



Poverty Trends 2021: The Change We Need

Discussion Guide for Faith Groups

Contents

Introduction	1
Guiding Question 1: How will we learn and grow together?	3
Activity 1A: Grounding in the Here & Now	3
Activity 1B: Establishing a Community Covenant	4
Activity 1C: Place-based learning.....	6
Guiding Question 2: What will it take to end poverty in Canada?	6
Activity 2A: Building common language.....	6
Activity 2B: Explaining trends in poverty in Canada	7
Activity 2C: Just responses to poverty in Canada	8
Guiding Question 3: How will our learning make a difference?	10
Activity 3A: Embodied practices of justice and reconciliation.....	10
Activity 3B: Changes in our institutions & communities [of faith].....	12
Activity 3C: Advocating for Systemic Change in Canada.....	13
Guiding Question 4: How will we continue to support one another in seeking justice?	15
Appendix A: Crisis Services (National)	17

CPJ wishes to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Poverty Advisory Group members: Amber Cannon, Brenda Gillingham, Serisha Iyar, Maxine Lacorne, and Noah Lubendo. We also thank the Catherine Donnelly Foundation for their generous support.

Introduction

Welcome! We hope this Poverty Trends Discussion Guide will help generate meaningful reflection, engagement, and change at an individual, community, and systemic level. Please ensure all members of your group have access to the [Poverty Trends 2021](#) and [Poverty Trends 2020](#) reports, as well as the [Policy Recommendations](#) supplement. **Questions in this discussion guide assume participants will have already read both reports.** You may also wish to identify a way to take notes that can be shared with your group, as well as inviting members to record their own personal reflections and questions.

The discussion guide is organized by several guiding questions to frame your conversations in a meaningful and authentic context. The guiding questions also invite you to consider the *processes* and not just the *outcomes* of your group's work together, so we can practice new ways of engaging with one another that are consistent with the principles of justice, reconciliation, and sustainability. That being said, we do hope that these discussions and resources equip and inspire you to take action, so there are suggestions to connect you with existing advocacy movements as well.

Suggested time allocations have been listed for each activity. **We expect that completing all the activities in this discussion guide would require six to seven sessions of about 90 minutes**, plus ongoing opportunities to debrief and reflect on learning and next steps. This assumes that each session would include revisiting the grounding activities and community covenant under Guiding Question 1. Depending on the size of your group and your familiarity with each other and with the issues addressed in the discussion guides, **you can pick and choose the questions and activities that work best for your group and your time commitment.**

You may want to rotate the role of facilitator and, if possible, orient yourselves in a circle when meeting in person. Some groups may also choose to seek out a facilitator skilled in anti-oppressive practices. Depending on the size of your group, you may also want to break into smaller groups at times, or even pairs, to ensure everyone has the opportunity to share and ask questions.

Acknowledging & Reducing the Risk of Harm

Discussing and responding to issues like inequity, poverty, colonialism, white supremacy, ableism, and other forms of systemic oppression can be difficult and draining work. Each of us will experience and engage in these conversations differently depending on our lived experiences.

While these are important and hopefully transformative conversations, there is also the real possibility of further harming participants with lived experience of poverty and other forms of systemic oppression. This is to be distinguished from feelings of discomfort that may be experienced by those recognizing their own privilege or participation in oppressive systems, and is a very real form of trauma caused by experiencing, remembering, and/or recounting

micro- and macro-aggressions and/or violence, sometimes even within a context that claims to be neutral or even equitable.¹

Before beginning your discussion group, please have participants read, “[How to Avoid Doing Harm When You Discuss Race at Work](#).” While this article refers specifically to the experiences of Black Americans engaged in discussions about race in the workplace, we can extend these precautions and best practices to consider how we will conduct our own discussion groups about poverty in Canada. As we explore in our Poverty Trends reports, we cannot talk about poverty in Canada without discussing racism, colonialism, ableism, sexism, and many other forms of systemic oppression.

Often, individuals who experience different forms of systemic oppression – and who are disproportionately impacted by poverty – have their knowledge, experiences and emotions dismissed, denied or suppressed. Even when given the platforms to share their expertise, it can be consumed and demanded repeatedly without concrete outcomes or fair compensation, despite the emotional labour (and in many cases, trauma) that retelling these experiences entails.

