

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

Glace Bay GPI - Tracking the Genuine Progress of Our Community

From coal mines to collective community action

To participate in and enhance the quality of a community, you first need to know about its customs, and quirks. As in any healthy relationship, those involved need to know the strengths and weaknesses of their partners.

There are any number of ways to measure the progress of a community, but the usual way is to look at its economic conditions – cost of living, household incomes, the unemployment rate, job creation and so on. No doubt, these are very important issues, but genuine progress means something more. Genuine progress also includes having a safe and caring community, with healthy people, a strong voluntary sector, and a sustainable future. The Genuine Progress Index (GPI) attempts to measure things that make life worthwhile.

According to Angus MacIntyre, author of Jobs Are Not the Answer – But Then What Is?, 2004, *“The obsession with economic growth and its confusion with quality of life have led us down a dangerous and self-destructive path. It is doubtful we will leave our children a better legacy until we stop gauging our wellbeing and prosperity by how fast the economy is growing.”*

GPI Atlantic is a non-profit, non-government research organization which tracks the wellbeing of the Atlantic provinces. In 1998, GPI Atlantic was approached by a citizens’ group in Kings County, N.S. to assist in developing ways to measure the wellbeing of that community. Glace Bay was chosen as a second site because people in this area also expressed concern for their future, and marked differences between the two communities made for interesting comparisons. A steering group in each community helped bring the project to life. The hope was to learn more about Glace Bay, its strengths and challenges, and to use that information to provide more focused action to improve community wellbeing in the future.

Researchers distributed a detailed 78-page survey to a random sample of Glace Bay residents in 2001. Over 1,700 completed surveys were returned, a response rate of well over 80 per cent. The research for this project has been community-driven since the beginning, including support from an extensive variety of partners and from the people who took the time to complete the survey.

The survey was designed to show the links among employment, health, volunteering, personal values, time usage, the peacefulness of the community, use of the environment, and many other variables. Data collection was completed, for the most part, in 2001. No other survey in Canada gives as much information at the community level. Over two million pieces of data were collected in Glace Bay alone. One Glace Bay respondent wrote on the survey, “I can’t imagine that all these questions and answers will be read.” But they were.



Collection and analysis of the completed surveys has taken a long time – and that was just the first step. The purpose of this progress report is to bring the ideas and issues raised by residents of Glace Bay back to the entire community. One respondent said, “We have been surveyed to death here in Glace Bay since the fifties. None of these surveys ever did a bit of good for anyone in Glace Bay.” But this survey will not sit idle. It has been administered by the community for

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- Angus MacIntyre

the community, and it belongs to us – not to government or to anyone else. It’s our way of learning about ourselves and empowering ourselves to act together to improve our wellbeing.

In examining all aspects of life in Glace Bay, the objective of the study is to provide detailed information, so that all residents can work toward developing a healthy and sustainable community. While signalling problems that exist, the survey also showed much hope and strength still alive in the town. All of us who worked on the project hope this newsletter will stimulate future collective action. The results already show that Glace Bay is a community where people are willing to help each other – a community working for renewal.

If anything in this newsletter gives you ideas about what we can do ourselves to create a better and healthier Glace Bay, write to us at: glacebaygpi@hotmail.com.

Main Areas of Concern

The end of the Glace Bay GPI survey contained three, open-ended questions so respondents could expand on any topic or comment on any area that had been overlooked in the earlier questions. Five main areas of concern emerged from the over 420 hand-written responses: employment, health care, water quality, appearance of the community, and youth.

Employment is covered in this progress report, as it is a key engine of the community. About three-quarters of the written responses mentioned the need for job creation. Many felt the residents of Glace Bay are willing to work, but need the opportunity. “We have many smart people here who move on because right now there is no future,” stated one resident. Those who wrote about unemployment expressed their frustration and sadness at the lack of jobs and at families being split up. We welcome your feedback on this issue.

Almost half of the respondents mentioned the need for better health care. The focus on health care was specifically related to the lack of staff. As one respondent stated, “Better healthcare means more doctors, nurses and support services.” Some suggested the health of Glace Bay residents could be improved through education and exercise programs. Do you think the situation has changed?

