

## Strategy to Address Child Poverty

Creating a model community for Nanaimo's children

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# Strategy to Address Child Poverty

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# Strategy to Address Child Poverty

## Executive Summary

In Nanaimo more than 3000 children live in poverty.<sup>i</sup> Statistics Canada data suggests that this number is growing: the City of Nanaimo recognizes that it is difficult for these children to live up to their full potential unless the issues relating to poverty and the outcomes experienced by children are fully addressed.

**Of all regions in British Columbia, Nanaimo-Cowichan has the highest child poverty rate at 28.2 % cent, followed by Surrey North at 27.7 % and Richmond at 27.6 % (Stats Can).**

This Strategy for Nanaimo's Children provides a snapshot of current issues impacting our youngest residents (those under 12 years of age), examines the range of services and programs being offered in the City, and then provides an Action Plan that takes a broad-based encompassing approach to addressing the issues in the City. Overall, this report recommends that coordinated and targeted efforts are the best approach to addressing child poverty.

Key findings include:

- A multi-faceted approach is needed to address child poverty, including increased employment for parents, living wage employment, child care subsidies, improved transit and transit subsidies, early start education programs, adequate and affordable housing
- There are already many agencies doing great work
- Opportunities are available for further collaboration
- A multiple agency approach with monitored implementation targets is needed.

This study was prepared by students in Geography 446 at Vancouver Island University under the leadership of John Horn, Social Planner for the City of Nanaimo. The many individuals and organizations involved in this study are thanked for their contributions – working together is the way to address the issues facing Nanaimo's children.

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## Demographic Profile of Nanaimo

- In 2011, the total population of Nanaimo was 98,025, an increase of 3.6% since 2006.
- The median age was 45.2 years old compared with 41.9 years provincially.
- Of the total population, 47,635 were male and 50,390 were female.
- 6.6% of the population identified as Aboriginal compared with 5.4% provincially.
- 67.3% of census families were married couples, while 15.6% were common-law-couples and 17.0% were lone-parent families
- In 2010, the median income of families in Nanaimo was \$61,321. This was lower than the national median income of \$67,044 and the provincial median of \$67,915
- In 2012, 17.3% of Nanaimo residents had incomes below the after-tax poverty rate compared to 17% of Canadians and 18.6% of BC residents.
- Of all Nanaimo residents employed in 2010, 38.2% were not earning a living wage -- an annual income of more than \$20,000. This compares to 36% nationally and 37.9% provincially.
- In 2013, 5.5% of Nanaimo's working population was unemployed. This is slightly higher than 2012's rate of 5%.
- The cost of food for a family of four on Vancouver Island per month was \$873 in 2011, compared to \$858 in 2009 and \$695 in 2007.
- 6,908 people used the Food Bank in Nanaimo at least once from July 2013-2014, including 2,259 children under the age of 18. This is up slightly from the year previous, with 6,718 people using the food bank, 2,244 of whom were children.

### ***But most telling...***

- According to Statistics Canada,<sup>ii</sup> of all regions in British Columbia Nanaimo-Cowichan has the highest child poverty rate at 28.2 % cent, followed by Surrey North at 27.7 % and Richmond at 27.6 %.

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## Why Does Nanaimo Need a Child Poverty Strategy?

Nanaimo has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada. In 2012, Nanaimo's poverty rate was at 17.3%, compared with 17% of Canadians and 18.6% for BC residents. Concurrently, 38.3% of residents who are employed are not even earning a liveable wage – an annual income above \$20,000.<sup>iii</sup> Identifying the local factors contributing to these situations and identifying actions for moving forward will help Nanaimo to address and resolve some of the fundamental problems in relation to poverty.

Poverty is created through layers of barriers and factors that must be tackled together if the City is to achieve positive change. The economy, transportation, education, physical and mental health, social inclusion, lack of employment opportunities, and the unavailability of affordable housing substance misuse are a few key issues impacting poverty and quality of life in Nanaimo.<sup>iv</sup> In addition, the geography of Vancouver Island is in and of itself an issue, as the separation from employment and educational opportunities in the Lower Mainland and the high costs of transportation limit options for individuals who may not have the economic ability to travel.

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## Agencies Serving Nanaimo's Children

There are many agencies and organizations in Nanaimo currently working to address child poverty. This is the primary focus of some agencies while others contribute more indirectly with services and products that address the root causes of child poverty. The following listing highlights known agencies in Nanaimo: this list should not be considered complete as new initiatives are expanding daily, and is presented in alphabetical order. Instead, this listing should be viewed as a starting point for gathering resources and seeking common interests among groups working toward common goals.

