportunity.

Far too many people in Saskatoon don't have this basic framework to build upon. They have had limited access to education and training throughout their lives, and find it impossible to access formal education systems to develop the skills they need to get further ahead.

Basic education & non-formal education/literacy programming is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty. These programs offer alternatives to people who have limited access to employment or formal education, and gives them the opportunity to succeed.

Often the certificates of participation in these programs hold less value than equivalents from formal education. For many living in poverty, investing the time and resources to attend non-formal programming is all they can manage. When it goes unrecognized or doesn't count to improving their circumstances people are left feeling helpless, worthless, confused and disenfranchised.

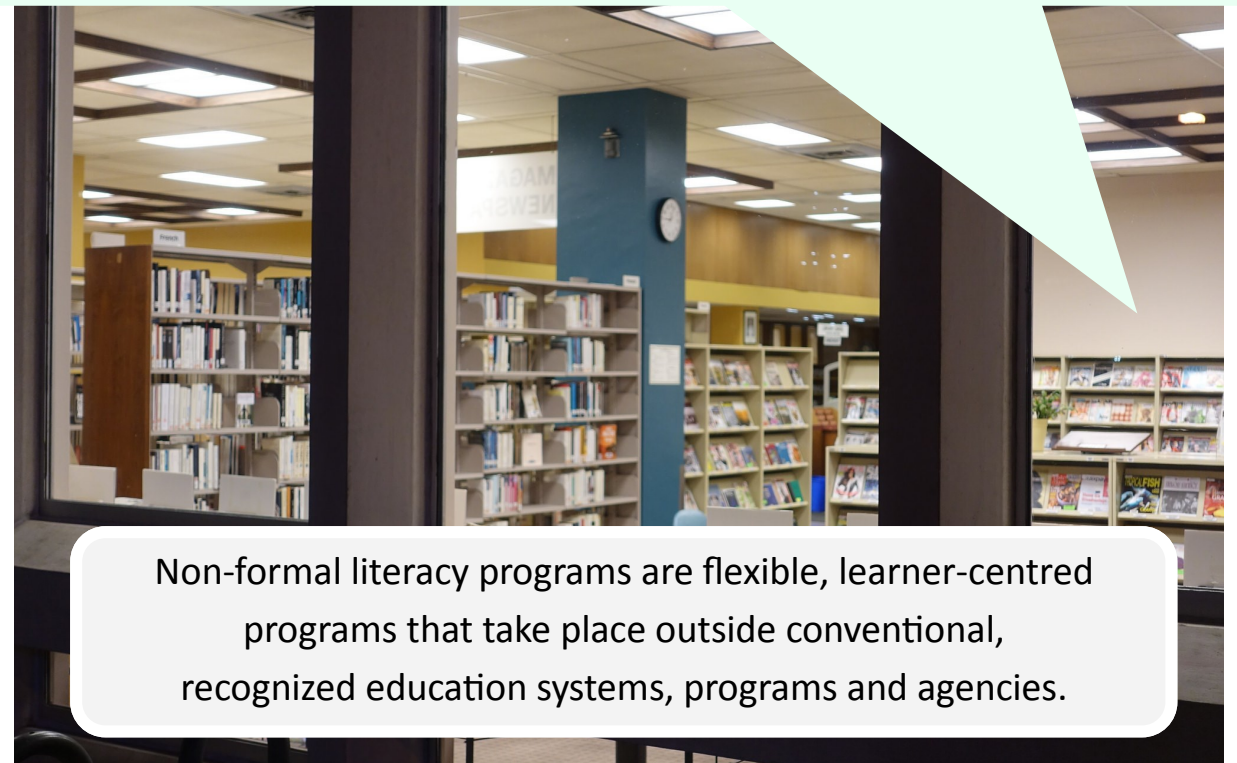
*Kevin decides that he needs to take a step to upgrade his education while he waits to hear about disability. On their increasingly tight budget, his only option is to access **free community-based programming**.*

He enjoys building his skillset and even though he struggles, is able to successfully complete the program.

*His sense of accomplishment doesn't last long. At the end of all his hard work, he receives a certificate of completion. While it acknowledges his success, **it does not serve as any kind of formal recognition of education with either employers or other formal education providers.***

He still doesn't have his high school diploma, so on paper he is still as unskilled & unsuitable for most jobs he would like to apply for.

He tried to encourage his brother Joel to come with him, but Joel felt it was useless. Now Kevin sees his point.



Non-formal literacy programs are flexible, learner-centred programs that take place outside conventional, recognized education systems, programs and agencies.

12 System Navigation

People need access to broad community support, no matter where they turn for help, when they ask.

We must create community-wide, coordinated access to deliver programs and services.

We must create a real-time access tool that includes equitable access to technology including free public wifi.

We must create a data collection system to track evidence, hold systems accountable and make sure people are not falling through the cracks.

In Saskatoon, many community resource centres already exist and are doing amazing work in their sector/system.

People work tirelessly to connect vulnerable people to the right service, but a **lack of coordination between systems** makes it difficult for people to access the help they really need, when they need it. Often people ask for help from the wrong system.

This is known as the **“wrong door” phenomenon**, and it creates far too many barriers for everyone—system users and those who provide services.

Better coordination of services, equitable access, evidence-based policies and practices, technology, and connected system navigators will help with the urgency that is often associated with breaking the cycle of poverty.

How will we pay rent? Can we afford groceries this month? Will the kids be okay if we leave them overnight on their own?