“If we do not take some kind of pride in the town as adults, how can we expect our children and grandchildren to have pride?”

Water quality was another main concern when the GPI data were collected in 2001. The opening of the new water treatment plant in 2003 has gone a long way toward solving the water quality problem. In 2001, for example, residents reported that clothes would occasionally turn brown in the washing machine.

A quarter of the respondents said an improvement to Glace Bay would come from just cleaning up the community’s overall look. Several responses indicated that fresh paint on old buildings and picking up litter on the streets would boost morale and enhance community pride. Many respondents made the connection between a clean town and its prosperity. “Ensure the town is clean. Dirt and garbage foster gloominess,” stated one respondent. Another said, “If we do not take some kind of pride in the town as adults, how can we expect our children and grandchildren to have pride?” Others suggested tax breaks for those who keep their property clean. What is your reaction to the downtown revitalization project, and what else do you think can be done?

The final topic, key to the success of all the others, concerns young people. Many respondents feel youth need to have more activities, not only to keep them occupied, but to create a sense of responsibility and build a connection with their own town. “Our youth are our greatest assets,” stated one respondent. More youth activities would also lead to greater self-esteem, and a positive result would trickle through all areas of the community. Do you think enough is being done for the youth of Glace Bay, and what else should happen?

All sectors of a community are connected, and when it seems that all of them need to be fixed, it’s a bit daunting. But improvements have occurred even since these responses were collected. Solutions exist within the community, and with continued positive action, patience, and confidence, further improvements are bound to take place. We have lots of caring, intelligent and generous residents in this town, and we can act together to create the kind of Glace Bay we’ll be proud to leave our children.

Employment and Youth

The people who responded to the survey identified the employment of youth as a major worry. The data show the validity of this concern. Among the 15 to 24-year-olds who were looking for a job, we find an official unemployment rate of over 40 per cent, and a combined unemployment / underemployment rate of over 65 per cent. The issues for youth are lack of available work, and being overqualified for the work they find. The youth do not, however, appear to be discouraged; they keep trying to find a job. The percentage of discouraged workers increases with age, even as the overall unemployment rate declines.

From Paper to Practice

Using data reported at a GPI workshop, the well-being of young people emerged as an important theme. Through the action of several concerned people, the YMCA Youth Leadership Project was created. This pilot project is a 30-week program designed to give eight unemployed youth an opportunity to build and practice their leadership abilities, increase their knowledge of youth health issues and promote inclusiveness in other community organizations. It will provide the participants with enhanced employability skills, increased self-confidence and positive interactions with various parts of the community. They will be working on an after-school tutoring service and delivering presentations to schools on injury prevention. The bulk of the project is a 25-week work placement. Host organizations are the Cape Breton District Health Authority, Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia, and the YMCA of Cape Breton. Taking action on a need identified by the community is the ultimate goal of the GPI project. Hopefully other community members with good ideas like this one can use the results to help Glace Bay make progress.



Employment in Glace Bay

Working at Finding Jobs

One of the key beliefs behind the GPI (Genuine Progress Index) research project is that the way something is measured makes a big difference in the value placed on it and the attention it gets. Employment and unemployment are good examples, and there has been no bigger issue on the minds of Glace Bay residents.

If there are decent jobs, a community is likely to be healthier. A major component of the GPI survey examined the employment situation of the Glace Bay area. The cycle of unemployment that continues to plague the town was evident in the survey.

Let's examine ways to measure unemployment:

Official Unemployment Rate:

The labour force survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, is reported regularly by the media. For this survey, someone who is without paid work and has actively searched for work in the past four weeks is considered unemployed. Using that official definition, the Glace Bay GPI survey found an overall unemployment rate of nearly 25 per cent in 2001.

Critics of the official measure point to at least three important groups of people left out of the official unemployment statistics:

Discouraged Workers: People who are without paid work, who want a job, but who have stopped searching for work. The GPI survey found another two-to-three per cent of working aged persons were discouraged in this way

Underemployed: Part time workers who want full time work, but can find only part time work. Another three per cent of Glace Bay residents fall into this category.