Agency/Organization	Mandate
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Vancouver Island	Variety of programs for children and youth of different ages.
Boys and Girls Club of Central Vancouver Island	Before and after school child care for children in kindergarten to 12 years of age.
City of Nanaimo	Social planning actions, tax initiatives, provision of meeting spaces for community groups.
Greater Nanaimo Early Years Partnership (GNEYP)	Goal of improving development and health of children (0-6) in Greater Nanaimo, through influencing public policy on childcare, helping promote new developments for child friendly neighbourhoods and advocating for family friendly workplace policies.
Kids 4 Kids and Harewood Community Schools Association	K4K provides programs for kids at Georgia Avenue School, extensive work completed by the Harewood Community Schools Association
Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre	Many programs, including Early Years and family night programs.
Nanaimo Child Development Centre (NCDC)	Non-profit organization offering services, support and programs to families in Nanaimo with special needs children.
Nanaimo Parent Participation Preschool	Free drop-in preschool along with other preschool programs.
Nanaimo Parks and Recreation	Free and low cost programs provided to children and families across a wide range of interests.
Nanaimo Unique Kids Organization (NUKO)	NUKO puts on a summer day camp program for students who face neuro-developmental disabilities such as Autism, FASD, ADHD, OCD, and Downs Syndrome.
PacificCARE – Pacific Child and Family	Mission to provide support to families in order to

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Enrichment Society	achieve better access to programs and resources for the development of children
School District 68 and Nanaimo Ladysmith Schools Foundation	Range of activities within schools to address the educational, physical, and cultural issues relating to child poverty.
StrongStart BC	No cost drop-in learning program for ages 0-5, with a focus is with the developmental of language, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills
Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre	Many programs, including after-school care.
Vancouver Island Regional Library	Events at all 3 Nanaimo locations (Nanaimo Harbourfront, Nanaimo Wellington, Nanaimo North) including Lego Club, Free Math Tutoring, Preschool Storytime, Learn Mandarin, Babytime, Toddlertime.
Others?	

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## Critical Issues Shaping Child Poverty

The reasons behind child poverty in Nanaimo, as is true for the rest of the world, are myriad. The impacts of child poverty also reach far beyond simple economics, impacting education and employment opportunities, social relationships, physical and mental health, and even longevity.<sup>v</sup> The causes of child poverty are also complex, and relate to the employment opportunities of parents, education levels achieved, income inequality, non-living wages, backgrounds, inadequate government supports, challenging physical and mental health issues, and care responsibilities.

The following details a range of issues that relate to child poverty in Nanaimo. These issue areas are then developed into **Actions** in the next section of this strategy.

### *Economic Issues*

Issues identified under this category include income, costs of child care, employment, housing, transportation, and food availability.

#### **Income**

The federal government, through the Canada Child Tax Benefit and Universal Child Benefit, has some resources available based on income for families. These programs support families with children up to age 17. Nanaimo had a higher percentage of people on income assistance (3.1%) than BC (1.7%). Further, there are a higher percentage of children living on income assistance with a single parent in Nanaimo (5.1%) than in BC (2.7%).<sup>vi</sup>

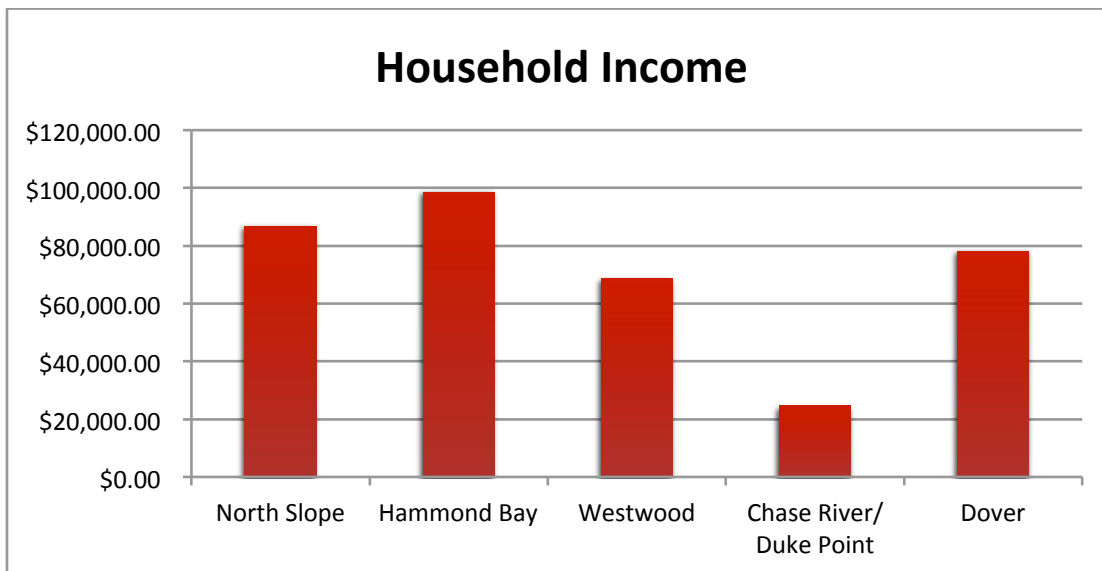
However, there is no attempt to match these benefits to the actual costs of raising children, and any increase in income can negatively affect the ability of parents to access these benefits. Other forms of income assistance are available through provincial and federal ministries. However, as noted in a recent address, Dr. Paul Hasselback (Nanaimo's Medical Health Officer) indicated, "...of the 20% of students living in impoverished conditions, only 5% are from families on income assistance. The other 15% are in that marginal income level where trying to get through a month is a challenge. They may be fine for a week or two when there is enough money but not necessarily for the rest of the month."<sup>vii</sup> Dr. Hasselback further noted that part-time work, low wages, costs of child care, housing costs, and student debt loads all contribute to child poverty in the City.



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That is, the issue is not simply one of low income, but all the factors that draw down on income must be considered in a comprehensive strategy to address child poverty.

