

SPRING 2022 ACTION PLAN UPDATE



Here's what we've been working on!

RENT BANK

In the fall of 2021 we partnered with CMHA and BC Rent Bank to pilot a rent bank program for Williams Lake. Rent banks provide no interest loans to low and middle income renters who are facing a short term financial crisis that puts their housing at risk. The goal is to maintain stable housing and assist people with getting through the crisis without losing their housing.

Over the first six months of the project, we approved nine loans for a total of \$14,000. This supported five families and three individuals to maintain their housing, for a total of 23 people.

Beginning in April, the rent bank program will be available for Williams Lake through the province-wide Rent Bank operated by Kamloops Elizabeth Fry society, which will ensure continuity of services over the long-term.

Apply for a loan here: <https://apply.bcrentbank.ca/apply/bc-rent-bank-province-wide>

COMMUNITY NAVIGATION TRAINING

In partnership with Cariboo Chilcotin Partners for Literacy, we developed a workshop to help train and support front line staff to bridge the gap between complex systems and people living in poverty. The workshop builds skills, knowledge, and community connections. The goal is to connect people who reach out for help anywhere in the community to the services they need, as seamlessly as possible.

So far, we've delivered the workshop six times and have trained 40 front-line staff, building capacity in our community to better meet the needs of those who are vulnerable and seeking support. In April, we will train an additional 12 school support workers who support children, youth and their families.

RENT SUPPLEMENT ACCESS

In partnership with the City of Williams Lake, with funding from the Union of BC Municipalities, we've offered support to seniors and low-income families to help them access the BC Housing rental supplement programs - Rental Assistance Program for Families, and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters. These programs are available province wide, but often people who need this support are not aware of the program, how to apply, and who is eligible. Over the past year, we've been getting the word out through the newspaper and social media. As well, we have a staff member who meets with people to help them complete the application process as it can be overwhelming for some.

Over the past year we have provided information or assistance to 138 people, including directly assisting 12 seniors and 7 families to apply for the programs. Funding has ended for support, but applications are available online:
<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-assistance-programs>

FOOD HUB

With support from United Way BC, we have launched the Central Cariboo Food Hub project. The focus is to improve household and community food security by addressing both short-term food access needs, as well as longer term food system sustainability in the community. We are working with many community partners to design new coordinated approaches to ensuring that all food in the community is utilized (food recovery initiatives), improve access to local food, and better meet the needs of those who rely on community food programs to meet their food and nutrition needs. As the cost of food is increasing rapidly, the need for creative approaches is growing. Working together will increase our community capacity to meet these needs.

Contact Brianna for more information: foodhub@wlspsc.ca



EMERGING ISSUES

The pandemic and other world events have had and continue to have significant impacts on those living in poverty. Loss of income, increasing cost of living, social isolation, and changes to employment circumstances have created financial stress, mental health struggles, food and housing insecurity, and many other challenges. Many community members who were vulnerable before are more vulnerable now. People who were just managing pre-pandemic are finding themselves struggling. Some folks who never expected to struggle are now finding it challenging to get by, or needing to reach out for support for the first time. As a community, we will need to continue to work collaboratively and creatively to respond to these needs, and support an equitable recovery for all.