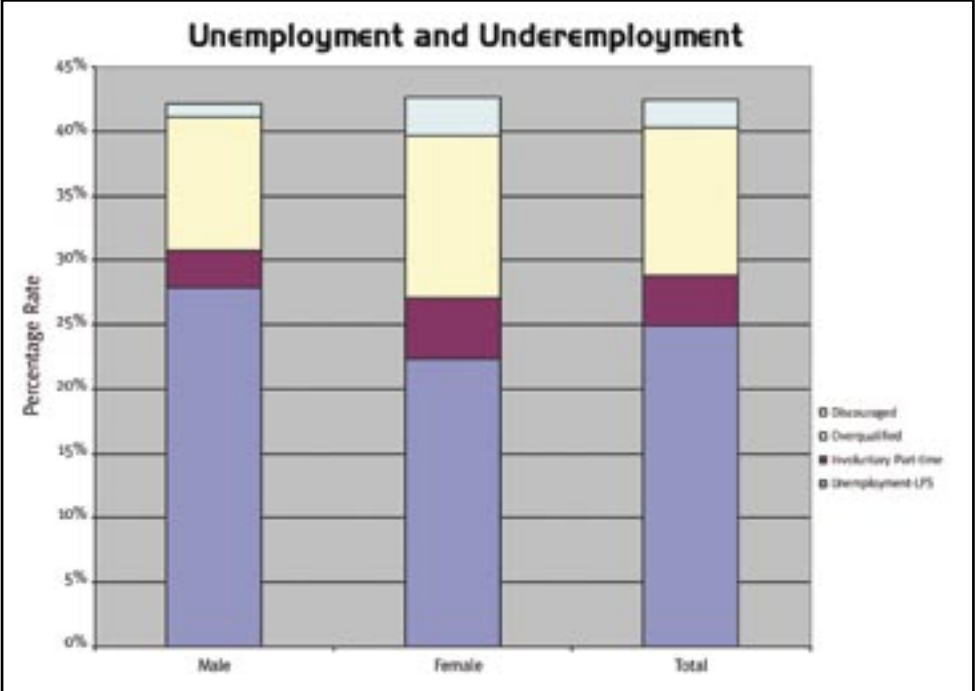
Overqualified: People who have the training, experience or education for higher paying jobs, but who cannot find such work and who end up working at jobs well below their skill levels. These people can also be considered underemployed. In the Glace Bay survey, there were almost 12 per cent of residents in this category.

If we add all of these categories together, the combined unemployment and underemployment rate for both males and females in Glace Bay reaches between 40 and 45 per cent.

The official unemployment rate also does not capture the length of time that people are without paid work. If unemployment tends to run for a long period of time, the impact on the person, the economy, their family, and their health can be severe. Long-term unemployed people also face a lower probability of

re-employment as their skills diminish and their confidence suffers. Employers may also screen out potential employees based on their unemployment history.

In Glace Bay, there is considerable long-term unemployment. Among people who were unemployed, 63 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women said their unemployment lasted for more than six months. That is three times the Nova Scotia average, where less than 20 per cent of the labour force was unemployed for more than six months.



If we turn the issue around and ask about employment, there are two important ways to assess the strength of the economy: the employment rate and the labour force participation rate. The employment rate is the fraction of the working age population – those aged 15 to 64 – with jobs. Higher employment rates indicate a stronger demand for labour and better job opportunities. The labour force participation rate is the fraction of the working age population who are in the labour force. This includes both employed people and those counted as officially unemployed and actively looking for work. Higher participation rates are a sign of a healthy labour market.

The GPI survey shows that, in 2001, Glace Bay had a higher unemployment rate, a lower employment rate, and a lower labour force participation rate than other regions in Nova Scotia.

It should be noted that almost all of the data were collected prior to the Stream call centre coming to Glace Bay. There is no doubt Stream has had a significant impact on the area's employment rates. However, the call centre seems to have an uncertain future, and Glace Bay may again have to show its resilience in dealing with the burden of high unemployment.

How Safe Do You Feel?

Peace and security are essential components of any community. Whether it's a business owner free from the fear of vandalism and break-ins, or a resident's confidence in walking the streets, peace of mind is necessary to build a positive environment.