When examining income by neighbourhood in Nanaimo, the Chase River/Duke Point area is identified as having the lowest household income and the highest percentage of low income families.



**Figure 1: Household Income (2011)**

A difference among neighbourhoods is also shown when the percentage of low income households is identified. Approximately 25% of the households in the Chase River/Duke Point area are in this category.

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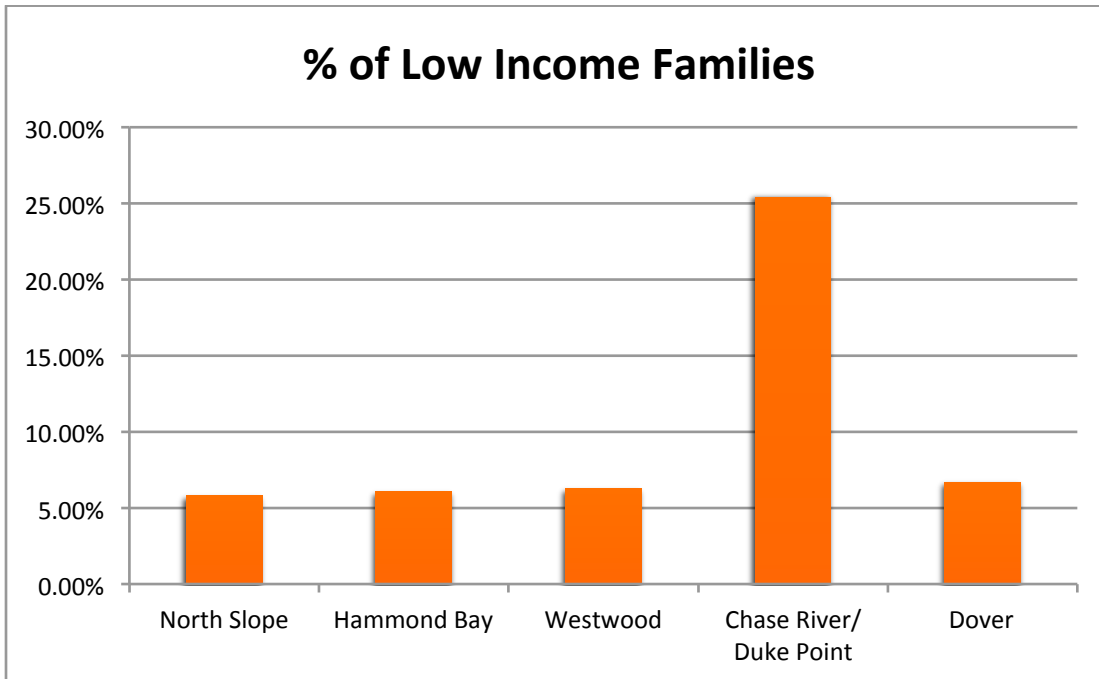


Figure 2: Percentage of Low Income Families (2011)

### Employment

Nanaimo has a higher unemployment rate (9.2%) than BC (7.8%).<sup>viii</sup> Related to this, the participation rate is lower for Nanaimo than for BC at 61.6% compared to 65.8%.<sup>ix</sup> There are many factors that are part of this higher rate, including the decline in traditional resource extraction industries on the Island and the rise of employment requiring specific education or training. Declining or limited opportunities for parents are one of the factors contributing to child poverty in Nanaimo.

### Housing

The United Nations through the Millennium Goals and the more recent Sustainable Development Goals identify safe and affordable housing as a basic human right.<sup>x</sup> The percentage of people spending more than 30% of their income on rent is higher in Nanaimo at 48.6% than British Columbia (43.4%).<sup>xi</sup> Relating to this is the level of owners vs. renters in Nanaimo: this is one statistic that has a geographic dimension for the City.

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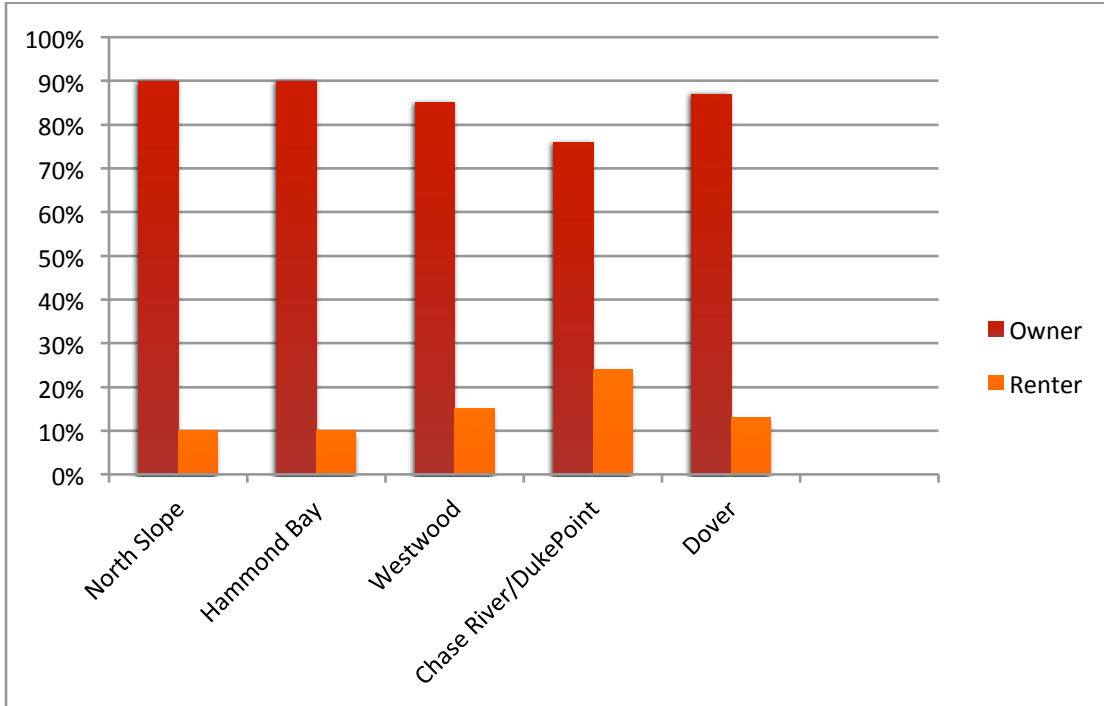