Each discussion group or participant may need different strategies and supports to ensure these conversations bring about meaningful change towards equity and reconciliation, rather than perpetuating harmful discourses and practices. The first guiding question of this discussion guide will explore how your group will commit to learning and growing together, but we acknowledge that this exercise is no replacement for the services of a facilitator trained specifically in anti-oppressive practices. The questions in this discussion guide are designed to help your group engage with the information and issues shared in CPJ’s Poverty Trends reports, encouraging personal and communal reflection and action. **Please consider sharing a list of skilled local resource people or contacts that participants can access if they are feeling triggered by these discussions.** We have included the contact information for three national crisis services in [Appendix A](#).

If you would be interested in having a workshop facilitated by Citizens for Public Justice or one of our partners, or should you have any other questions, please contact us at cpj@cpj.ca.

¹ See, for example, this 2015 article, “[Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labor, and Micro-Resistance](#)” by Louwanda Evans and Wendy Leo Moore. *Social Problems*, 2015, 62, 439-454 doi: 10.1093/socpro/spv009

Guiding Question 1: How will we learn and grow together?

We recommend that your group revisits the activities in this first section each time you meet, to cultivate conditions of respect, authenticity, and accountability.

Activity 1A: Grounding in the Here & Now

Suggested time: 5-15 minutes

Take a few minutes at the beginning of your time together to do some deep breathing exercises, notice any tension or discomfort in your bodies, and bring your attention to the present moment and surroundings.

You may wish to begin or close this time with a centring prayer, scripture reading, or guided meditation. There are many contemplative and meditative resources available from various faith traditions; see if you can find some that pay particular attention to the body for these exercises.

Throughout the discussion, practice paying attention to your body's responses (some prompts have been provided throughout this guide).

Invite everyone to "check-in" by answering a short (and non-intrusive) question about how they're coming into this space or some aspect they cherish about their identity. This can help people get to know one another, as well as drawing attention to what each of us brings with us into our discussions.

Sample somatic exercise:

- With your eyes closed, bring your attention to the top of your head and then shift it slowly downwards as though a gentle light or sense of warmth were scanning down your body. Notice as you scan if each part of your body feels open and relaxed, or constricted. Breathe deeply as you slowly bring your attention down to your jaw, shoulders, down your arms to your fingertips; down through your torso; around your hips, down your thighs, through your knees, and down your legs and out your toes. Take a few more deep breaths to bring some openness to any places you felt constriction. Notice any changes you feel in your body after this exercise.

Sample check-in questions:

- Describe how you are feeling coming into this space by using the analogy of water. For example, a quiet pool, a stormy sea, a teardrop, a fire hose, etc.
- Share a food or tradition you associate with your cultural heritage.

- Share how you are feeling coming into this space with a song title or lyric.
- Share a Scripture passage, parable, or person/character that comes to mind as you enter this discussion.

Suggested resources:

- Book: *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem (2017)
An excellent, practical resource for learning about how trauma responses (including defensive reactions) show up in our bodies and how learning to notice and regulate these responses is critical to racial reconciliation and justice. Lots of exercises to practice individually or as a group. Available in paperback, e-book, and audio book formats.
- There are many guided breathing exercises and somatic exercises to be found online. This simple 3-minute video provides visual cues for deep breathing: <https://youtu.be/aNXKjGFUIMs>. This article also provides several somatic exercises: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/somatic-therapy-exercises-for-trauma>.

Activity 1B: Establishing a Community Covenant

Suggested time: 15-20 minutes the first time; 3 minutes to review in subsequent sessions.

This activity establishes some “ground rules” to support your group in engaging in brave, authentic, and respectful dialogue. Ask participants to share what they feel is needed in order for the group to learn and grow together well and record these ideas somewhere where everyone can access them throughout your discussions. As you’re recording, check that people’s suggestions have been accurately captured. When you have finished, check in with the group to ensure everyone is willing to commit to these practices and to hold one another accountable to these commitments (and be held accountable themselves).

Here are some suggested principles you may wish to include or discuss:

- *Honour the dignity and differences of each participant:* Each participant agrees to treat one another with dignity, recognizing our inherent worth; our different experiences, needs, and contributions to the work of justice; and the dynamics of power and privilege within our group.
- *Sharing is an invitation, not an obligation:* Participants should be invited to share, without a sense that they *must* share. In general, participants should not be put on the spot to answer specific questions, though you may employ a talking circle or other methods to ensure everyone has the opportunity to share or pass.