These immediate and basic questions plague the family every day. They are always bogged down with the pressures of daily life – and when life throws them the curveball of Kevin’s injury, it forces them to navigate yet another piece of the system they know little about. They have seen what Crystal and Joel go through, and they can’t help but be afraid, reluctant and nervous.

How do we apply for disability? Would we qualify for income assistance? Can we afford to open ourselves to that kind of scrutiny?

How can Kevin and Carmen move from a life of dealing with each immediate crisis to being able to make long-term goals & plans, all while navigating a system that doesn’t see the unique challenges they face as a family?

It might just be easier to avoid the system and try to live off one income until Kevin can go back to work.



Anyone within systems and/or who uses services talks about **silos, dead-ends & a lack of communication** among systems. We know that policies and practices are difficult to understand, that discretion plays a critical role in who gets what and that the more vulnerable someone is the harder it is to get what is needed.



Income

Asset Building

Social Enterprise

Childcare

Education

Healthcare

Transportation

Good Food

Housing

Justice

Literacy

System Navigation

**Help us
rewrite the
story of
poverty in
Saskatoon.**

Poverty elimination is complex

It's time to ask.....

What if Kevin and Carmen didn't have to live in survival mode?

What if Kevin and Carmen had an income & assets that could actually support their needs?

What if they were encouraged to pursue their educational dreams, and were able to find meaningful work that further encouraged them to keep learning?

What if Beth and Wyatt had a safe, fun and appropriated place to just be kids, all year round?

What if Crystal could find the support she really needs to no longer live in fear of losing her child?

What if Joel's past circumstances opened up possibilities for healing instead of a revolving door of poverty & pain?

What if systems were connected so that they didn't have to worry about being at the wrong place all the time?

How are others doing it?



Mincome was guaranteed annual income project that looked at the social impact of a guaranteed, unconditional annual income.



As an alternative to predatory loans Affinity Credit Union is offering the **Restart Loan** with reasonable interest rates which allow greater flexibility.



There are numerous social enterprise options in Saskatoon such as **Build Up Saskatoon, Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre Clothing Depot**. There are also new conversations about **social procurement policies within the City of Saskatoon**.



Many **communities across Canada** have full year school year models and other **modifications to calendars, start times** & hours of instruction and **innovative practices**.



Recently the **Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives** looked at childcare in Saskatchewan, there are many recommendations that would improve access to early years in this province.



Many communities across Canada are looking at free access to transit (**Winnipeg**). Others have looked at the impact **lower fares** have and the implications of **changing existing** systems.



The City of Saskatoon could become a member of the **Milan Urban Food Policy Pact**.



The **BC Policing and Community Safety Plan** is a good example of modern community-based policing with an emphasis on mental health & addictions



Poverty screening tools have been effective in Ontario.



Some recognize that the solution to a problem falls inside a different system. Here is an example of **housing and education working together**.



Next steps...

The SPRP will be looking for community partners and colleagues to drive the implementation of this plan. Understanding that this plan is designed to call on **collective action** of all sectors. We understand that all systems have a deep history in our province and community. No single system is responsible for the changes nor is there blame or judgement directed at any system.

Now is the time to take a critical look at policies and practices, to challenge mandates, to work collaboratively and to rewrite the story of poverty in Saskatoon. **It is possible, and it takes all of us.**

Get involved with the SPRP and help create a Saskatoon that has no poverty, a Saskatoon where everyone is able to develop their talents and abilities, have the choice to actively participate in an economic, cultural & social life and enjoy a good standard of living on a sustainable basis.

How the SPRP works

75+

Partners participate in 3 levels of collaborative collective action:

Leadership

Setting direction and vision of the work using evidence-based practices.

Management

Overseeing the financial resources provided to support the work of the coordinator.

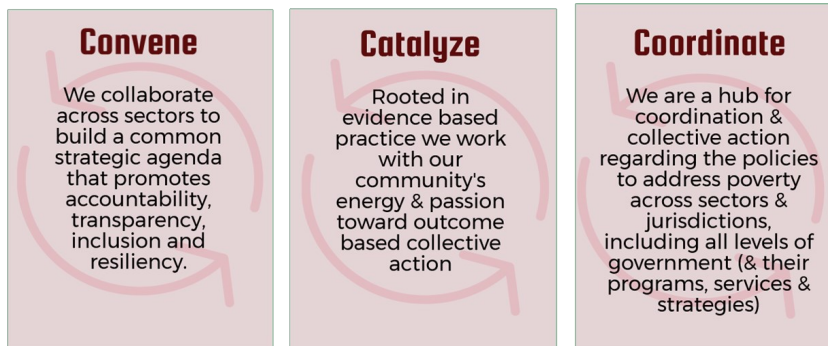
Action Teams

Leading projects, advocacy and community driven work to support the vision of the leadership team.

Since its inception in 2009, the SPRP has convened people to collaborate on the policies and practices connected to poverty reduction.

In 2019, the SPRP is committed to shining a light on the system policies and practices that are required to eliminate poverty in Saskatoon.

The SPRP understands that the elimination of poverty is a difficult and complex task. They are committed to convening, catalyzing and coordinating the collective action to end poverty in Saskatoon.



Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership
February 2019

About the PHOTOS

Many of the photos of Saskatoon in this document are the property of Jordon Cooper.

Jordon was a passionate community advocate whose commitment to supporting vulnerable people and ability to challenge policy & practice, while shining a light on inequities in Saskatoon, will forever be his legacy.

We are grateful for the privilege to include his work in this document.

Get Connected with SPRP



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