Figure 3: Owners and Renters (2011)

### Transportation

The ability to move through and around the City is a critical issue for children. Two factors are at issues: costs and accessibility. Children (and family members) should be able to move about the city at reasonable levels of cost and convenience.

As noted previously, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals address a number of issues relating to child poverty. Included in this is transportation. Goal #11 asks nations around the world to "provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities. In addition, the proposal calls for providing universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for persons with disabilities."<sup>xii</sup>

In Nanaimo, transit is managed by a regional transit authority under the jurisdiction of the province of BC and the Regional District of Nanaimo. In 2014/15, ridership totalled more than 2.7 million at a cost of \$13.57

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million.<sup>xiii</sup> It is difficult to develop accurate measures that assess the relationship between child poverty and the use of transit: further research is needed to fully develop a trend analysis that will examine this relationship.

## Transit

Transit unavailability also complicates access to child care. While service is improving in Nanaimo, there are still limited routes and times available for using public transit as the sole source of transportation for all employment, childcare, and life trips. Limitations in public transportation restricts parents from choosing available affordable child care options due to location and timing restrictions. Without an efficient network of transportation routes and walkable distances to child care services, additional stress is placed on parents and children. According to the *Provincial Child Care Needs Assessment*, 31% of BC parents stated that child care services are too far away from either home or work.

## Food

Systemic poverty is a barrier to attaining food security.<sup>xiv</sup> Health Canada states that food security exists “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>xv</sup> Nanaimo Food Share expands on this definition, suggesting that all people should have access to locally grown food that is produced and processed in a sustainable way.<sup>xvi</sup> Food insecure environments are harmful to children’s growth and development and may lead to “serious health problems like obesity, developmental abnormalities, or a compromised immune systems.”<sup>xvii</sup>

Currently over 90% of the food eaten on Vancouver Island is grown or processed elsewhere and most of the Islands “food system infrastructure” is economically unviable; these phenomena may be attributed to the globalization and industrialization of food systems.<sup>xviii</sup> In Nanaimo the cost of food is rising, proportionally more people are visiting food banks, and donations to food banks are decreasing.<sup>xix</sup> Supporting local food initiatives may be economically and socially beneficial, as it will support local jobs and increase healthy options for local residents. At issue is the cost of local produce: higher costs for local goods over imported goods will be a barrier for all, especially those living in poverty. Increased work is needed to improve the links between food security, local involvement, poverty reduction, health, and child poverty.

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## Child Care Placements

In Canada child care is a system regulated by the province or territory. In British Columbia families can apply for child care subsidies to make child care more affordable for lower income families. Affordability of child care is affected by a number of factors including where one works, where a child can attend child services, and where one lives. In BC there is currently no official child care plan to support working families.

The number of child care spots in Nanaimo is a critical issue impacting child poverty in Nanaimo. The city has approximately 2,467 licensed daycare spots in Nanaimo (2015)<sup>xx</sup> and 2015 *Parent Child Care Survey* (BC Stats) indicates that approximately 48% of respondents require full-time, stable child care. The percentage needing full time care increases as a child ages. At issue is whether this level of service is sufficient for Nanaimo. The Greater Nanaimo Early Years Partnership (GNEYP) 2015 Report<sup>xxi</sup> states that 30.1% of parents feel that child care is not readily available to them. When affordable or suitable child care is offered there can be waiting lists for parents to get their children into these programs. Current slow growth in Nanaimo's population of youth is resulting in school closures and fewer resources for parents. As fewer spots in care are available in relation to population size, competition to access these limited spots increases, adding additional workload and stress on parents seeking child care.

Typical Number of days per week needed for child care	British Columbia	≤2 years old	3-4 years old	5-12 years old
1-2 days per week	25%	26%	23%	26%
3-4 days per week	27%	36%	31%	22%
5+ days per week	48%	38%	46%	52%

## Costs of Child Care

The cost of child care has been identified as a critical issue in addressing the ability of parents to find employment. More than 76% of low income families express concerns over price of child care, along with concerns about fee increases, and wages not keeping pace with fee increases. Single parents, in particular, are often more disadvantaged when trying to earn a wage that enables paying for day care.

