

# Building an online anti-poverty community



## [www.povnet.org](http://www.povnet.org)

Anti-poverty related tools, news and resources for advocates, community workers, marginalized communities and the general public in British Columbia and Canada.

PovNet is funded by:



# What is PovNet?

PovNet provides online tools that facilitate communication, community and access to information around poverty-related issues in BC and Canada.



## Website

Our website is a clearinghouse of links to current legal information on poverty law subjects, as well as hundreds of helpful organizations and essential resources.



## PovNetU

Our online courses for advocates, community and settlement workers are facilitated by experienced advocates and offer rich opportunities for learning and collaboration.



## Mailing Lists

Our private email lists facilitate invaluable connections between advocates and community workers. They and cover a number of issues relevant to anti-poverty advocacy work.



## Outreach & Networking

We work to ensure that our community stays connected and informed via newsfeeds, popular social networking tools, collecting feedback from the communities we serve and several multimedia projects.



*" PovNet is like having  
all the advocates and poverty law  
professionals in the province,  
and their combined expertise,  
in your office, on call, and  
ready to help.*

*PovNet helps me serve more people,  
more efficiently, and allows me to  
offer my skills and experience to  
others looking to provide the same  
efficiency and excellence  
of service."*

*~ PovNet users*



# Our Board of Directors

PovNet's board of directors represent the anti-poverty community throughout British Columbia. Its current member organizations include:

- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
- BC Library Association
- BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- BC Teachers Federation
- Community Advocate Support Line (CASL)
- Clicklaw
- Community Legal Assistance Society
- End Legislated Poverty
- MOSAIC
- Port Alberni Friendship Centre
- REACH Multicultural Family Centre
- SPARC BC
- Tenant Resource Advisory Centre



# Our Team

PovNet's team includes a full-time executive co-ordinator and contract technical support, web content manager and facilitators for online courses.



**Penny**  
Executive Co-ordinator



**Kara**  
Web Content Manager &  
Illustrator



**Mosa**  
Technical Support &  
Designer



**Nicky**  
PovNetU Facilitator



**Diane**  
PovNetU Facilitator



# Our Website



# Online Resources

PovNet's website hosts thousands of up-to-date links and resources that are organized and described to help you find the info you need.

The screenshot shows the PovNet website homepage. At the top, there are navigation links for HOME, ABOUT US, HELP, and CONTACT US, along with the date Tuesday, January 18th 2011. The main header features the PovNet logo and a banner image with the tagline "Building an online anti-poverty community". Below the header, there are several sections: "Search PovNet" with a search bar and advanced options; "PovNet News" with a description of the latest news; "Regional" resources by province/territory; "Finding Help" with a "Find An Advocate" section and a map of Canada; "Advocacy Community" with links to an Events Calendar, Job Postings, and Community Listings; "Resources" and "Applying For..." sections; "Issues" and "Quicklinks BC" sections; and "New on PovNet" featuring a highlighted legal blog post.



## Keep up-to-date

See current blogs, reports, news stories, newsfeeds, campaigns and more.



## Find practical info

Get links to applications and forms, government info, FAQs, directories, guides and more.



## Research an issue

Browse by issues and filter resources for your province or territory.



# Find An Advocate

PovNet hosts an up-to-date and widely-used directory of advocates in BC and Canada.

Visitors can find advocates in their own communities to help with their legal or poverty-related issues.



Legal aid offices, workers advisers, government agents, pro bono services, community-based advocacy organizations and much more...

*"I use the  
'Find an Advocate'  
map, which is a  
great way to refer  
people to other  
services in BC."*

*~ A PovNet user*



# Community Connections

PovNet's website is a great place to find out about what poverty-related projects are happening in Canada and BC.



## Calendar

Workshops, conferences, arts events, forums and more!

## Job Board

Job postings from the anti-poverty and social justice community



## Community Listings

Campaigns, polls, petitions, volunteer postings and more!



Make connections in your community

Find out where and how you can get involved



# Social Media

Along with our many web tools, PovNet also makes use of several social media sites to make sure our community stays connected and up-to-date.

## Facebook

Like our PovNet Facebook page! See who else is in our network, share links about poverty issues with friends, browse our photos and videos and leave us comments.



## RSS



Syndicate our newsfeed using your preferred RSS viewer

Photos, videos, interviews and more...



## Twitter

Follow PovNet's Twitter feed and get short, daily updates, news and resources.



*"A true legal veteran  
on the web, PovNet.  
This anti-poverty group  
gives legal advocacy  
a central role.*

*PovNet does an  
admirable job keeping  
up with the times."*

*~ Simon Fodden*

*Slaw - a popular Canadian co-operative weblog  
about all things legal*

# PovNetU



# What is PovNetU?

PovNetU (<http://povnetu.povnet.org>) is a collection of online courses for anti-poverty advocates in BC.

The courses are intended to be a useful and cost efficient way of improving the skills and knowledge of advocates and people who need to advocate for themselves.

The logo for PovNetU, featuring the words "Pov", "Net", and "U" in a large, bold, green, rounded font. "Pov" and "Net" are stacked vertically on the left, and "U" is to their right.

