



# **RURAL MUNICIPALITIES : THE CHALLENGE TO TALK ABOUT POVERTY**

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***CPHA Conference Public Health 2019***

***Ottawa, April 30 - May 2 2019***



# Outline

- Background
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  - Implications for policy, practice and future research
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# Background

- ▶ Healthy Communities is a health promotion strategy that supports local action on the determinants of health among which **poverty** is a very central one
- ▶ As part of a research project funded by CIHR-FQRS (2015-2018), we sought to understand how rural municipalities members of the Quebec Network of Healthy Cities and small towns (*RQVVS- Réseau Québécois des villes et villages en santé*):
  - ▶ **Perceive poverty** (this presentation)
  - ▶ **Address poverty issues** (poster tomorrow)



# Methodology (1/2)

- ▶ A collaborative and qualitative research project
- ▶ Case study methodological approach (based on Rosenberg & Yates, 2007)
- ▶ Two phases of data collection
  - ▶ 19 semi-directed individual interviews with key informants active in RQVVS and a day seminar
  - ▶ 4 case studies of poverty-reduction initiatives conducted by 4 RQVVS member municipalities
    - ▶ 29 individual and 7 group interviews (55 people: local activists, municipal councillors, various stakeholders, users of services); Review of documents relating to each case; Field observations



# Methodology (2/2)

- ▶ We used diverse qualitative analysis strategies
  - ▶ Case by case thematic analysis
  - ▶ Cross-case thematic analysis
  - ▶ knowledge-interchange (*croisements de savoirs*) involving different types of expertise ( day to day living, Practice, policy and Academic researchers).
  
- ▶ Conclusion and dissemination
  - ▶ Various dissemination activities
  - ▶ Development of an advocacy and awareness tool box for elected officials in rural municipalities



# Key findings (1/4)

- ▶ According to our informants, very few municipalities member of the RQVVS addressed directly poverty reduction
- ▶ The three main ways to talk about poverty by those interviewed were:
  - ▶ **People's poverty** (often hidden and stigmatizing, different forms)  
*"In rural areas, poor people don't lie under bridges but on their couch"*
  - ▶ **Communities' poverty** (loss of local services and jobs)
  - ▶ **The poverty of municipalities as administrative entities** (low financial capacity )

## Key findings (2/4)

- The fight against poverty and exclusion **is rarely named as such** in the municipal environment - they refer most often to specific issues.
- **Reluctance for some** to use the term poverty in the local municipal context. The tendency to use other terms such as "**devitalisation**"  
*«It's an abstract concept that does not fit with the image people have of municipal life.»*
- **An individualistic vision of poverty** and the usual stereotypes associated with it are very present according to some informants  
*«I would say that it is not fashionable at all the fight against poverty and exclusion, because if people are poor, it is [seen] as their fault : its because they are lazy, etc. [...] I've been active in politics for many years and I've never seen that discourse so heavily present.»*



## Key findings (3/4)

- ▶ Rural municipalities are little equipped to **measure** the extent of poverty in their environment
- ▶ A common perception exists that it is the responsibility of other levels of government (regional or provincial) and that **municipalities do not have a leadership and social role in this area**

*" We are already doing things to give poor people a little boost. We can not do more. " We have so many issues to deal with. We can not add that of poverty. "*



## Key findings (4/4)

- ▶ **The participation of people living in poverty** to municipal decisions impacting on them **is extremely rare and thus can not influence poverty perception.**

*"When we go to the municipal council, the question period always deals with the question of budgets [...] Citizens are not necessarily worried about people's poverty. Poor people are not necessarily organized to properly present their concerns."*

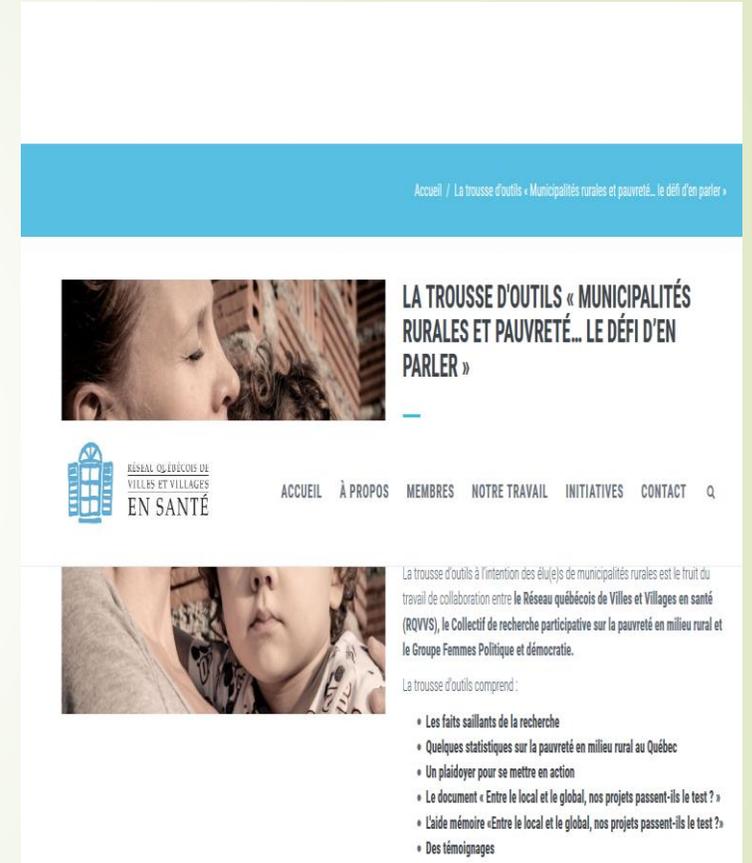
# Implications for policy, practice and future research (1/2)