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According to this report, a single parent working full time in BC on minimum wage makes a yearly average of \$19,919, well below the Low Income Measure before-tax poverty line of \$27,437. The yearly fees for child care consume a substantial portion of that income: while information for Nanaimo was not specifically listed, the cost of an infant in child care in Vancouver is estimated at approximately \$15,000, dropping to \$14,000 for a toddler and \$11,000 for a preschool child. While BC does offer child care subsidies, ongoing changes to subsidy programs can make it difficult for parents to plan for the long-term.

## Child Care Subsidies

While **subsidies** may be available, the *2015 Child Care Fees in Canadian Cities Report* states that BC is the least accessible province for information on subsidies out of all provinces and territories in Canada. This report continues to describe how the website lists the bare minimum of requirements for subsidy eligibility, providing no easy access to income level cut offs or subsidy calculators. Wait times for direct phone contact are described as being prohibitive, making it difficult for parents to access information.<sup>xxii</sup>

Other **economic issues** include:

- Rising food costs for households. The cost of food for a family of four on Vancouver Island per month was \$873 in 2011, compared to \$858 in 2009 and \$695 in 2007
- Rising real estate costs and rent prices
- Increasing taxation (local, provincial, and federal)
- Transportation costs to and from Vancouver Island limiting economic opportunities
- Loss of traditional employment in industry and resource extraction
- Rise of low paying employment in the service industry
- Overall high unemployment rates in Nanaimo.

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## Social Issues

Issues identified in this category include social inclusion, education, demographic changes, and health.

### Social Inclusion

*“The World Bank defines social inclusion as the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society”* (The World Bank 2013)

Social inclusion relates to the level of “belonging” that people feel for their community. Low levels of social inclusion tend to be caused by isolation, non-integration, lack of opportunities, and lack of connections. High levels of social inclusion result when individuals feel that they have strong community ties, have a sense of belonging, feel that other members of the community support them, and perceive that they are contributing to the good of the community.

Social inclusion can be difficult to quantify, but two proxy measures could be children in care and rates of juvenile crime. To the former, there is a higher rate of children in care in Nanaimo when compared to the BC average (11.6/1000 vs. 6.4/1000 respectively). As to crime, there is a higher rate of serious juvenile crime in Nanaimo again when compared to BC as a whole at 5.1/1000 youth aged 12-17 vs. 3.5/1000 for the province.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Increasing social inclusion for all members of a community means programs, places, and venues must be provided that encourage engagement and provide safe places for involvement. While this may not address the economic root causes of poverty, much can be done to increase perceptions of care, sense of belonging, and the sense of community through actively engaging with citizens of all ages.

### Education

Education is one of the most important investments a community can make in its people and its future. Education reduces poverty, boosts economic growth and increases personal income.<sup>xxiv</sup> Education improves a person’s chances of having a healthy life while teaching the importance of equality through inclusive learning opportunities.<sup>xxv</sup> Nanaimo has the ability to prepare its citizens for our future knowledge-based economy, and

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improving educational opportunities for all students and learners in our community is a shared responsibility.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Many children in Nanaimo are considered vulnerable in a range of developmental areas, including: physical health & well-being, language & cognitive development, social competence, emotional maturity & communication skills, & general knowledge.<sup>xxvii</sup> In 2013, 35% of children in the Nanaimo Ladysmith School District were considered vulnerable in at least one of those five areas.<sup>xxviii</sup> High school completion rates are another issue. In 2013, 27.7% of all students and 44% of Aboriginal students did not graduate within the scheduled time frame. In 2011, children in Nanaimo were also below the provincial standard in reading and writing, 25.5% and 22.1% compared to 20.2% and 16.1% respectively.<sup>xxix</sup>

At issue as well is decreasing school budgets for non-curricular activities, and the current system in BC of establishing budgets and resources based on existing enrolments instead of implementing changes in advance of receiving future growing enrolments. The current system of budgeting by “back-casting” instead of forecasting creates difficulties in meeting increasing demands and addressing issues of child poverty within the school system.

## Demographics

While the population of children in the 0-4 and 5-9 cohorts is increasing approximately 10% between 2010 and 2020, the number of youth ages 11-18 is decreasing.<sup>xxx</sup> This decrease in older youth population poses an issue, and consequently effects the younger cohorts of children, as the “pinch” in the population pyramid for Nanaimo as the older youth category ages will be used to predict the need for social programs, school resources, and daycare spaces for future generations: it may be difficult to regain resources once they are discontinued, and youth may be perceived as less of a priority if their numbers appear (falsely) to be decreasing.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Other relevant demographic indicators include:

- The percentage of lone-parent families in Nanaimo at 33.4% is higher than the percentage for British Columbia at 26.7%



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- School performance indicators illustrate that more than 25% of Grade 4 and 7 students in Nanaimo scored below average on standardized reading exams, compared to BC at approximately 20%.
- On average, Nanaimo citizens have a lower life expectancy than BC as a whole at 80.8 years compared to 82.5 years.<sup>xxxii</sup>

## Health Care

It is a prevailing myth that Canada has universal and free health care: although some services are covered under basic medical plans by the provincial government, coverage is limited to services deemed necessary and there are often charges in place for basic services and prescriptions. Individuals who are Aboriginal and have federal status can access some vision, medical, and dental services through separate programs, but again these programs cover basic services with limited coverage for higher order services. That is, access to physiotherapy, nutritionists, chiropractic services, or to specialists that charge for services is generally unavailable to individuals and families living in poverty. The inability to access needed services or to pay required costs is a debilitating problem for many people living in poverty.

