

## INSIDE SPERO...

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Newsletter of the  
Canadian Poverty Institute  
at Ambrose University  
Fall 2017 Vol. 2, No. 3

## Together in Dignity: A path toward a peaceful and inclusive society

This October 17th marks the 25th anniversary of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This year's theme calls us to create "a path toward peaceful and inclusive societies." The vision of a society that is peaceful and inclusive has perhaps never seemed more important than the present time. As cities and states are pulled apart by economic and racial divisions, stoked in many cases by leaders that seek to benefit from those divisions, it is important to reaffirm a commitment to what binds us together rather than what separates. For it is that separation which is the root of poverty, and the deepest form of poverty.

The links between poverty, inclusion and peace are strong. Inclusive societies are peaceful societies. And peaceful, inclusive societies are ones where poverty in all its forms cannot take root. The root of poverty and the root of exclusion is the same: fear. We fear those who appear unlike us; those of different colour, religion, dress, gender, status ... In our fear we categorize and label people and carve up community into competing camps of "us" and "them". Inevitably, the camp of "them" gets larger and larger as the "us" becomes increasingly narrow.

The heart of our fear of others, however, is fundamentally our fear of not having enough. When we believe there is not enough to go around, our world becomes a zero-sum game and our fellow human beings become our competitors. Whatever is taken by them leaves less for us. So we scramble,



hoard and protect. We build walls (real and imagined) to guard our scarce resources. We carefully construct the rules of inclusion to ration who has and who has not. And so we create the conditions of poverty.

Scarcity, however, is largely a myth. A 2014 report, for example, noted that Canada wastes \$31B in food annually, even while 850,000 people were using food banks across the country every month. Hunger arises not from a scarcity of food, but the result of the structures we've built to ration who gets food and who does not. In a world of abundance, scarcity is created.

What if we affirmed that food is not a commodity, but a basic human right? Indeed, the right to food is enshrined in international law. Yet, we feel discomfort

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## Canadian Poverty Institute Engages 1000 Voices

The Canadian Poverty Institute is excited to be working with Aspen Family Services to support the 1000 Voices community hub in northeast Calgary. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process, a team from the CPI will engage the community over the next several months to assess community assets and needs, and

develop a sustainability plan for the 1000 Voices project. 1000 Voices is a unique community partnership that brings together service providers and the local community to plan and deliver services to residents in a one-stop community centre. Established in 2010, this innovative project has provided a range of programs to

meet the needs of this diverse part of the city. The project team includes Ambrose University graduates Katherine Leonard and Brayden Boerchers, and community resident Sandeep Malhi.

For more information visit [www.povertyinstitute.ca](http://www.povertyinstitute.ca)

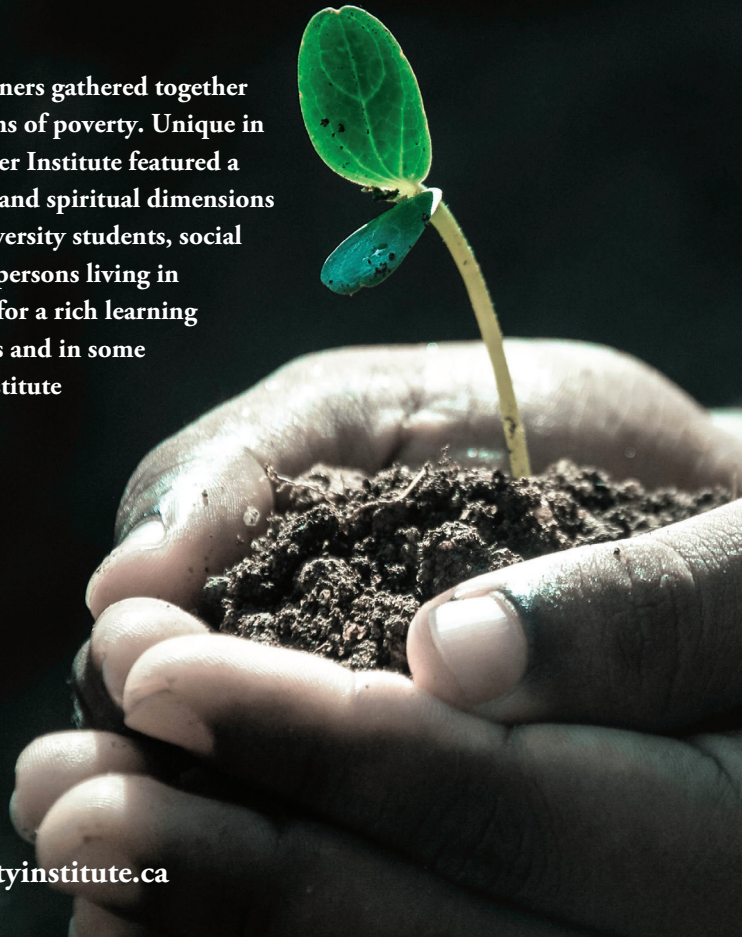
## Successful Launch of the Poverty Studies Summer Institute

