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*Dawn spoke on the panel,  
 "What is Child Poverty", at  
 the Sharing Resources  
 conference in St. John's.  
 Here's what she had to  
 say.*



Hi, my name is Dawn,  
 and I am from  
 Conception Bay South,  
 in Newfoundland. I am  
 here today to give you my  
 personal statement about  
 child poverty. First, I would  
 like to start off by saying that  
 poverty is not necessarily about  
 tattered clothing and starving children. Poverty  
 is about missed opportunities. Children that  
 don't get a chance to choose where they want to  
 go with their lives miss out on activities because  
 of their social status, because they don't fit in  
 well enough, or because they have extremely low  
 self-esteem. These things need to be changed –  
 and can be!

---

Poverty is not necessarily about  
 tattered clothing and starving  
 children. Poverty is about  
 missed opportunities.

---

During my lifetime, I have come across many  
 barriers. My mother had me at an early age and  
 had quit high school. She always found a way to  
 blame me for this and for other things that she  
 thought she couldn't do because I was tying her  
 down! My mother soon became very scarce in  
 my life because she had to work two jobs just to  
 make ends meet for the both of us. As I grew  
 older, I began to hate my mother because she  
 couldn't give me the things I wanted. I couldn't

# introduction

handle the teasing and name-calling I received at  
 school because I didn't look right, or didn't have  
 all the things everyone else had. I began hanging  
 out with the wrong people, always getting in

# children need..

trouble with the law, and constantly fighting with my mother.

I was finally sent to a foster home that was far away from my mother, and given a probationary period. When I returned home six months later, I hadn't changed very much and still gave my mother a hard time. My behaviour soon got to the point where she couldn't take it anymore, and she called social services to pick me up and take me away. That was almost five years ago, and I have been in the same home ever since!

Last year I was introduced to the Youth in Care Network, and have been steadily involved ever since. I am also involved in the Community Youth Network where I work as a development worker, and I am a youth on the board of the Community-based Policing Board of Conception

team 9

team

want my work to turn attitudes around!

basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing and water in order to survive.  
relationships with their family and friends to be able to fulfill their need for attention and to be shown that they are loved.  
dreams and goals to work towards so that they have a chance to express themselves

# children need...

team 4

Bay South. I have since realized that I can make my life better and I can use my experiences to help young people to become or be who they want to be. My experiences can also be used to let people know how the foster-care system works, and that youth don't necessarily do something wrong to wind up in care. I



team 8

well-educated and sensitive leaders who can identify when students are having emotional or learning difficulties, who are committed, and who can create a positive environment to know they are cared for, loved, and respected. children have the right to be kids. They shouldn't have to deal with adult problems at an early age and consequently miss out on their childhoods.



community-  
to be in an open  
ambitions are



based resources and an education.  
and non-judgmental environment where their  
not stomped on.

basic elements: shelter (i.e. a place to stay warm and feel protected when they go home to it); education to gain the skills, ideas and opportunities to attain their dreams and goals for the future; love to feel worthy and not alone; clothing; food; self-esteem so they feel capable of achieving anything. Once these basic needs of children are met, the most primary level of poverty will be eliminated. "After the children are guaranteed to survive, we can begin to make sure they thrive." Joël Béland. Once we work on these fundamental issues/needs, we can deal with the next level of poverty, which is a lack of opportunities to thrive and flourish. parents who are supportive and understanding of their children, and positive role models for their children. people that they can look up to for guidance in their communities, for example, The Boys and Girls Club. acceptance from others, for example, through youth groups, award days, and sports. to be treated equally and should not be pre-judged. freedom of self-expression, for example, through an arts club which helps children express their feelings and emotions.

# children need...



## team 10

happiness.  
to hear that they are loved.

parents.  
necessities of life (but not luxuries; this way they will appreciate necessities more).  
a stable home.  
hugs.  
to be educated.  
to be disciplined.  
to be treated as equals.  
to be allowed to be kids.  
friends to play with.  
to be heard.  
to be able to trust and be trusted.  
to have goals.  
support.  
to not have worries about being abandoned.



## team 5

positive role models.

dreams.

someone to believe in them because sometimes it is so hard to believe in one's self.

self-esteem so they can contribute to the development of society.

to feel they are important and worth something.

to set goals in order to move forward in life.

to be confident to overcome problems that happen in life.

to feel safe and secure.

to feel that they belong and have close friends.

to be educated so they become all that they can be.

# children need...

to be loved, respected, and appreciated.  
encouragement, support, trust, hope, and advice.  
role models, influences of wisdom, and somebody to follow.  
a family and proper health services.  
liberty of expression and of opinions.  
love from their parents, friends, relatives, etc. in order to be happy.  
to be listened to and understood.  
to be in the company of others, to not feel alone.  
compassion for one another.  
support to achieve their goals and dreams.  
confidence in order to believe in themselves.  
self-esteem to be happy.  
activities that demonstrate to them their need for others, and also that they are needed in turn.  
role models to follow, someone to trust.  
friends so that they feel accepted.  
education to learn and understand certain issues and to have a future.  
clothes to feel comfortable.  
relationships with others to be happy.  
the rights necessary to be able to speak freely.  
to have fun in their childhood without being given any responsibilities.  
security to be comfortable in their environment.  
food to be healthy.  
fun in order to be happy.

