



McMaster-Community Poverty Initiative

New Year 2013/14 Update

The McMaster Community Poverty Initiative is a group of faculty, staff, and students who are working to build bridges between McMaster and the Hamilton community particularly around poverty reduction. The MCPI is active in the areas of education, research, and advocacy. The MCPI receives funding from the Office of the Vice-President, Research.

Students from all Faculties “Do the Math”. This year’s Do the Math campaign was a great success. Thirty-nine students representing all campus Faculties took part in the October week-long food bank diet in order to draw attention to the low social assistance rates in Ontario that drive families to food banks. Students took part in daily reflections that were intended to raise awareness about the links between poverty and health. You can see samples of their reflections [here](#). If you are interested in getting more information about the Do the Math campaign, visit [this site](#) and join the call for increasing social assistance rates.

Featured presenter: Dr. Valerie Tarasuk, Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto presented: Food Insecurity in Our Communities to an audience of 80 people during the Do the Math week. Dr. Tarasuk’s compelling presentation used longitudinal Canadian Community Health Survey data to compare cities across Canada and found higher than expected rates of food insecurity. Interestingly, Hamilton’s food insecurity has improved over the last decade in noted contrast to most jurisdictions across Canada. You can find Dr. Tarasuk’s presentation on the MCPI website (www.mcmaster.ca/povertyinitiative) under Projects and Events. The full report by Dr. Tarasuk will be released nationally on Thursday, February 6. The event was co-sponsored by OPIRG McMaster.

Provincial poverty reduction strategy consultations come to Hamilton. The MCPI took part in the Province Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy consultations that came to McMaster Innovation Park on September 13. There were 60 people attending, representing a wide range of organizations and individuals – all interested in poverty reduction. The consultation was hosted by the Honorable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Community and Social Services. The government is hosting consultations to inform the next iteration of the Province’s Poverty Reduction Strategy. There were common themes heard about immediate increases to social assistance rates, developing a low income extended benefit plan, and increasing minimum wage. More information on the consultation is available on the Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy [website](#).

Local living wage research hones in on both employers and employees. The MCPI has partnered with Dr. Benson Honig, Professor, DeGroot School of Business, and his doctoral student, Elly Zang, to carry out research on the impact of a living wage on area businesses and employees. The research, which is expected to be carried out over the course of this year, is being funded through a SSHRC Partnership Grant called Communities First: Increasing Community Engagement (CF:ICE). Carleton University is the administrative lead for this grant, with the MCPI and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction being local partners.

Speakers Bureau for people with lived experience of poverty in development. The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is developing a Speaker's Bureau for people with lived experience of poverty. Once recruitment and training is complete, there will be trained speakers who will be available for speaking engagements. This could be an excellent match for professors who are looking for guest speakers for their classes. The HRPR is hoping to have speakers ready by spring 2014. More information is available [here](#).

The McMaster Discovery Program completes its 3rd course offering. The Discovery Program is a university-level non-credit course offered to local community members who have experienced barriers to education. The most recent course was taught by Dr. Ann Herring, Anthropology, and was called "Plagues and Peoples of Hamilton". The 22 students came from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages completed projects in the coming weeks, and graduated on December 14, from 1 pm – 3 pm, in Council Chambers at McMaster. The Discovery Program is offered with the support of the Office of the President, McMaster, the Hamilton Community Foundation, and the City of Hamilton and administered through the McMaster Arts and Science program.

Upcoming Events

February 2014: Information Lost – How the Changes to the Census and Loss of Other Public Surveys Will Shape Our Future.

March 2014: Call for Submissions Released: Graduate Research on Local Poverty Related Issues.

April 2014: Graduate Presentation: Music outreach as a means of increasing community engagement and social capital for children and youth at-risk – Kate Einarson, Department of Psychology.

April 2014: Poster Demonstration: The MCPI is recruiting student poster projects with research or info-graphics related to poverty reduction and local communities for an event in the spring. More Information [HERE](#).

The MCPI is looking for Steering Committee members. If you are interested, please let us know at macpovertyinitiative@gmail.com. We meet monthly for two hours.

If you would like to be part of our regular mailing list (events and updates), please let us know at macpovertyinitiative@gmail.com.