You can expect our courses to:

- be accessible and easy to navigate
- include descriptions of learning goals and expectations
- encourage group collaboration and participation
- include knowledgeable feedback from experienced facilitators
- provide up-to-date links and info and breakdowns of procedures
- offer practical experience and real-life examples



# Our Courses

PovNetU is the home of a number of courses for advocates, and is always growing.

- **Basic Business Letter Writing**
- **Be Your Own Advocate**
- **Employment Insurance Level I**
- **Introduction to Advocacy**
- **Persons with Disabilities Benefits**
- **Residential Tenancy Level I & II**
- **Welfare Advocacy Level I & II**
- **Seniors' Residential  
Care Advocacy**



Appeals

# Our Facilitators

Courses are facilitated by experienced advocates who provide our learners with constructive feedback and useful information every step of the way.

PovNetU facilitators...

- encourage learners to participate, challenge themselves, complete assignments and achieve their learning goals.
- take the time to carefully read and respond to everything their learners are saying and doing.
- help make sure course content, links and exercises are up-to-date and useful.
- make sure their learners feel comfortable asking questions and receiving feedback on their work.



# Learning Tools & Strategies

PovNetU makes use of the technology available but we don't let it get distracting.

## User Profiles

Learners and facilitators are encouraged to complete their profiles to help get to know one another.

## Multiple Choice Quizzes

Learners get immediate feedback and suggestions and have several chances to self-evaluate their work.



## Personal Assignments

Learners complete private assignments, where they receive one-on one-feedback.

## Discussion Forums

Learners engage in facilitated discussion for a multi-faceted view of course topics.

## Getting Comfortable

Facilitators also connect with learners via telephone calls, mail-out packages and icebreaker exercises.

*"Did I mention how much I appreciate the intuitive and 'twit-proof' nature of your computer entry systems?"*

*I took another on-line course which was a huge pain just to figure out how to submit assignments. I know this course also uses Moodle but at least you don't rub our noses in it."*

*~ A PovNetU learner*



# A Peek Inside

Course content is presented in a straightforward way, with clear and numbered topics that are revealed to learners as they progress through the course materials. Each topic builds on the last.

The screenshot shows the PovNetU website homepage. At the top, there is a yellow banner with the 'PovNetU' logo and a row of seven small portraits of diverse individuals. Below the banner, the page is organized into several columns. The left column contains introductory text about PovNetU, including contact information for the training coordinator. The middle column features a section titled 'What are PovNet and PovNetU?' with an illustration of a person at a computer, followed by a section 'What makes up a PovNetU course?' with an illustration of two people talking. The right column lists 'PovNetU is supported by' and displays logos for various organizations such as BCGEU, CWHQ, HEU, and others.

This screenshot shows a course topic page titled '3 Before the Tenancy Begins'. The page includes a brief introduction: 'This is where we start to learn about the new tenancies in British Columbia. We will find them online and look at resources and information.' It also provides instructions: 'You will need to set aside a chunk of time to try to clear your desk, put your phone on hold or coffee before we begin.' Below the text, there are three interactive elements: a link to 'Before the Tenancy Begins', a 'Discussion Board - Book 3', and a 'Personal Assignment - Book 3'.

This screenshot shows a discussion board thread. The main post is titled 'Hello' and is from a user named Theresa. Two replies are visible: one from 'Tish Lakso' dated Thursday, 18 June 2009, 10:25 AM, and another from 'Joanita Owen-Walton' dated Thursday, 18 June 2009, 01:51 PM. Each reply includes a 'Show parent' link and options to edit, split, delete, or reply.

This screenshot shows a course page titled 'Preparing the R4R'. The page is divided into sections. The top section, 'What you will learn', lists 'The Assessor's Report - Physical Impairment' and 'Assessor's Report - Daily Living Activities'. Below this, there is a section 'Preparing the R4R' with a sub-section 'Calculating deadlines'. A large illustration of a person's head with gears is shown. The bottom section, 'How to prepare', includes a list of tasks: 'Compare what HAB was written with what the doctor wrote in the original application. Carefully advise the original application and pay particular attention to the description of the DLAs.', 'Ask your client to complete the BCCPD Daily Living Activities checklist on page 9 of the BCCPD Help sheet #2.', and two bullet points: 'Make sure your client understands that it is not essential that they actually receive the assistance they need; it is only necessary to show the assistance is "required".' and 'Before sending the client away to complete the list, discuss with them, how the assistance end supports them.'



# Feedback From Learners

*"I found the immediate, thoughtful and constructive feedback from the facilitators very helpful. Being to be able to see other participants answers on discussion questions was a real plus as well. It gave me the opportunity to see a diversity of opinions and approaches."*

*"The course has made me more comfortable researching the issues. I am more aware of the resources that are out there and am more familiar with the various sections of the Residential Tenancy Act."*



*"It's been great to have the concrete, knowledgeable feedback and encouragement by experienced advocates.*

*Another important consideration made by the instructors is that we were given the time to negotiate our workloads and work on the course... I had the time to really pay attention to each chapter."*

*"The whole course was incredibly helpful as I am brand new to the disability process. I feel confident that I can now assist my clients who want help with the disability application."*



# Mailing Lists



# Our Mailing Lists

PovNet hosts confidential email lists for advocates, community & settlement workers in the anti-poverty community.

