

Event Ideas

As long as the focus remains on poverty and homelessness within your local community as well as in BC and Canada, the event details are up to you. Here are some examples, roughly ordered from minimum to maximum effort, but feel free to come up with your own ideas:

- Wear the Poverty Olympic Gold medals (highlighting BC's record of 'wins' in relation to poverty) all day wherever you go
- Arrange to meet with government representatives in your community
- 'Run' (or march) with a low-cost Torch (we have a design made from a toilet plunger), banners and placards, handing out leaflets along the way
 - the march could simply take place along a high-traffic road or it could have a specific departure and arrival point, such as, from a well-known social service/community centre to the MLA's office
 - the march could be livened up by cross-country skiing (if you live in a snowy region), pushing shopping carts, wearing costumes as the Poverty Olympic mascots, etc
 - or alternatively, for a more sombre feel, you could carry candles and march in silence (this would be particularly effective in those communities where it is dark for much of the day at this time of year)
- Perform as a Complaints Choir – put all your poverty woes to music and sing the message out loud and clear
- Perform a street theatre skit, perhaps with involvement from low-income members of your community
- Organise a free outdoor concert with local musicians
- Organise your very own Poverty Olympics within your local community, with Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Games (see the examples from previous Poverty Olympics below), mascots, and official sponsors

Previous Poverty Olympic Games

Curling: Sweeping aside poverty in a world-class Olympic City

Team VANOC: players supporting the Olympic industry, including government partners (Political Pete), business interests (Corporate Corrina), and security forces (Security Steve). Team Poverty: people living below the poverty line, including “Sarah Single-Mom,” “Homeless Harold,” and “Disabled Derek.”

Both teams experience “rough spots” on the ice. Team VANOC’s first rock is blocked by pennies representing deficit of capital for completion of infrastructure sites. But, their rock smoothly makes it to the circle, thanks to Political Pete, who’s pushing a bail out broom to clear the financial deficit. Their second rock glides into the centre with corporate media grease. Their final rock, thrown by Security Steve, is blocked by homeless people sleeping on the street, panhandlers, even some Olympic protesters. Team VANOC sweeps the people away with new by-law brooms. The rock moves smoothly into the circle.

For Team Poverty, all three rocks are disqualified by the rough spots on the ice. The first rock is blocked by “welfare sand,” representing consistently low welfare rates. Their second rock, thrown by Homeless Harold, gets caught up in red tape, representing bureaucratic delay and discouragement, especially when trying to get out of homelessness. Team Poverty’s last rock is stopped by a rope that says, “eviction and rent increase,” representing real estate and housing interests.

Poverty Line High Jump

A top-level government bureaucrat sets the “poverty line” bar for athletes to jump over. The athletes include Nancy Employable, Joe Average, Rachelle Single Mom, and Crystal Refugee. The “top quality” mats on which the athletes land have been gathered from homeless shelter programs.

Announcer: “Our first athlete to approach the bar is **Nancy Employable**, hailing from the region of Basic Welfare Rates. Nancy fell into difficult personal circumstances and lost her job when the company she worked for downsized. She couldn’t find more work, lost her place of residence, slept in shelters while waiting to get on basic welfare, and now survives on \$610 per month – trying to pull herself up by her bootstraps. Despite living in substandard conditions (she shares a room with cockroaches and rats), and spending time standing in food lines, she has been training for this event consistently. Oh, too bad! She fell far below the poverty line bar, coming in at only \$7,320 per year. That’s not even half way up to the bar. Better luck next Olympics.”

Housing hurdles

You need: Announcer

3-4 athletes dressed as homeless people

3-4 hurdle structures labeled “high rents,” “no vacancies,” “bedbugs and mice” etc.

Announcer intro's athletes and says, “get ready, set, go!” Athletes start running and stumble over hurdles. As athletes fall down, stopped from getting housing, announcer explains each label on hurdles: “average rent for 1 bedroom apartment is about \$700 but person only gets \$375 on welfare” “Vacancy rate is less than 1 %; only cheap places full of vermin” etc. At the end no one wins and announcer calls for immediate national housing strategy.

Skating around poverty

You need: announcer

2 athletes dressed as Campbell and Harper (find a photo of each on internet, then print and enlarge it, paste on cardboard and cut eye holes; make cardboard skates in same way, dress them in track suits)

4 other people to sit on stage at 4 points along skating oval with signs that say things like “worst poverty in Canada for 6 years in a row”; “no national housing strategy”; “10-15,000 homeless in BC alone”; “poverty causes 10 lost years of life”

Announcer announces that race begins and contestants literally skate around each person holding up a stat sign. Announcer says “there's Campbell skating around the worst poverty record in Canada for six years running”; “Oh, there's Harper, skating round homelessness”, etc, At the end it can be a tie, they both skate around all the poverty issues equally.