# We believe that ...

- families can build bonds between children and their issues with security and love.
  - in too many cases, only money leads to power and respect, and this has to be changed.
  - everyone has potential, that if developed, could create opportunities that lead to less poverty.
  - the government has the money and power to create a solution for poverty, but its ability to do this is sometimes overcome by greed.
  - education leads to knowledge and a sense of pride which, in turn, leads to accomplishment; however, if we don't have a means to educate people, this becomes complicated.
  - no child in Canada should have to go hungry.
  - all Canadians should be equal; all children should have same opportunities.
  - equal opportunities should be created nation-wide; no one should leave their families because of the lack of local jobs.
- 
- We, as people that live in Canada, should talk about the issue of child poverty.
  - we need to share our resources.
  - people need to empathize with and not just acknowledge the problems of poverty.
  - the community has the power to eliminate child poverty.
  - poverty is everyone's responsibility.
  - child poverty happens when businesses and governments put profits and popularity ahead of the interests of the most vulnerable members of society.
  - child poverty is part and parcel of the larger issue of social inequality.
- child poverty, and poverty in general, is the result of a lack of any one of the following essential human needs: food, shelter, clothing, self-esteem and love.
  - child poverty is a vicious cycle, perpetuated by vested economic interests.
  - the only responsibility children should have to worry about is just being kids.
  - all children should have a stable, safe and secure environment.
  - all children should have a role model to look up to.
  - poverty is a result of many factors; however, through education and awareness, decreasing poverty will become our nation's responsibility.
  - youth should be united in their fight against child poverty.
  - the first step in eliminating child poverty is educating youth.
  - youth should work together and become more accepting of each other to break down barriers; youth should become aware that they have the power to eliminate the differences between them.
  - youth poverty isn't just about economics, but is also about missed opportunities which limit the quality of life.



# We believe that ...

- youth poverty is not a simple issue with simple causes, but is very complex and will involve a variety of solutions.
- a child should never regret his or her childhood.
- if you really want to do something, you should have the chance to do whatever you believe in.
- self-reliance is important, with the help of human love and kindness, should have the opportunity to fulfill
- children in Canada their dreams.
- not all poverty can be blamed on government.
- poverty can be viewed on three levels: individual, community, government.
- children should not be discriminated against because of their social status.
- if someone doesn't make it while trying to improve themselves, we as the country of Canada should help them.
- children should be motivated through education to achieve their goals and to do the best they can.
- all youth should have better access to community centres in each municipality in order to help youth realize their dreams. The goal of this is to bring youth together in small groups in order to provide them with better support.
- a stigma has been attached to people receiving welfare because of the small percentage of the population that abuses it.
- residential schools have caused emotional and spiritual problems within first nation communities.
- poverty is a term that society has put on certain groups of people.
- the self-esteem of youth can be raised by lessening discrimination, class division, and pressures. This can be achieved by identifying each others' individual talents and praising them.
- poverty is a lack of opportunities, equal access to resources, satisfaction, communication, sports, education, love, and support. We need to compensate for these inadequacies.
- child poverty can be reduced by fulfilling the following needs: love, happiness, support, acceptance, friendships, and having someone to relate to.
- everyone should stand up for something better and never give up or shut out the world, no matter how hard the struggle.
- there should be less emphasis placed on money. People's financial expectations are too high, therefore, we need a more realistic approach.
- by starting at home, we can change opinions, ideas and attitudes.



# we believe that ...



- by volunteering, people gain experience and initiative which can lead to jobs.
- education is necessary to help eliminate poverty.
- people require emotional support from caregivers.
- youth should feel that there is light at the end of the tunnel (that someone is out there to help).
- no matter how materialistically poor you are, love is the greatest thing you can have.
- not having a loving, caring family is a form of poverty.
- government officials at each level and people in power need to look at the issues more seriously and take them to heart.
- we need more non-school affiliated trained professionals in our schools. (i.e. psychiatrists).
- cost-free special activities and programs should be implemented in our schools; students should not be obligated to pay for activities that are a part of the school curriculum.
- each one of our hands can make a difference.
- communication breaks barriers.
- every child needs an adult to look up to as a role model.
  
- adults need opportunities to continue learning (i.e. vocational training).
- consumers and the government alike should take action on their views on child labour.
- love, friendship, and affection are essential riches.

## **The 1999 Students Commission would like to thank:**

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- Canadian Optimist Clubs
- TG Magazine

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TG Magazine  
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Dawn Barton  
Neil Tilly  
Bruno Sabattini  
Julie Erbland  
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Serge Étienne

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