- *Speak from your own experience:* Invite participants to share from their own experiences rather than using or commenting on others' experiences. This helps to keep participants engaged in noticing and working through their own thoughts and reactions, rather than critiquing or advising other people. It also helps to ensure people are not being misrepresented by others speaking on their behalf, and prevents the dismissal of others' experiences by those who do not share them.
- *Choose authenticity over performativity:* Real change requires owning our real thoughts, feelings, reflexes, and behaviours. It can be tempting to try to show how much we know or how committed we are to justice, but this can prevent us (and others) from uncovering and dealing with the ways in which we have internalized systems of inequity and oppression. While no one is expected to share beyond what feels safe to them, perfectionism is not our friend! Consider whether you are speaking or remaining silent to avoid your own discomfort versus doing so out of consideration for someone else's well-being.
- *Distinguish between comfort and safety:* Real learning and growth often requires us to move beyond our comfort zones, particularly when we're discussing challenging topics like power and privilege. At the same time, real trauma and harm, though unintended, are still very possible in the context of these discussions, particularly for those who have experienced systemic oppression and violence. For example, hearing a group member express agreement or sympathy with a harmful belief or stereotype associated with systemic oppression can cause others to feel *unsafe*, whereas hearing someone challenge a belief or practice as being oppressive may make others feel *uncomfortable* without compromising their actual safety. Invite participants to notice when they experience discomfort and practice soothing techniques that allow us to settle our bodies and engage in the hard work of learning and growth. If, at any time, however, anyone feels unsafe, options should be available immediately to stop, take some space, and actively address the safety concern.
- *Choose curiosity over judgment:* If someone shares something with which you disagree, doubt, or have not yourself experienced, adopt a stance of curiosity about what they mean, how they came to that position, as well as what has brought you to your position, rather than responding with judgment; try to avoid making assumptions about others.
- *Share space & share the work:* Be mindful of how much time you are spending talking versus listening; allow others the space, time, and sometimes silence, to share their own contributions. Ensure voices that are typically marginalized are given time and space to be heard and are not dismissed, devalued, "corrected," or tone-policed. Do not expect people with lived experience of poverty and other forms of systemic oppression to do all the teaching, or to soothe the discomfort of people recognizing their own privilege or participation in oppressive systems.

- *Double confidentiality:* As one Advisory Group member put it, “stories stay, lessons leave.” Any personal information shared within this group stays within this group (barring duty to report in case of harm to self or others). If something is shared within this group, do not bring it up outside the group even with the person who shared it, as they may not be comfortable discussing it then. Participants are encouraged to share lessons they have learned through their experiences in this group, but no one else’s personal information or stories should be shared.

Activity 1C: Place-based learning

Suggested time: 10-15 minutes first session, 5 minutes to review or share new learning in subsequent sessions

1. Invite participants to share the names of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples who have inhabited and cared for the lands in which you are meeting since before European contact and continuing on to today. What treaties govern the lands and people where you are meeting and what does that mean for your group? If no treaty was signed, what does that mean for your group? Were there residential schools or Indian hospitals in your area? What Indigenous-led organizations, movements, and/or resource centres exist today in your area? Where there are gaps in your knowledge, commit to learning more and sharing at future meetings.
2. What relationships do members of your group have to local organizations or movements that address systemic inequities and oppression? How might you build accountability and solidarity between your group and these community groups so your learning and actions can help further the shared work of justice and reconciliation?

Guiding Question 2: What will it take to end poverty in Canada?

A reminder that the questions in this discussion guide presume participants have already read through the Poverty Trends 2021 and 2020 reports.

Activity 2A: Building common language

Suggested time: 45-60 minutes

1. Some of the terms used in Poverty Trends 2021 may be unfamiliar. Invite participants to identify any words or concepts that intrigued or confused them, or that they feel are especially critical to define as a group. Collaboratively build your group’s shared understanding of these terms and their origins and supplement with outside resources as necessary. Be mindful of whose voices, cultures, experience, and language are being privileged when deciding on definitions and the meaning of terms.

