

# VOICES

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Of Lived Experience Dufferin

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LIVED EXPERIENCE

# DUFFERIN

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Our work is connected to the values and mission of The Dufferin County Equity Collaborative (DCEC). The vision for a PWLE group was formed in DCEC and became possible with United Way funding

A group of 7 PWLE in Dufferin County formed and began first meeting before Christmas. Since then, two have left and two new members have joined (total 7)

DCEC formed in 2018

September 2022

December 2022

July 2022

Our coordinator, group facilitator/recruiter, and framework developer, Siobhan Bonisteel was hired

We are deeply in development of our framework (a lot of work has been produced), we've identified our 6 focus areas, we have developed our internal structure and guidelines. We are ready to offer our voice to DCEC members, we are ready to engage DCEC working groups with a focus on homelessness (more to come!)

# Meet Siobhan

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Siobhan Bonisteel has over a 15 years in the non-profit sector working on the grassroots level, in management, strategic visioning, and program development including managing a food bank and leading teams that have grown over 250,000 servings of food for those living in poverty.

Current PhD in Environmental Science at the University of Toronto. Siobhan has worked with many organizations and community groups to create meaningful community programming, strategic plans, and initiatives of all kinds with a goal to build community, end poverty, and support the environment.



SIOBHAN BONISTEEL

# About



**VOICES of Lived Experience Dufferin** is an equity-based poverty advocacy group consisting of people with lived experience of poverty (PWLE).

**It is supported by the DCEC** and its members, as well as community partners including HCIA. In 2022, VOICES was established with the goal of increasing equity for people who live in poverty in Dufferin County by involving PWLE in community decision-making processes (Crawford et al., 2020; Staley & Abbey-Vital, 2019).

**Research** has shown that involving PWLE in such processes leads to more effective and relevant solutions to complex social problems (Raja, 2018), while also breaking down barriers and reducing stigma associated with poverty (Minkler, 2005).

# Areas of Focus



## Our Current Focus:

1. **Group Health & Learning** (we have participated in on-line workshops and diversity training to inform our work)
2. **Consulting** – Offering a Voice of Lived Experience
3. **Development of a Framework of Tool Kit + Recommended Resources** for organizations working with PWLE. This includes community survey for those experiencing homeless
4. **Changing Perceptions of Poverty** – Community Learning & Sharing Our Stories (Framework & Conversation Café)
5. **Eventual sharing** of our Internal Processes/Methodologies with Other PWLE Groups + Resources
6. **Support DCEC Priority Pillars & Working Groups** with consultations/collaborations

# Connect



## Consulting – Offering a Voice of Lived Experience

We work with our community of DCEC Members to provide feedback on initiatives, programs, organizational strategic planning, community issues, etc. that impact people who live in poverty in order to offer a lens of experience. Member organizations of DCEC can contact our coordinator with a request. Our coordinator brings the work to our group meetings, and we work to produce a report that answers your request. We act like an independent expert consultant group. Organizations that we produce reports for are not obligated to apply feedback, although we hope our response is meaningful.

Approximately 12% of the population in Dufferin County lives in poverty, with rates highest in Orangeville and Shelburne, disproportionately impacting single-parent families, Indigenous peoples, and recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2016). Having meaningful feedback from this large percentage of the community is urgently needed to make a positive and lasting impact. We feel that our VOICES group is vital to the quality of programs and services for the vulnerable population of our community and is helping to lead the way for the community.

For consultation for VOICES you must be a member agency of DCEC.

Email questions and requests to: [livedexperience@dcmoves.org](mailto:livedexperience@dcmoves.org)