Twenty-five percent of business owners reported incidents of crime, mainly vandalism. Insurance did not compensate for the loss in over 93 per cent of the cases. Without insurance reimbursing the business, even if the amount lost seems small, vandalism can have a major impact on the health of a business.

The rate of crime victimization in Glace Bay was reported to be relatively low. Only eight per cent of respondents stated they had been a victim of crime in the past five years. The major problems identified by respondents included underage drinking, drug use and trafficking, and vandalism. The data were collected prior to the media reports of serious concern about the abuse of prescription drugs.

Key security indicators are changes in behavior, such as 72 per cent of Glace Bay respondents locking their doors more often than they used to. However, respondents also consider the crime level in their area to be lower than in other areas of Canada, and 94 percent are satisfied with their level of personal safety.

In order of preference, respondents indicated that the role of police should be (1) to prevent crime, (2) to see that victims receive justice, and (3) to punish criminals. Respondents also indicated high levels of neighbourhood closeness. This is important because if neighbours know one another and feel connected to the community, they are more likely to watch for intruders, report suspicious occurrences, and discuss problems.

Despite an overall feeling of security in the community, the survey responses show Glace Bay could benefit from certain changes or improvements. Respondents repeatedly mention the need for youth programs in the area. One respondent said, "I feel anything that helps today's youth would be an asset." Most current youth activities are sports-related and can be

expensive. The community needs youth programs that are low-cost and accessible to all. Some of the ideas suggested recently included a skate park, a community pool, a toboggan hill, and restoring basketball nets on local courts. Research shows programs created "by youth for youth" with mentoring, and community development initiatives are successful in reducing truancy, drug use, vandalism, aggression, and arrests in other communities. Through these actions, people develop a sense of responsibility to their community. That sense of responsibility helps heal past hurts and prevent future problems. Your feedback is welcome, and taking action is encouraged.

Prescription Drugs: Creating More Pain than Recovery

The use and abuse of prescription drugs, and their relationship to an increase in crime rates, have captured headlines in our community during the past year. During a meeting of the Local Committee on Drug Awareness in April, Chief Edgar MacLeod revealed there had been 14 deaths due to Oxycontin in 2003, and six more deaths in the first four months of 2004. The now infamous painkiller, normally prescribed for moderate to severe pain, has become known on the street as “hillbilly heroin”. At the same time, the courts have been dealing with accused persons who say their crimes were a direct result of their addiction to pre-scription drugs.