2. The way we define “poverty” will influence how we try to deal with it. Invite participants to reflect on the different measures used to estimate poverty rates in Canada (see map on page 4 of Poverty Trends 2021).
 - a. What (or who) has shaped your definition of poverty? How does your faith inform your understanding of poverty?
 - b. What aspects of poverty might be overlooked in definitions or measures of poverty? How might the way we define and measure poverty influence how we engage with poverty in our communities? How do you see this playing out in your faith community, specifically?
 - c. How might your definition of poverty affect the way you engage in politics? What feelings come up for you when you think about the interaction of faith and politics?
3. Some of the content in the Poverty Trends reports may evoke strong emotional responses. Name this and invite participants to consider what happened in their bodies (e.g. posture, heart rate, tension, “knots” in your stomach) as they read the report.
 - a. Were there any words, statistics, or anecdotes that elicited a strong reaction?
 - b. How might this relate to your experience and understanding of poverty?
 - c. How might this inform the ways in which you seek to build a more equitable society?

Activity 2B: Explaining trends in poverty in Canada

Suggested time: 45-60 minutes

1. Was there anything in the Poverty Trends 2021 or 2020 reports that surprised you about people’s experiences of poverty in Canada? What trends stood out and what kind of response did they elicit in your body?
2. What did you experience when reading about the connections between colonialism, white supremacy, and poverty in Canada (see Poverty Trends 2021, pgs 5-8)? In particular, how did you feel reading about the Doctrine of Discovery and the role of Christian churches? What hurts? What feels hopeful?
3. Consider some of the statistics shared in Poverty Trends 2020 comparing people’s rights with their lived realities in Canada.

- a. How can you trace the connections between these outcomes and Canada's colonial history?
 - b. How might we address the kinds of myths and stereotypes that can be associated with poverty in ourselves as well as in our institutions, faith communities, and society at large?
4. Imagine you are preparing to meet with other members of your family, faith community, and/or elected officials to discuss poverty in Canada.
- a. What examples might you use to illustrate the systemic nature of poverty in Canada?
 - b. How does your faith community's understanding of poverty, or response to poverty, perpetuate or challenge these trends? Are there faithful alternatives you would propose?
 - c. Does anything scare or excite you about having this conversation? What kinds of resources or support would help you?

Suggested resources:

- Reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) available at <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/#trc-reports>
 - *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*
 - *The Survivors Speak*
- Book: *The Skin We're In* by Desmond Cole (2020). Explores racism in Canada over the course of one year of events and advocacy.
- Reports: *Land Back* (2019) and *Cash Back* (2021) by the Yellowhead Institute available at <https://redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org/> and <https://cashback.yellowheadinstitute.org/> respectively.

Activity 2C: Just responses to poverty in Canada

Suggested time: 75-90 minutes (feel free to break into two sessions)

1. Was there anything in the Poverty Trends 2021 or 2020 reports that surprised you about current responses to poverty in Canada?
2. What might current responses to poverty in Canada imply about the way we, as a society, understand poverty and/or people experiencing poverty? Are there ways these narratives or beliefs show up in our own thinking or behaviours?

3. Imagine you are preparing to meet with other members of your faith community to discuss your own responses to poverty in Canada.
 - a. What examples might you give of current policies or practices that may help some people, but don't address the systemic nature of poverty? Are there some ways that you have tried to provide charity that may not fully respect people's dignity? How might you address people's immediate needs while also addressing the roots of poverty?
 - b. What policies or practices would you suggest your group or community employ to address poverty as a matter of rights and dignity?
 - c. Who is involved in the decision-making processes that determine how your faith community responds to poverty? Who are the people or organizations bringing lived experience of poverty who could inform your decision-making process? Who are the leaders of the First Nations, Inuit, or Métis Peoples where you live? What would it look like for your group to build solidarity with these groups and honour their time and expertise? How could you help amplify the voices and power of people with lived experience of poverty?
4. Has your thinking about responses to poverty changed over time? What contributed to these shifts in perspective? How might this inform the ways we engage with one another (and our broader communities) in seeking to build a more just society?
5. What recommended change to Canadian policy and/or society elicits the most discomfort for you? You may choose to share with the group or just reflect silently on what contributes to this feeling of discomfort or resistance. What recommended change energizes you or makes you feel the most hopeful?
6. Imagine a society in which everyone's inherent rights and dignity are honoured, and people live in balance with our natural environment and ecosystems. Close your eyes and use your five senses to describe what you might experience as you make your way through your own local community or place of worship. What has changed? What has stayed the same? What about this scenario feels possible or impossible?

