

Indigenous Youth and the 2015 Canadian National Homeless Youth Survey: 332 Experiences of Being Young, Marginalized, and Indigenous in Canada

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Funders

- Home Depot Foundation
- National Learning Community – A Way Home Coalition



Objectives

- Share the main findings from this study
- Generate discussion on how this work can have an impact
- Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).

The National Survey

- 57 agencies serving homeless youth (emergency shelters, day programs) in 42 communities
- 1,103 youth participated of whom 332 were Indigenous-identified
- Among Indigenous respondents, 116 identified as cisgender female (38.9%), 182 cisgender male
- Most were recruited from western Canada (Vancouver n=79; Edmonton n=55) along with Toronto (n=33) and Ottawa (n=19) centrally and n=75 (22.6%) reported being born and raised on a reserve.
- Mean age was 19.87
- Avg. age of first homeless episode was 15.67
- 95 reported LGBTQ2S identity (28.6%) and 234 reported child protection involvement (70.5%)

Thoughts on Implementation

- A great response – particularly from Indigenous youth and sexual and gender minority youth
- The largest study of its kind to date – hopefully a useful tool in advocacy and service design efforts
- We will do better in 2018 – some problems including the global Indigenous category

Highlights from All Participants

Key Findings

29.5%

*identified as
LGBTQ2S*

30.6%

*identified as
Indigenous*

28.2%

*identified as members of
racialized communities*

1.8%

*identified as
transgender*

1.8%

*identified as
two-spirit*

2.5%

*identified as
gender non-binary*

10.1%

*were born
outside Canada*



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Age of first experience of homelessness

Many homeless youth became homeless before they were 16, and youth who leave home at a younger age experience greater adversity on the streets.

40.1%

were younger than 16 when they first experienced homelessness

THOSE WHO LEAVE HOME AT AN EARLY AGE ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

- Experience multiple episodes of homelessness
- Be involved with child protection services
- Be tested for ADHD
- Experience bullying
- Be victims of crime once homeless, including sexual assault
- Have greater mental health and addictions symptoms
- Experience poorer quality of life
- Attempt suicide
- Become chronically homeless

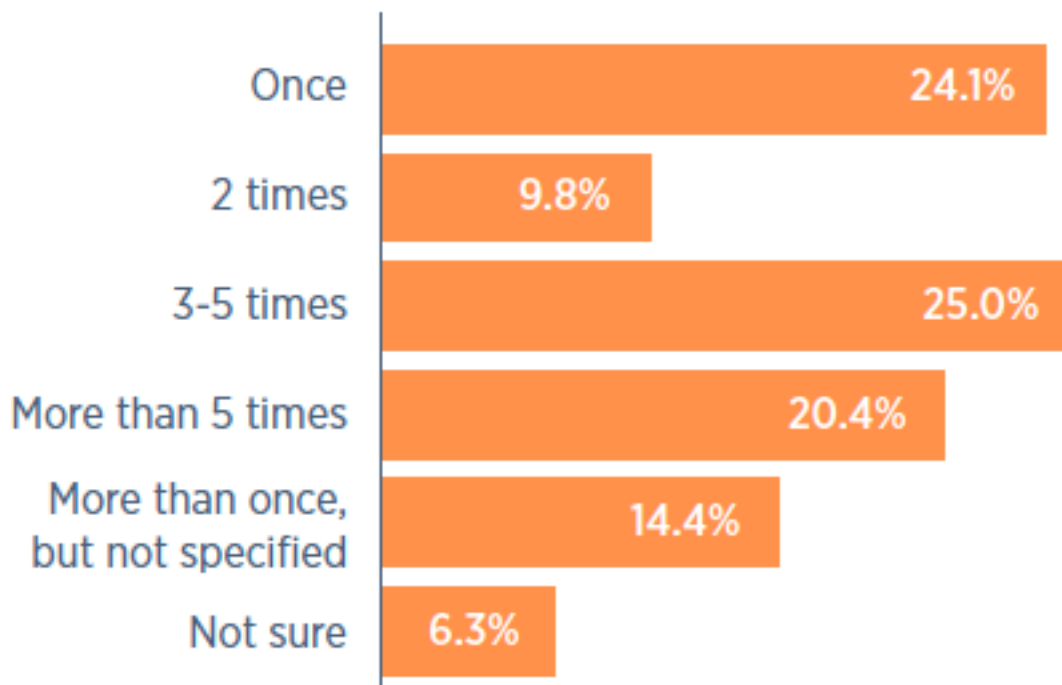


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Number of experiences of homelessness