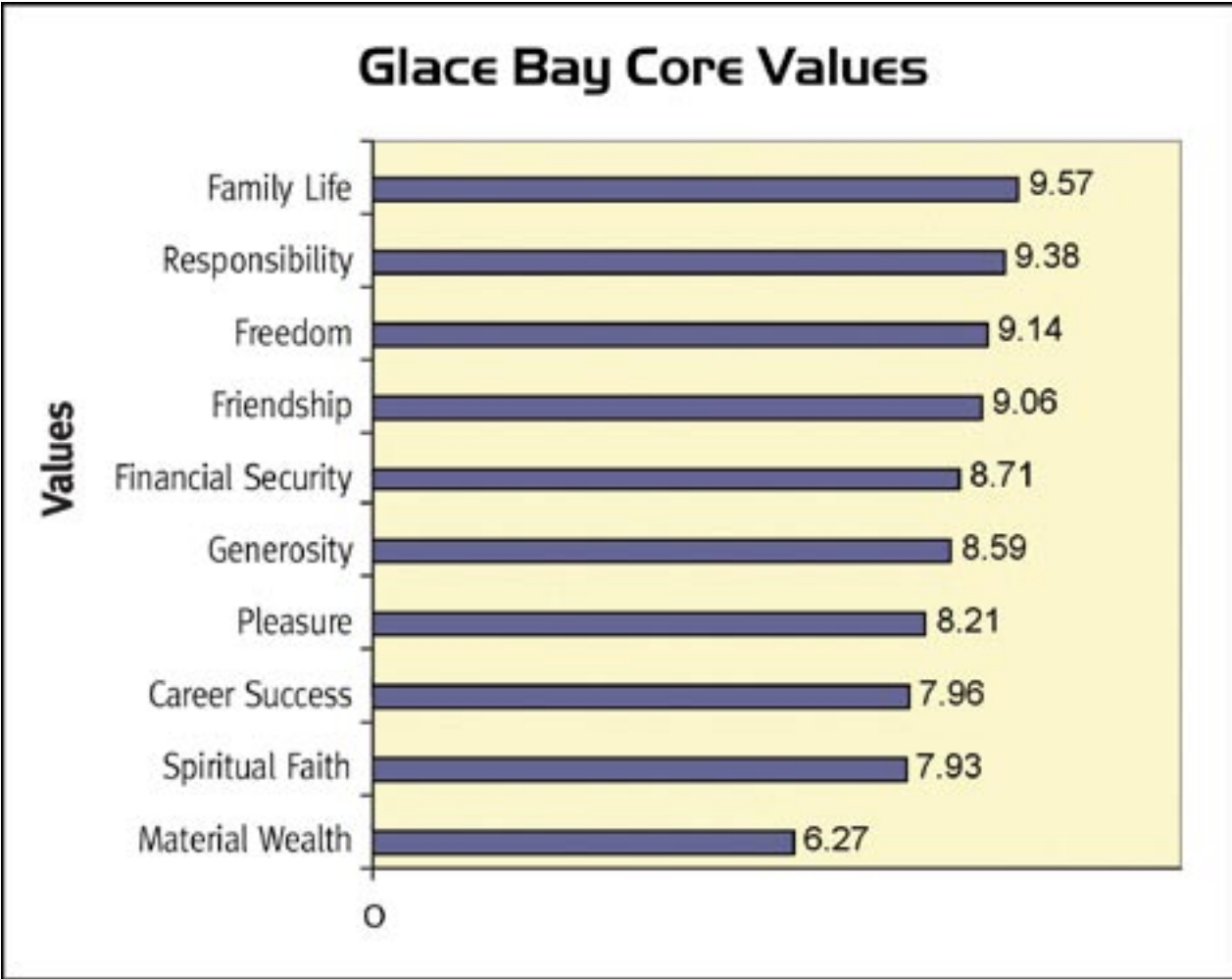
The GPI Glace Bay survey was administered just before Oxycontin hit the headlines, therefore there were no specific questions regarding its use. However, approximately two per cent of respondents reported the daily use of other prescription drugs such as tranquilizers, codeine, Demerol, morphine and sleeping medication. When we take into account the type of survey, as well as the fact that these are self-reported statistics, it would be reasonable to assume that this percentage is low. A recent study presented to a Nova Scotia Police Commission inquiry in May 2003, found that Cape Bretoners were ingesting nearly half of the roughly one million Oxycontin tablets prescribed annually in the province of Nova Scotia.

At the time of the GPI survey in 2001, residents of Glace Bay felt relatively safe from crime. Only eight per cent of respondents reported having been a victim of crime in the previous five years and, overall, residents perceived crime rates to be lower than in other parts of Canada. However, police connect the drug to a number of violent and desperate acts over the last several months. Cape Breton Regional Police Chief Edgar MacLeod reported that the largest spike in crime over the last eight years occurred in 2003, with 10 murders and four attempted murders in Industrial Cape Breton. Chief MacLeod also referred specifically to the increase in drug-related crime in the Glace Bay area suggesting that, as a result, residents of Glace Bay may be experiencing a decline in community connectedness and a loss of the traditional positive neighbourly attitude. Let us know whether or not you think that is happening.

“In 30 years, no other drug has ever had this kind of impact - not cocaine, not heroin, not anything”

Chief Edgar MacLeod

Various committees comprised of Glace Bay residents, law officials, doctors and employees of addiction services have met to try and deal with this critical problem. Although these committees proposed various options for improving the prescription drug/crime rate situation in Glace Bay, it was suggested that solutions developed and implemented by Glace Bay residents themselves would be more effective and longer lasting than those developed and administered by the judicial system. This is a positive indication of the willingness of Glace Bay residents to band together as a community in times of crises. This could also serve as a message of support to the residents of Glace Bay who are fighting the horrific battle with drug addiction.