Suggested resources:

- Report: *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (2015) available at <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>
- Report: *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019) available at <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
- Website: Status updates on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action available at: <https://indigenouswatchdog.org/latest-status-updates/>

- Reports: *Land Back* (2019) and *Cash Back* (2021) by the Yellowhead Institute available at <https://redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org/> and <https://cashback.yellowheadinstitute.org/> respectively.
- Report: *Alternative Federal Budget 2022* by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) available at <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/alternative-federal-budget-2022>
- Report: *No One Left Behind: Strategies for an Inclusive Recovery* (2021) by Campaign 2000 available at <https://campaign2000.ca/no-one-left-behind-strategies-for-an-inclusive-recovery/>
- Book: *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013).
- Book: *A Good War* by Seth Klein (2020).
- Book: *Journeys to Justice: Reflections on Canadian Christian Activism* by Joe Gunn & Citizens for Public Justice (2018), available at <https://cpj.ca/journeys-justice/>

Guiding Question 3: How will our learning make a difference?

It is important to take time to sit with the truths we are learning so we can move forward with greater understanding and act in solidarity with others advocating for justice. Ultimately, we want our deepened or changed understanding to transform our hearts, minds, and bodies; our communities; and our society at large.

Activity 3A: Embodied practices of justice and reconciliation

Suggested time: 60 minutes

Western society often emphasizes and privileges intellectual ways of knowing over emotional, somatic, or other experiential ways of knowing. Cultivating new ways of relating to one another and to our surrounding environments is part of seeking justice together. The following activities explore how we can become more attuned to our bodies and physical environment, noticing how our bodies respond in various situations, and the importance of physical presence and solidarity in seeking justice and reconciliation.

1. What are some practices or routines that you could cultivate as a community to encourage awareness of your bodies? Are there resources and practices that could be shared? How can you, as a group, invest in these practices and resources sustainably to support one another in dealing with trauma or discomfort, both in real-life situations and in discussions about challenging topics?
2. If possible, spend some time outside either on your own or as a group. Feel the ground supporting you. Notice the sounds, smells, sights, and feel of your surroundings. Consider how you are connected through your breathing, the cycles of life, your daily interactions with the natural environment and ecosystems where you live.

- a. What do you appreciate the most about your natural surroundings? What makes you feel connected to this place? What makes you feel disconnected? What might you do as a group to cultivate a sense of connection between your community and your natural environment?
 - b. Do you know of, and/or live in, the same lands as your ancestors? How does this proximity or distance impact your identity and experiences? How might you, as a group, support one another in cultivating greater connection to the lands of your ancestors (whether you live near or far)? *This may be a heavy question for some. Consider providing some advance notice about this question if you choose to discuss it in your group and ask if there are specific supports or opportunities for debriefing that may be helpful.*
 - c. Who are the First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis Peoples that have traditionally lived and continue to live in the lands where you live, work, and play?² What do you know of the lives and experiences of local Indigenous Peoples pre-European contact? What are some examples of the impacts of colonialism experienced locally today? What are some examples of Indigenous resistance and leadership?
 - d. What would it require for you as individuals and for your faith community to honour and advocate for the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples? What is your role in honouring the treaties that cover these lands (if applicable)?
3. How might you show up physically to exercise solidarity with people experiencing poverty and other intersecting forms of systemic inequity or oppression in your community? What practices might you cultivate individually and as a faith community to seek justice in solidarity with others? What kinds of relationship-building, learning and support might be required beforehand?
 4. How might individual and institutional/organizational financial decisions interact with issues of justice, sustainability, and reconciliation? This could include day-to-day spending, investments, budgeting, charitable giving, contracts, etc.
 5. As a community, are you able to commit to continuing this work? How will your community commit to supporting one another so you can engage in this work sustainably? Consider what resources you have available to contribute to this work, and how you will ensure that those with lived experience are guiding your decision-making processes.