24.1%

*reported being homeless
only once*

75.9%

*had experienced multiple
episodes of homelessness*



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Involvement with Child Protection Services

57.8%

*indicated some kind of
involvement with child
protection services in the past*

47.2%

*had a history of
placements in foster care
and/or group homes*

30.9% were in group homes



Mental Health and Addictions - Findings

85.4%

*of youth fell in the
'high' symptom/
distress category*

42%

*reported at least
one suicide attempt*

35.2%

*reported at least
one drug overdose
requiring hospitalization*

Struggling to sustain resilience, older youth reported greater resilience with indications of a strength in this area for Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth

Mental Health and Addictions - Findings

Belonging to the highest risk group (n=144)

- LGBTQ2S overrepresented
- Racialized youth underrepresented
- Age of first homeless episode
- Victimization while homeless
- Social supports equivocal

Background – Indigenous Youth

- Greater adversity in all social determinants of health
- Over-represented in child welfare systems
- Over-represented in homeless youth populations
 - Therein greater risk for incarceration, HIV, sexual victimization
- Similar patterns elsewhere (e.g. Australia)

Background – Indigenous Youth

- Homelessness as an expression of colonization and dispossession of lands, disconnection from identity, loss of cultures, linguicide, domicide
- Indigenous youth have borne the brunt of residential schools and child welfare – the result:
 - deep cultural destabilization
 - destroyed institutions responsible for the socialization of Indigenous peoples
 - traumatizing generations of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit
- Dealing with both loss of kin and identity, coupled with the extreme emotional and psychological pressures of being in care, and underlying intergenerational trauma, are key contributors to Indigenous youth homelessness.

Comparisons – Between Groups

- No significant differences in social support, quality of life, and resilience
- Lower age of first homeless episode, higher psychiatric symptomatology and substance abuse/dependence
- Re: becoming homeless, Indigenous youth reported problems getting along with parents less than others, though reported as more important child protection removal
- Also reported were greater pre-homeless experience with child protection, physical and sexual abuse
- Differences of experience while homeless included Indigenous youth reports of greater physical victimization, more frequent overdose requiring hospitalization and a higher suicide attempt rate

Comparisons – Within Group

- Growing up on a reserve was associated with more substance and alcohol abuse challenges and differing emphases regarding reasons for homelessness. Reasons that reserve-raised youth reported as relatively more important included exposure to sexual abuse, trouble with the law, being taken away by child protection services, a difficult time in child protection services
- Growing up on reserve was not associated with increased frequency of report of child protection involvement, report of pre-homelessness physical or sexual abuse, current contact with family, suicide attempt, overdose, or victimization while homeless either physical or sexual.

Comparisons – Male/Female

- Female youth reported an earlier age of first homeless experience, higher levels of psychiatric symptoms and reported different emphases than males in the reasons given for becoming homeless.
- Leaving to work had less of an emphasis as did trouble with the law, while physical and sexual abuse were emphasized more as were own mental health issues, parent mental health and drug/alcohol
- Greater frequency of pre-street physical and sexual abuse, street physical and sexual assault, and a higher suicide attempt rate
- No difference - social support from friends, quality of life, substance abuse, overdose rate, resilience, child protection engagement, and contact with family

Comparisons – LGBTQ2S

- Earlier age of first homelessness, lower quality of life, higher psychiatric symptoms and substance abuse.
- Re: reasons to become homeless including more physical and sexual abuse, more child protection removal and negative child protection experiences
- Greater emphasis on own mental health challenges as a reason for becoming homeless along with parent mental health issues
- Greater exposure to pre and post street physical violence, pre and post street sexual violence
- Higher rates of suicide attempt and overdose

Current Distress

- Considering current distress, reserve status, and demographics were less important than pre-street exposure to violence and child protection and exposure to violence while homeless.

Where there was no difference

- Social support
- Resilience
- Quality of Life

Some take aways

- Large disparities in the types of adversity and level of distress experienced by female and LGBTQ2S-identifying Indigenous youth
- Systemic indicators of adversity were also observed for reserve-raised youth who were exposed to more child protection and justice involvement and parents facing greater addiction challenges.
- Central role of child protection and violent victimization
- Age of first homelessness is not the strong predictor of current distress that it is for non-Indigenous youth.