In June 2017, a diverse group of about 100 learners gathered together over three weeks to explore the many dimensions of poverty. Unique in Canada, the first annual Poverty Studies Summer Institute featured a range of courses addressing the material, social and spiritual dimensions of poverty. Participants included Ambrose University students, social service professionals, government workers and persons living in poverty. This eclectic mix of participants made for a rich learning experience as people shared perspectives, stories and in some cases tears. Stay tuned for the next Summer Institute which runs from May 28 – June 15, 2018.

Courses will include:

- Shock Poverty
- Human Rights and Poverty
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Co-op Development for Poverty Reduction
- Sociology of Poverty
- Working with Vulnerable Populations
- Community Development for Local Congregations

For more information visit: [www.povertyinstitute.ca](http://www.povertyinstitute.ca)



### Together in Dignity: a path toward a peaceful and inclusive society

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at the thought of simply giving food away. What if there isn't enough? What if we run out? What if someone takes my share? The root of scarcity comes back to our fear and the walls we build to make sure we have enough. But the walls we build to keep people out are also the walls that keep us in.

If the basis of exclusion is fear, the starting point of inclusion must be the opposite: trust. Research on resilient systems and societies reveals that the key ingredients for resilience are trust, diversity and empowerment. These attributes encourage risk-taking which fosters innovation and enables the community to work together to address stresses and shocks. It is the glue of a strong community. Paradoxically, the more we exclude and build walls to assuage our fear of scarcity, the more scarcity persists and our fear grows. Yet, when we tear down our walls and

embrace each other as human beings with equal dignity and worth, scarcity diminishes and we are able to harness our resources and realize the abundance in our midst.

Our work to end poverty therefore is the work of healing. It is the work of re-building trust in a world that daily fractures into ever narrower divisions of us and them. Healing those divisions to build peaceful and inclusive societies is the only path to overcoming scarcity and fear. It is the only road out of poverty. Let us begin our healing journey together in our homes, workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods, and places of worship. Together in dignity, we can stop poverty.

**The vision of a society that is peaceful and inclusive has perhaps never seemed more important than the present time.**



## She Cried

By Tracy Ray Lewis,  
Poverty Studies Summer Institute Participant

As a person with lived experience of homelessness in Calgary (also some other places) and with current low income status, I have to admit I'm sometimes pretty damn lucky and get to do a LOT of cool things – despite my location inside of poverty!

Recently I participated in and completed a set of week-long workshop classes of University caliber about the intricacies of poverty, particularly tipping points and shocks that put people into poverty. Oh, and that isn't the way to describe it, either.

The course is about some of the history of poverty and agency perspective and low income perspective and Christian perspective and non-Christian perspect...

No, that isn't all what it's on about either... it's about ways to explain poverty experiences to agency people and ways for people in poverty to understand agency lingo and perspective... Oh and that isn't all on what it's about either...

The course is MOSTLY about how various approaches to poverty problem-solving work for some situations but not others and then you can pull other perspectives and approaches out of your poverty tool kit and use them to help understand and assist both impoverished persons and agency people and – heck, even naming the course won't help describe it properly.

The course is called Shock Poverty... and I found the course, content, classmates, and facilitator AMAZING!



**People are REAL and people contain tears – people are vast, damn VATS of salty, humane, loving, hating, hurting, healing and crybaby tears.**

Much of what was amazing is how the 14 participants and 1 facilitator almost imploded then came out of 5 days with respect for each other.