Related to this is the ability of children to access places to play and connect with nature: there are myriad health studies that speak to the benefits of outdoor play in safe and stimulating environments.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Children learn through playing. Playing provides sensory stimulation enhancing creativity, imagination and their natural learning ability. Children develop physical, emotional, intellectual and social skills that are required for growth and learning. The availability of playgrounds, then, could serve as a proxy measure of the ability for children to play.

There are approximately 60 neighbourhood playgrounds found around the City of Nanaimo, and the City is broken down into 16 planning neighbourhood areas (this is exclusive of larger city parks and trails).<sup>xxxiv</sup>

**Figure 4: Neighbourhood Playgrounds** shows how the neighbourhood playgrounds are distributed throughout the planning neighbourhoods. Many of the neighbourhood parks in Nanaimo were built using the Partner in Parks Program, which speaks to likely connections to high levels of social inclusion and social capital. For these parks, the City provides matching funding for park improvement projects but the onus is first on the local residents to raise funds and determine the need for new improvements in the neighbourhood.

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At issue, however, is whether or not strategies are in place to ensure children across the City have equal access to playgrounds, and secondly if these playgrounds encourage active play that contributes to mental and physical health. Further research is needed to confirm if these conditions are in place across the City.

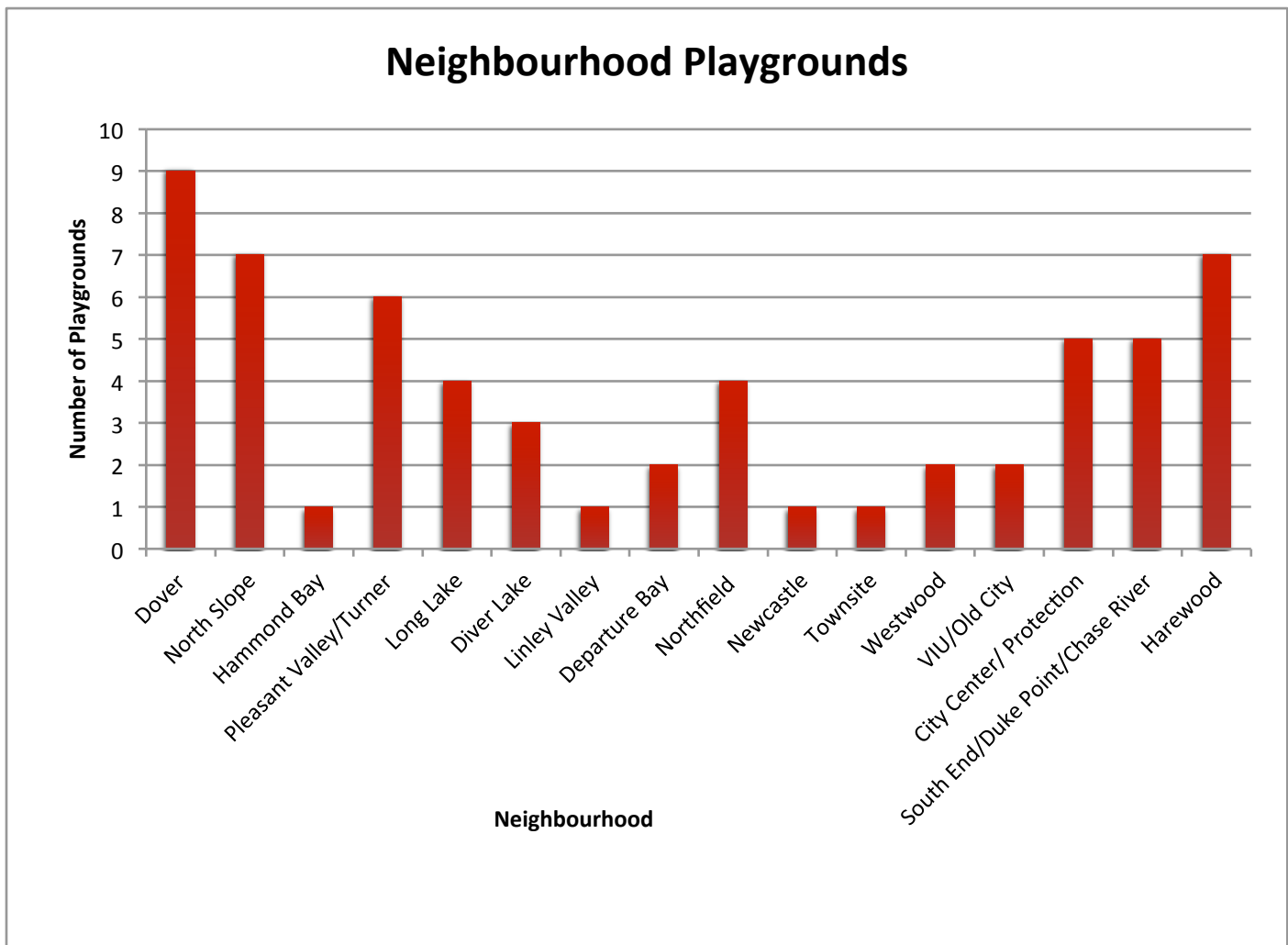


Figure 4: Neighbourhood Playgrounds (2015)

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## Vision of the Strategy to Address Child Poverty

The vision that this strategy develops from is simple:

### ***End Child Poverty Now.***

No child should live in poverty in one of the most prosperous nations in the world.