These lists provide a forum for discussing cases, sharing strategies & identifying and working on systemic issues that arise in the pursuit of access to justice.

PovNet hosts lists in British Columbia about:

- Welfare
- Housing
- Mental health
- Workers' rights
- First Nations and Aboriginal issues
- Debt
- Employment questions

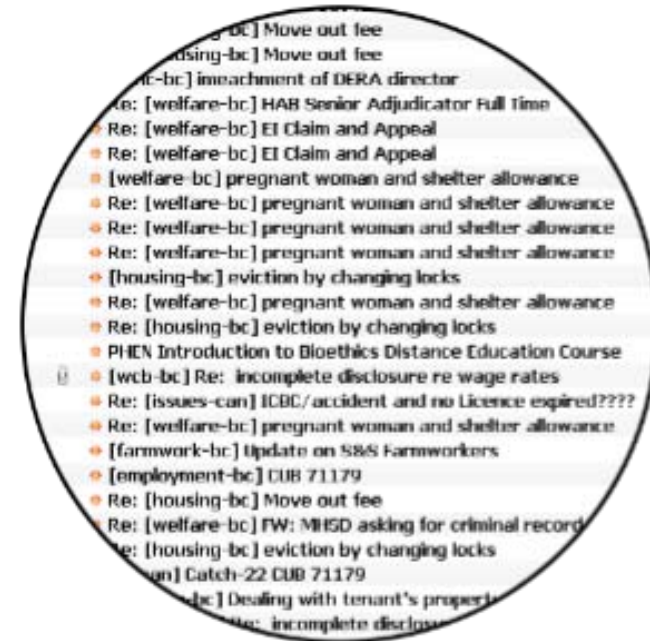


# Diverse Discussion

We also provide a home for national lists about:

- Canada Pension
- Employment Insurance
- Older adults

There is a general issues list that is very popular, and a forum for advocates in the northern parts of all provinces and the territories across the country.



*"The lists give me a bird's eye view of issues across the province so I can have a sense of when an issue is systemic."*

~ A PovNet list subscriber



*"This list keeps me functioning in my job. I have learned far more from being part of the list than any workshops combined."*

*"The networking, shared experience /knowledge, support, camaraderie and diverse points of view are invaluable... It's imperative to our survival and positive health that PovNet continue."*

*"There is just no better way of finding answers to questions related to poverty."*

*"They keep me abreast of legislative changes, decisions of tribunals, etc."*



# Outreach & Networking



# Collaboration & Support

PovNet is constantly collaborating with community and advocacy organizations to make new contacts, get direct feedback and stay connected to how we can best support their work.

Participating in conferences, workshops and other poverty law-related events allows us to meet advocates, get feedback and stay connected to how we can best support their work.



We provide education and training for advocates who learn to use PovNet's tools because they find it useful for their social justice and advocacy work.



# Building Awareness

PovNet's community benefits from our in person outreach work. Our bookmarks, info sheets and other print materials are available at public libraries and other community organizations.



PovNet was contacted by Radio Canada International for an interview in Arabic, and Saleem Spindari of MOSAIC was happy to lend his expertise.



# Penny's Fellowship

In 2008/2009 PovNet's coordinator, Penny, was awarded a fellowship by the Carold Institute ([www.carold.ca](http://www.carold.ca)).

This opportunity allowed her to spend almost a year collecting stories, wisdom, interviews and ideas about PovNet from the anti-poverty community, in preparation for a book about PovNet called,

[PovNet: Stories of an Online Social Justice Network.](#)

She wrote about some of her experiences in a blog at: [www.percolating.org](http://www.percolating.org).

She also was interviewed by Dorothy Kidd and Pilar Riaño Alcalá, and a [video](#) was created about the origins and purposes of PovNet.



# Listening to the Advocates

Penny also created a [PovNet digital story](#) featuring interviews with advocates in Bella Coola, Courtenay, Campbell River, Terrace, Port Alberni and Dawson Creek about how they use PovNet.



*"PovNet is a unique online organizing network, and advocates and community workers throughout British Columbia are its mainstay. These are some of their thoughts about where they live, their work, and how they make PovNet useful for them."*

Produced in 2009 by Colin Ford of [homelessnation.org](http://homelessnation.org)



# On The Line & Online

One of the interviews that Penny did was with Jean Swanson of the Carnegie Community Action Project. Kara Sievewright turned the interview into a graphic story.



# Learn More

<http://www.povnet.org>

<http://povnetu.povnet.org>

<http://twitter.com/povnet>

<http://www.facebook.com/povnet>

# Contacts

General Inquiries: [info@povnet.org](mailto:info@povnet.org)

PovNetU: [povnetu@povnet.org](mailto:povnetu@povnet.org)

Content: [kara@povnet.org](mailto:kara@povnet.org)

Technical: [mosa@povnet.org](mailto:mosa@povnet.org)