Yes, I thought the class imploded around day 2 and then on day 3 someone cried!

Well, well, well – now did THAT ever change some things! THAT was the REAL SHYT I showed up for 'cos dammit, poverty is EMOTIONALLY DISTURBING! Poverty hurts like HELL, from the body and brain to the soul, and even effects the people AROUND YOU when you don't want it!

What happened was a gal in class started telling her perspective, her story – and it got overwhelming for her, for us, for the prof – it was great and real and I was privileged that an almost-stranger would trust me in a room to hear these personal poverty points that affected her life so very, very much.

This burst the big fake, bubble of professionalism that has been strapped to poverty topics and impoverished people for so long as well as in

classrooms, care and learning settings where people struggle, learn and should be allowed to respond with human emotions. People are REAL and people contain tears – people are vats, damn VATS of salty, humane, loving, hating, hurting, healing and crybaby tears.

Cry.

Baby!

The gal kept saying, “Sorry, sorry...” and I am not sorry at all that her tears caused more tears in other people. Her tears gave ME permission to cry and to be sad and angry about what she said happened to her in social services offices, student loan centers, school settings, places of employment and more. Some of what she said is similar to what has happened to me and to people I know and care about.

All I know now is on that day, we were learning the academic lingo for talking about problem solving with poverty issues, learning some stats and approaches and then we were shocked into some emotional learning about poverty 'cos...things got REALLY REAL ...when she cried!

## CPI Director Appointed to Federal Ministerial Advisory Committee on Poverty

Ambrose University is proud to announce that Derek Cook, Director of the Canadian Poverty Institute, has been appointed to the federal Ministerial Advisory Committee on Poverty. The new committee will work together as a part of the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy, an initiative by the Canadian Government to reduce poverty and improve the economic well-being of over 1.9 million families in Canada that struggle to make ends meet. Cook joins the committee of “leaders, academic experts and practitioners working in the field of poverty reduction, and individuals who have experienced poverty first-hand, to provide expert advice on poverty-related issues.”

For more information about the Ministerial Advisory Committee please visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/advisory-committee.html>

### Upcoming Events

#### Foundations of Community Organizing Workshop

This training aims to develop leaders and members who understand and are able to practice the key skills of community organizing. This workshop provides content based on the philosophy and practices developed by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) during its 70 years of community organizing experience.

November 13, 20 and 27, Calgary

For more info contact Ryan Anderson at [ryan@calgarycommongood.org](mailto:ryan@calgarycommongood.org)

#### Energy Poverty Roundtable

A gathering of government, industry and non-profit representatives to discuss strategies to alleviate energy poverty in Alberta.

November 30, 2017, Edmonton

For more info contact [povertyinstitute@ambrose.edu](mailto:povertyinstitute@ambrose.edu)

### New Reports and Resources

*The following reports have recently been published by the Canadian Poverty Institute.*

- **Submission by the Canadian Poverty Institute to the Ministry of Families, Children and Social Development on the Development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy.** June, 2017
- **Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council on the Occasion of the 3rd Universal Periodic Review of Canada. Submitted jointly by Canada Without Poverty, the Canadian Poverty Institute and 10 other civil society organizations.** October, 2017

### About the CPI

The Canadian Poverty Institute is a inter-disciplinary research and teaching institute housed within Ambrose University in Calgary. Our mission is to contribute to the healing of poverty in Canada through teaching, research and public education. We are grounded in the Christian tradition of extending compassion while seeking justice and reconciliation for the marginalized and oppressed. The Canadian Poverty Institute is a member of:

- Vibrant Communities
- Canadian Council of Churches, Commission on Justice and Peace
- The Metro Alliance for the Common Good

### Support the CPI

The Canadian Poverty welcomes individuals and organizations who wish to Support the Canadian Poverty Institute financially.

If you wish to become a supporter, please visit <https://www2.ambrose.edu/donate> and indicate you wish to designate your gift to the Canadian Poverty Institute.

The Canadian Poverty Institute is a community partner of Sponsor Energy. Customers of Sponsor Energy can direct a portion of all profits from their utility bill to the Canadian Poverty Institute.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.sponsorenergy.com/community-partners/cpi>.

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