Smoking : Taking It Outside

Part of the GPI survey involved asking residents questions about their tobacco use. The data indicate approximately 29 per cent of Glace Bay residents are smokers. This rate is higher than both the provincial average (23 per cent) and national average (21 per cent). It was also found that the rate of smoking in Glace Bay is highest among those who are unemployed (46 per cent), as compared with employed (31 per cent), students (22 per cent), and retired persons (20 per cent).

It is well noted that cigarettes are a powerful addiction. However, smoking does not just affect smokers. Second-hand smoke has long-term, serious consequences for those who are exposed; it has been linked to cancer, heart disease, and respiratory diseases. Researchers have also discovered a link between second-hand smoke and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. In Glace Bay, 78 per cent of daily smokers have children in the home, and 73 per cent of those continue to smoke inside the home, despite the presence of children. A high number of smokers are smoking inside of a house where there are children who are taking asthma medications (42 per cent).

The survey also found that the use of Ritalin and other medications for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is higher in children who come from smoking homes, than in those from non-smoking homes. In Glace Bay, nearly 86 per cent of children who are currently taking such medications live in homes where at least one person smokes inside of the home. Although much more research is needed, this statistic may suggest a link between second-hand smoke and ADHD.

There is something that can be done now. Public Health Services of Cape Breton District Health Authority and Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority have jointly launched a campaign to target this issue. “Smoke Free Around Me” was designed to raise awareness of issues regarding second-hand smoke. Individuals can log onto their website at www.smokefreearoundme.ca and declare their home smoke-free. The site also provides valuable information regarding the dangers of second-hand smoke, and the benefits of having a smoke-free home.

Since the time of the Glace Bay GPI survey, the new smoke-free bylaw has come into effect for CBRM. As of July 7, 2003, all public places became smoke-free. It will be interesting to see what impact this might have on rates of smoking in the area. Your feedback on this issue is welcome.

By the way, if you have been thinking about quitting smoking, you might check out www.sickofsmoke.com, or call the toll free Smokers’ Helpline at 1-877-513-5333.

Volunteering – Helping Yourself While Helping Others

Volunteering is what creates a community. You give something of yourself – time, a listening ear, expertise, or a helping hand – and the well-being and morale of the entire community gets a boost. As a volunteer, you benefit too. When residents were asked if they had volunteered for an organization in the past 12 months, 28 per cent responded yes, which is slightly above the national average of 27 per cent. On average, Glace Bay volunteers spend 204 hours of their time every year volunteering, which is well above the national average of 162 hours. In addition to volunteering for organizations, the survey also shows that 51 per cent of Glace Bay residents perform informal volunteering, such as helping neighbours, friends or others.

Volunteering may also keep you out of your doctor’s office. Volunteerism has been linked to considerable benefits, including better health and greater life satisfaction, improved self-esteem, psychological well-being, and increased longevity. Prior literature has found that those who volunteer tend to be happier, have higher self-esteem and better health, and are less likely to become depressed. The findings from the survey indi-

cate that 84 per cent of volunteers rate themselves in either good or excellent health, compared to only 76 per cent of non-volunteers.

For older individuals, volunteering is an opportunity to strengthen social ties. It can be a solution to the boredom and loss of purpose that some individuals face in retirement. For anyone, volunteering can be a great way to meet new people, make good use of your time, and further develop personal skills. Above all, helping others gives purpose and meaning to people’s lives.

Although Glace Bay residents are doing quite well when it comes to volunteering, more volunteers are always needed. If you would like to volunteer but don’t know where to start, you can contact the Town House Citizens Service League at 849-2449. You’ll find information on tutoring, meals on wheels, and books on wheels; and volunteer teachers are always needed for the nursery school. Unpaid work offers rewards that money can’t buy.

Building a Sustainable Community

Our days of having a primary industry economy are over. We must take advantage of our hospitality and brain power to develop our economy. – Glace Bay respondent

Many residents mentioned the importance of rejuvenating the downtown area, with ideas from employment to community development to the creation of more youth activities. Many residents suggested the construction of a motel or hotel in the town to attract visitors. These comments are significant because they illustrate the need for a central area within a community – a place where people come to gather, to shop, to eat, or to pass through on their way home.

The recent face-lift of the downtown area, completed after the survey data were collected, was an important step. The revamping of Commercial Street, complete with new lampposts, sidewalks, and the creation of mini-parks shows a commitment to renewal. Now it's up to residents to provide the continued support necessary for local business.