The United Nations adopted a series of new Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, building on the momentum and achievements of the Millennium Goals. The first of the new goals is to ***end poverty in all its forms everywhere.***

The UN intends to achieve this target through a multi-faceted approach that considers food security, social programs, policy development, employment, housing, land ownership, inheritance, as well as access to resources and technology.

The UN will reach this goal by 2030. This sets out a clear goal and target for Nanaimo, ideally achieved in a much shorter time frame. Clear and achievable actions are required to attain this vision.

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## Recommended Actions

The following table sets out a strategy with actions and time frames intended to address issues relating to child poverty in Nanaimo. The first action – assembling a roundtable of agencies and organizations to implement this strategy – is critical. Without this multi-agency approach, it is unlikely that the City will be able to implement a coordinated approach to create positive change for children in Nanaimo.

Many of these actions require the involvement of the provincial and federal governments. Research on this strategy has shown that there are many local groups actively working to reduce child poverty in Nanaimo, but are in many ways stymied by structural issues that prevent achieving substantial progress. For example, local groups may provide recreation opportunities to children in need, but unless systemic problems with transportation are resolved, this programming remains inaccessible to segments of Nanaimo's citizens.

The actions listed below are shown in grouped priority order, with immediate actions listed first, then short-term (completed in one year), medium term (completed within 2 to 3 years), and long term (over three years). Many of the actions speak to working with senior levels of government: a united, organized roundtable is a means of achieving a level of recognition and ensuring that the voices of local groups/agencies are heard by provincial and federal agencies.

	Action	Details	Time Frame
1	<b>Form a Roundtable to implement the Strategy to Address Child Poverty</b>	<b>The City of Nanaimo will create a new sub-committee that reports to the Social Planning Advisory Committee. The terms of reference for the committee, including membership, will be developed by SPAC.</b>	<b>Immediate</b>
2	<b>Develop a multi-agency implementation plan</b>	<b>Work to develop a detailed map of the activities of each participating agency and seek out synergies/places for cooperation among agencies. Identify any gaps that may exist on the local level, and then set out a clear strategy for working with the provincial and federal government to address systemic issues relating to child poverty.</b>	<b>Short term</b>

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3	Implement a monitoring program to assess progress	Measuring outcomes is critical to knowing if the actions to address child poverty are making an impact. The Nanaimo Foundation publishes the Vital Signs Report: including a section on child poverty and the achievement of the actions listed in this Strategy may be an option.	Medium term
4	Work with the City Planning Department to identify new and creative options for developing affordable housing in Nanaimo and amending PlanNanaimo to support these changes	Options may include secondary suites, laneway housing, creative subdivisions that create a range of parcel sizes (with a range of price points), and cooperative housing. Involve the wider public in identifying these options.	Short term
5	Work with provincial and federal governments to implement changes to income benefit programs	Issues with income benefit programs have been identified many times by individuals and agencies. A coordinated effort, perhaps involving other local governments through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, is needed to pressure senior levels of government to implement changes that help to address child poverty. Benefits must be reformed to focus on the needs of children first.	Medium term
6	Work with provincial and federal governments to address barriers to employment	Living wages and opportunities for employment are routes out of situations that lead to child poverty. Additional efforts are needed on building work experience, encouraging employers to consider flexible hours, and working with child care providers to match employment sites with care sites.	Medium term
7	Advocate for a \$10/day child care plan and remove discrimination based on income levels	Again, Quebec has implemented a clear and publically supported system that serves as a model for BC. While this is a far-reaching action, steps must be initiated to address the root causes of child poverty.	Short term
8	Work with BC Transit on addressing transit accessibility for low income families and children	Improving transit access to educational programs and services is another critical link to building knowledge capacity. Transit oriented development will also support employment and public placemaking opportunities; resulting in a more sustainable Nanaimo.	Medium term

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9	Develop the South Nanaimo Transit Exchange	Consider the development of a transit exchange in the south of the City in the long- term, with potential locations at Southgate Mall or within the planned future Sandstone area. This exchange could allow transfer between routes from the north, and local services in the south. Services from this exchange would support the future planned population and employment growth in the south of the City.	Medium term
10	Work with the Nanaimo Ladysmith School District, community schools, and private schools to coordinate actions	Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools have a detailed Strategic Plan that speaks to the impacts within the education system from children living in poverty. Other organizations, such as the Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre and other community schools also have programming and plans to address child poverty. These groups currently are providing critical services in quick start programs, food provision, and after school services. The involvement of these organizations is needed in a coordinated strategy/action plan.	Medium term
11	Improve local accessibility to child care subsidy programs	Work with the provincial government to improve the child care subsidy website page or make contacting the province for more information more accessible and less time consuming.	Medium term
12	Implement a new Playground/Parkland Strategy that targets low income neighbourhoods	The links between park/nature space and thriving is clear. Work toward accessing new funding through amenity charges or other taxations on development to specifically target the development of new or improved playgrounds and parklands in low income neighbourhoods.	Medium term
13	Increase the role of Vancouver Island University in working with community groups and agencies	Develop stronger links between VIU and the community. Create internships, co-op placements, and find new ways to integrate students into the fabric of the community to assist in implementing programs and services.	Medium term
14	Create neighbourhood advocacy/help centres	Work with local commercial store owners to develop space (potentially as small as a kiosk in a mall) in each neighbourhood that will be staffed by knowledgeable volunteers interested in addressing	Medium term