²See, for example, this article by archeologist Joanne Hammond about the evidence that Kamloops and the entire Thomson Valley have been occupied since the last Ice Age: <https://www.kamloopsthisweek.com/community/dig-it-the-proof-is-under-the-pavement-4440792>

Activity 3B: Changes in our institutions & communities [of faith]

Suggested time: 60 minutes

1. Does your faith community have any statements or policies outlining a particular understanding of poverty and/or systemic oppression?
 - a. If so, do you feel there is strong alignment between these statements or policies and the ways in which your community operates?
 - b. If not, what stances might be implied by the internal and external practices of the faith community?
 - c. Whether they are explicit or implicit, have the policies and practices of your faith community been informed by people's lived experience of poverty and other intersecting forms of systemic oppression?
 - d. What are the demographics of your faith community and how has this been shaped by where you live, where people have come from, why people have come to live here, etc.? Do you observe examples of racial and/or cultural segregation within your community? What systems of oppression may be contributing to this phenomenon?
2. How are resources and power held and/or distributed within your faith community? Consider, for example, how budgets and resources are allocated, decision-making processes, representation among staff, volunteers, community members.
 - a. How has the history of your faith community led to this distribution of resources and power? How has your faith community's historical and contemporary theology contributed to these decisions?
 - b. How might this distribution perpetuate or disrupt the inequitable sharing of wealth and power in Canadian society?
 - c. How might you, as a community, model just and equitable practices and centre the voices of people who are typically marginalized?
3. How might you invite accountability and create pathways for restitution and reconciliation where necessary within your faith community?

Suggested resources:

A skilled facilitator can be an invaluable investment in helping your community understand, explore, and shape internal and external policies and practices that can cultivate a more just and sustainable society. We suggest you look for someone skilled in trauma-informed, anti-oppressive and/or decolonial approaches, and that you give consideration to the

membership and power dynamics within your own community. It is important that people experiencing systemic oppression and poverty on a daily basis feel seen and supported by the facilitator, and can trust them with these difficult and potentially triggering conversations.

It can also be helpful to find a facilitator who is familiar with the particular context of your faith community so they can help you navigate common challenges and explore hopeful alternatives and helpful resources. CPJ is grateful for the skilled facilitation skills of Bernadette Arthur and [Co:Culture Collective](#) in our own journey of developing more equitable and anti-oppressive internal policies and practices.

Individuals may also benefit from the support of the following services:

- **Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World** - The GDEIB helps organizations determine strategy and measure progress in managing diversity and fostering inclusion. It is a free downloadable PDF that can be used by submitting the User Agreement. To properly view and print the GDEIB, you will need Adobe Acrobat. Available online at <https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/gdib/>
- **Indian Residential School Survivors and Family: 1-866-925-4419**
The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line is available 24-hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their Residential school experience.
- **Canada Suicide Prevention Service: 1-833-456-4566**
The CSPS helpline is available 24/7/365 to “help people feel safer and explore ways to cope with suicidal ideation.”
- **Crisis Services Canada - resources for marginalized groups & allies:**
<https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/resources-for-marginalized-communities-and-allies/>

Activity 3C: Advocating for Systemic Change in Canada

Suggested time: 45-60 minutes

1. Review the [Policy Recommendations and Advocacy](#) supplemental resource to the Poverty Trends 2021 report. What are the issues that generate the most energy and commitment within your community? What are the pressing needs and underlying causes that need to be addressed?
2. What experience do members of your group have in engaging with elected officials or other policy decision-makers?

- a. Are there stories you can share of success, connection, or overcoming obstacles?
 - b. What questions, reservations, or concerns do group members have about engaging in politics and/or advocacy in general? Where might you look for the guidance and support you need?
3. What experience do members of your group have in engaging with media outlets (local, regional, or national) to advocate for change?
- a. Are there stories you can share of success, connection, or overcoming obstacles?
 - b. What questions, reservations, or concerns do group members have about engaging in politics and/or advocacy in general? Where might you look for the guidance and support you need?
4. How could you as a faith community work towards a more just, equitable, and sustainable society in solidarity with other communities? Consider what this might look like at a community level and imagine how it could build up to the national level in solidarity with other movements.
- a. Who are the stakeholders (e.g. community members, elders, elected officials, people with lived experience, business owners, people in positions of authority, service providers, etc.) connected to this issue? What relationships might you cultivate and how might you envision working together?
 - b. What are the unique skills, gifts, spheres of influence, and/or expertise that your group (and wider community) can contribute to justice issues? What are some specific sectors where you feel you could have an impact? What kind of people power or resources can you leverage to build your collective impact?
 - c. Who else within or beyond your community might share a similar vision or set of values? How could you learn from and amplify their work or collaborate?
 - d. Where might you find or create opportunities to provide input into decision-making processes in your community, region, or at the national level?