Support for local merchants has an impact beyond the business community. Walking to local stores also puts a real pulse and presence of people within the town. Staying in town to shop cuts down on car emissions as a result of driving to other places. Like volunteering, that extra commitment benefits all of Glace Bay.

The survey found that Glace Bay residents placed relatively low value on material wealth. Residents also felt our current lifestyles produce too much waste, and that we buy and consume more than we need. What we buy is directly connected with all levels of our life – family, community, happiness, health, and financial security. Before making a purchase, we ought to consider its purpose, its packaging, and where it is from.

Small gestures such as consuming less and being more community-minded in our purchases can result in huge spin-offs for local business. In turn, the entire community benefits, as the economic boost increases morale, fewer buildings are abandoned – the community is literally alive.

Glace Bay is renowned for its sense of community, and for its strong bond among friends, family and neighbours. Even a simple day of community action where all residents were encouraged to come out and pick up pieces of garbage, would combine a commitment to cleanliness and community action, and would enhance a sense of pride for the town.

Some residents are deeply concerned about future generations. In the words of one respondent:

“Kids today have no home town. They are told as soon as they can read that they will have to leave. This I believe is the root of vandalism – they [the youth] have no pride in the community – it's not theirs. Their hometown is somewhere far away, they can't live here.”

Other residents see reason for optimism:

“I think we are on the rebound and with the next five-to-10 years we should be back to being proud to say we are from Glace Bay and will have something to offer visitors. As well, be able to keep our work force in our community rather than having to travel abroad for decent employment.”

What do you think?

The Future Belongs to You

Take Action Now

A great community is like a tasty potluck – everyone brings something different and it all gets mingled together to produce a fabulous meal.

The future use of the information presented here depends on the community of Glace Bay. Remember, the survey was just the first step. Whether your interests lie in health, nutrition, employment, youth programs, community safety, or any other area tapped by the GPI (Genuine Progress Index) survey, the data that were collected might be of interest to you. Check out the website www.glacebaygpi.com. It will grow as we add new analyses and reports.

The survey and these reports reflect the concerns of Glace Bay residents. But the critical element of the entire process is to take the information and construct real change, real community renewal. If you have an idea, or are interested in some of the options provided in this pamphlet, don't hesitate to take action. Tell other people about your idea. The excellent 82 per cent response rate to this survey means there are a lot of people who want to improve Glace Bay, and still have hope in that goal. One realistic, yet optimistic respondent wrote:

“People need to have a positive attitude. I would be lying if I said I was not afraid. I'm afraid living in Glace Bay, there's very little work, bad water and a high cancer rate. But I believe rather than be discouraged and becoming depressed, one should look around to see what solutions are available to fix the problems. I also believe the town of Glace Bay is filled with wonderful people and has the potential in becoming the town it once was, filled with prosperity.”

If there is something that you would like to see added to the website or included in the next edition of this flyer, please contact us at glacebaygpi@hotmail.com.



Glace Bay GPI Society

To help guide future uses of the Glace Bay Genuine Progress Index survey, a non-profit society was formed. We are convinced that good information about our community can empower us, help us set goals to improve our wellbeing, act together to achieve those goals, and measure our progress in getting there. To that end, the goals of the Glace Bay GPI Research Society are:

To provide the Glace Bay community with information regarding a wide variety of indicators of progress and wellbeing.

To collect, analyze, and distribute results of the GPI Glace Bay survey, so that residents and community groups can identify needs and act to improve their wellbeing.

To build partnerships between community, university, and potential funding partners.

To be an advocate for information systems that would support local-level planning and development. To be an advocate for regular follow-up surveys in order to measure progress on identified priorities within the original survey.

If you are interested in membership in the society, please let us know. Watch for future community meetings. New partners who are committed to seeing genuine progress in Glace Bay are always welcome.

Methodology

Random sample of Glace Bay residents
Sampling designed by Statistics Canada
72 page questionnaire
2 – 5 hours to fill out survey
Ages: 15 years and over
Response rate: 82% (final sample size 1,713)
Accuracy: +/- 3%, 19 times out of 20



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