- Limits of this study
- The fight against poverty is part of the basis of the VVS approach (DeLeeuw and Simos, 2017). However the links are not automatic.
- Using the research findings, we developed an **advocacy toolbox**

**RECOGNIZE:** empower rural municipalities to recognize the presence of poverty in their environment and to open a dialogue on the issue

**INCLUDE:** increase the participation of people living in poverty in the implementation of initiatives and decisions to improve their conditions and quality of life

**ACT:** act locally while paying attention to national public policies that can significantly impact poverty



The screenshot shows the website for the 'LA TROUSSE D'OUTILS « MUNICIPALITÉS RURALES ET PAUVRETÉ... LE DÉFI D'EN PARLER »'. The page features a blue header with the text 'Accueil / La trousse d'outils « Municipalités rurales et pauvreté... le défi d'en parler »'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'ACCUEIL', 'À PROPOS', 'MEMBRES', 'NOTRE TRAVAIL', 'INITIATIVES', and 'CONTACT'. The main content area includes a large image of a woman and child, and a list of items included in the toolbox: 'Les faits saillants de la recherche', 'Quelques statistiques sur la pauvreté en milieu rural au Québec', 'Un plaidoyer pour se mettre en action', 'Le document « Entre le local et le global, nos projets passent-ils le test ? »', 'L'aide mémoire « Entre le local et le global, nos projets passent-ils le test ? »', and 'Des témoignages'.

<https://rqvvs.qc.ca/outils-et-publications/outil/la-trousse-d-outils-municipalites-rurales-et-pauvrete-le-defi-d-en-parler>

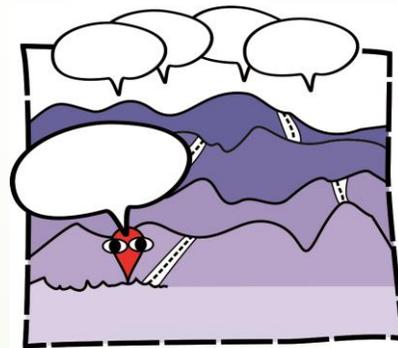


# Implications for policy, practice and future research (2/2)

Several lines of inquiry are possible for further research. There is a need to

- Document the challenge to talk about poverty in rural areas and understand the stigma and public perceptions around it
- Evaluate municipal poverty reduction strategies which are still fairly emergent in Canada especially in rural communities.
- Better understand the different forms of poverty by taking into account the diversity of rural areas and reflect on indicators that reflect the multiple dimensions of poverty to be able to monitor and evaluate the evolution.
- Explore how we can meaningfully engage people with lived experience in the poverty reduction strategies.

# The research partners



COLLECTIF  
de recherche participative  
sur la pauvreté en milieu rural





# The research team (operational group)

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- ▶ Sophie Dupéré, professeure, Faculté des sciences infirmières, Université Laval;
- ▶ Élise Landry, agente de planification, de programmation et de recherche, Institut national de santé publique (2015-2017)
- ▶ Marc-André Bonneau, étudiant, M. Sc. Santé communautaire, Université Laval (2016-2018)
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- Gérard Divay (École nationale d'administration publique),
- Chloé Dodinot et Ariane Pichette Neveu (Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé),
- Trevor Hancock (University of Victoria),
- Vivian Labrie (chercheure autonome),
- Esther Lapointe et Katie Gagnon (Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie),
- Julie Lévesque (Institut national de santé publique),
- Nadine Maltais (Institut national de santé publique),
- André-Anne Parent (Université de Montréal),
- Julie Richard (Université Laval),
- Jean Tremblay (Institut national de santé publique)



# Acknowledgments



- ▶ This project was jointly funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Santé (FRQS)* through their *Intervention Research in Population Health* program
- ▶ Thanks to all the individuals and organisations which took part in the two phases of the project, especially the four following municipalities
  - ▶ LEBEL-SUR-QUÉVILLON
  - ▶ NOTRE-DAME-DE-HAM
  - ▶ ROUYN-NORANDA
  - ▶ SAINT-PASCAL

# Disclosure Statement

- I have no affiliation (financial or otherwise) with a pharmaceutical, medical device or communications organization.