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		issues of social inclusion.	
15	Increase social inclusion and self-sufficiency among citizens	A good example of concrete actions at work in creating housing and opportunities for children is the Northeast South Dakota Community Action Program. This program actively works to address basic problems that face low income families; the program contends that addressing foundational problems must be done first before addressing higher order problems. For example, the agency is involved in property management and the provision of safe, affordable housing to local residents. Most importantly, the program provides a safe place to drop in, ask questions, join groups, or access assistance.	Medium term
16	Nature in Action Programs	A range of actions is required to address the connection between children and nature in Nanaimo. While examples of programs abound, the Nature for New York City Kids is one of the best examples of seeking new ways to make this connection. While the urban environment differs between New York and Nanaimo, at the core is the need to make nature-based experiences a day to day occurrence for children. VIU could take an active role in this area, promoting environmental literacy and sustainability by working with our Education Students to ensure that the nature/human connection is part of every K-12 classroom. Students at VIU could be actively engaged in creating course modules and field assignments that could be used by local teachers. Beyond this, the involvement of the provincial government will be necessary to include the human/nature connection as part of the curriculum.	Medium term
17	Accessible Recreation	Encourage new programming that attracts children and families to park spaces; maintain, replace, or add new equipment to benefit park spaces.  Nanaimo provides tremendously rich natural experiences: at issue for some children is accessibility and costs. The City's Recreation and	Medium term

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		Parks Department currently provides many opportunities to access programming and venues at low or no cost. It is recommended that this be expanded to include new outdoor learning opportunities that will draw Nanaimo's children directly into experiences with nature. Teams of certified Naturalists (similar to the City's Leaders in Training Program) could be created and new programs could be implemented across City parklands. The experiences offered could range from informal presentations/information to registration-based weekly sessions.	
18	Be a Child Friendly City	Nanaimo could become the most child friendly cities in the world. Critical actions could address placemaking, urban agriculture, accessibility, street fixtures, play spaces, connectivity – any improvements that would add to the child friendliness of the City.	Long term



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- <sup>i</sup> Statistics Canada 2011. The data is not yet available for the 2016 Census but trend analysis would suggest this number will be
- <sup>ii</sup> Statistics Canada Taxfile data for families with children 17 and under who made incomes below the Low Income Measure After Tax, the most commonly used low-income measurement tool in the world, according to our national statistics agency.
- <sup>iii</sup> Nanaimo Foundation 2015.
- <sup>iv</sup> City of Nanaimo 2015.
- <sup>v</sup> Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper. Inequalities of Income and Inequalities of Longevity: A Cross-Country Study. *American Journal of Public Health*: January 2016, Vol. 106, No. 1, pp. 160-165.
- <sup>vi</sup> Island Health at 222.68Nanaimo2014.pdf
- <sup>vii</sup> [http://www.nlsf.ca/index.php?p=1\\_39\\_Child-Poverty-Misconceptions](http://www.nlsf.ca/index.php?p=1_39_Child-Poverty-Misconceptions)
- <sup>viii</sup> Island Health at www.68Nanaimo2014.pdf
- <sup>ix</sup> Statistics Canada 2006 Census Profile Nanaimo
- <sup>x</sup> [www.unmillenniumproject.org](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org)
- <sup>xi</sup> Island Health at www.68Nanaimo2014.pdf
- <sup>xii</sup> [www.unmillenniumproject.org](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org)
- <sup>xiii</sup> [http://bctransit.com/\\*/about/facts/regional](http://bctransit.com/*/about/facts/regional)
- <sup>xiv</sup> Food Secure Canada 2013
- <sup>xv</sup> Health Canada 2012
- <sup>xvi</sup> Nanaimo Food Share 2011
- <sup>xvii</sup> Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2008
- <sup>xviii</sup> Island Good Food Initiative, 2007
- <sup>xix</sup> United Way, 2013
- <sup>xx</sup> Specific information on child care availability by neighbourhood is not available for Nanaimo, but the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) does provide documentation on licensed child care practices for Nanaimo. Using the VIHA resources, Greater Nanaimo Early Years Partnership (GNEYP) released a report in 2015 stating that there is a total of 2,467 licensed daycare spots in Nanaimo (of these 653 are designated for preschool age children, 710 as before and after school care, and 60 spots for on reserve group daycare). GNEYP states this as increase in available spots by 6.7% since 2013.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Greater Nanaimo Early Years Partnership (GNEYP) Report 2015, developed from Vancouver Island Health Authority resources.
- <sup>xxii</sup> [http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca/files/localreports/Nanaimo\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca/files/localreports/Nanaimo_Report_2014.pdf)
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- <sup>xxxiii</sup> <http://voiceofplay.org/benefits-of-play/>
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> City of Nanaimo Parks and Trails Map 2015.