Suggested Resources:

- **CPJ's Advocacy Toolkit** - <https://cpj.ca/cpjs-advocacy-toolkit/>
This toolkit was designed to help you advocate for change by influencing the legislative process. This guide provides tools for people with various levels of experience, with useful information about different methods of advocacy, when to use each, and how to voice concerns most effectively. Printed copies of the Advocacy Toolkit can be purchased for \$15 (shipping included) with group rates available.

Digital versions can also be downloaded free of charge by section from the website.

- **Chew on This! campaign:** ChewOnThis.ca

CPJ is a proud co-lead of Dignity for All, a coalition of community organizations, faith communities, and citizens calling for an end to poverty in Canada. October 17 is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Each year on this day, our annual *Chew on This!* campaign mobilizes people from across Canada to call on the Government of Canada to do what is legally and morally required to uphold and protect the rights of people experiencing poverty and other intersecting forms of systemic oppression in Canada.

In 2021, the Chew on This! Campaign launched a call to all MPs and Senators to sign a pledge committing to work together to establish targets, timelines, and action plans that would address the underlying inequities that cause and perpetuate poverty. Find out more and consider asking your local MP to sign the pledge by visiting the *Chew on This!* website, and stay tuned for details about our 2022 campaign.

- **Sign up for CPJ's newsletter** - <https://cpj.ca/justice-news/>

Sign up for our e-newsletter to get updates on campaigns, petitions, resources and other ways to promote justice with CPJ and our partners. You can also follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

- Connect with local, regional, or national grassroots movements and other advocacy partners. Here are a few suggestions at the national level:

- Campaign 2000: Campaign to End Child and Family Poverty
- Canada Without Poverty
- Leading in Colour
- Climate Action Network - Réseau action climat Canada
- Native Women's Association of Canada
- Food Secure Canada
- KAIROS Canada
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- National Right to Housing Network
- Canadians for Tax Fairness
- DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada
- ACORN Canada (housing & tenant rights)
- Canadian Council for Refugees

Guiding Question 4: How will we continue to support one another in seeking justice?

After digging into such heavy subjects and exploring ways you could engage in building a more equitable and sustainable future, it is important to continue to cultivate relationships of support, accountability, ongoing learning, and care. **Some participants may also need to debrief with a skilled professional** (either individually, or as a group). If your group has access to such support, or if the costs associated with such support could be covered by your group, please make this information available to all participants. We have included the contact information for three national crisis services in [Appendix A](#).

We suggest that discussion groups schedule some time for follow-up reflection after going through this discussion guide. Maybe you will check in monthly as a group. Maybe you will plan one-on-one or small group check-ins periodically.

Here are some suggested questions for ongoing reflection:

- What have you noticed in the way your body physically responds to the ideas and questions shared throughout these discussions? Has noticing this helped you in any way?
- Did anything surprise you about your experience participating in this discussion group? What do you feel you took away from this experience? What did you appreciate the most? What did you find the most challenging?
- How has participating in these discussions changed your understanding of various systems of oppression and poverty? Of yourself and your own experiences of oppression and privilege?
- What are some ways in which you now feel you can work to dismantle systems of oppression from the individual level (i.e. within yourself) to the societal level? How might this play out in your own life, your family, your friendships, your faith community, school or workplace, or other community groups?
- How are you inviting accountability into your journey of learning and seeking justice? How are you acting in solidarity with communities and movements of people with lived experience of poverty and systemic oppression? Were there any moments in your group's discussion that you felt called out or called in, or felt the need to call someone else out or in?
- What kind of support are you looking for from members of this group (and/or beyond) as you continue to learn and act for a more just and sustainable society? What have you found most helpful? Was there anything intended to help that actually caused harm, and what could be done about that?

If at any time, you would be willing to share your reflections or experiences using this discussion guide with CPJ, we would be grateful to hear from you!

Please consider sharing your feedback at <https://cpj.ca/poverty-trends-evaluation-form/>

You are also welcome to contact us at cpj@cpj.ca.

Appendix A: Crisis Services (National)

- **Indian Residential School Survivors and Family: 1-866-925-4419**
The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line is available 24-hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their Residential school experience.
- **Canada Suicide Prevention Service: 1-833-456-4566**
The CSPA helpline is available 24/7/365 to “help people feel safer and explore ways to cope with suicidal ideation.”
- **Crisis Services Canada - resources for marginalized groups & allies:**
<https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/resources-for-marginalized-communities-and-allies/>