Indigenous homelessness

- Indigenous homelessness has recently been defined as lacking stable cultural and social matrixes – it is not merely about lacking a brick and mortar home residence
- The forcible removal of Indigenous children from their homes during the residential school and Sixties Scoop eras, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system today, can be understood as leaving many Indigenous children, and in turn adults, experiencing cultural, communal and spiritual forms of homelessness

Prevention

- Bolstering Indigenous language programs
- Rural and urban education and labour training programs aimed at youth
- Investing in culturally-specific shelters and substance use intervention services in urban and rural centers
- Investing in projects of reconnecting youth with consanguineal family members and affinal kin
- Reconnecting youth with Elders, and helping youth understand historical processes of dispossession to explain generational traumas.
- Strengthen a socio-cultural relationship web that can catch youth before entrenched patterns of absolute homelessness occur

Prevention

- Policy that seeks to amend the child welfare system, including a revision of current funding models to address inequitable services and ensuring that service delivery is culturally informed
- Indigenous communities must be equipped with appropriate resources to ensure that Indigenous people have equitable access to education, employment, and health care services, as well as basic standards of living (e.g., clean drinking water, housing, food security).
- Indigenous communities must be respected and permitted to act as self-governing Nations, recognizing that self-determination is a critical factor for the health of Indigenous peoples – therein lies the promise of preventing homelessness

Intervention

- Need for clinical interventions for Indigenous youth focused on concurrent substance use and complex trauma, which are rooted within a framework that examines the impacts of colonization, historical and intergenerational trauma
- Both preventative and intervention-based programming should be culturally and communally based, and led by Indigenous communities.
- The development of family and community interventions are needed, as treatment and healing for Indigenous people includes multiple systems of relationship

For discussion

- Thoughts on the role of history and colonization in what is seen here?
- Implications for policy and service design?
- Where should this work go next?

Tertiary Prevention for Formerly Homeless Youth: A Model for Making Housing Live up to its Promise and how Relevance for Indigenous Youth is Achieved -

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Partners and Funder

- Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, The Wellesley Institute, CAMH, LOFT Community Services, Covenant House Toronto, SKETCH
- Ontario Local Poverty Reduction Fund



Objectives

- Discuss tertiary prevention for youth in the transition from homelessness to housing – the HOP-C model
- Describe youth in this transition in Thunder Bay – resources and challenges
- Discuss efforts to develop HOP-C North

The Framework

- Tertiary prevention
 - The idea of leverage
- System dynamics and the importance of transition points

Context & Rationale

- The particular dilemma of transitions out of homelessness:
 - Sector disconnects
 - System emphasis on crisis
 - Provider overselling
 - Very poor outcomes for most

A Common Experience

- “At 17 ended up homeless, and I came to the shelter, and it was crazy from 18 to about 21. I was like having a place, and not having a place, and moving in with a partner and it not working out and having to leave and start from scratch.”

Context & Rationale

- A complex problem that requires a systems approach
- “Systems Approaches” often best devised from the bottom up
- Needs in a critical time:
 - Brass tacks and a steady presence
 - Mental health supports
 - Thoughtful peer support
 - Creative engagement and seamless services

Tertiary Prevention HOP-C South

- Main components:
 - Outreach case management
 - Mental health supports – wellness group, individual, family
 - Peer support – group, entertainment, participatory action
 - Collaboration across organizations in an unconventional space

Test of Feasibility

- Eligibility: 18-26 years old
- At least 6 months of homelessness (non-consecutive)
- In stable housing for less than 12 months

- Intervention lasts 6 months per person
- Client led: Choice about what components they access and how much
- Only encouragement is to have some contact with case management

Feasibility in Toronto

- 28/31 completed
- Complex engagement of a complex intervention
- Self-reported outcomes variable
- 22 sustained or improved re housing; 9 made gains in education; 19 sustained or improved work situation
- Positive reports from youth
- Capturing where keeping steady is a good outcome

The next step

- A trial in Toronto
- A partnership in Thunder Bay

Dilico Anishinabek Family Care

- First Nations governed organization
- Representative of 13 First Nations
- On-reserve & urban service delivery
- Integrated Cultural Service Model
 - Mental Health & Addictions
 - Health
 - Child Welfare
- Internal Research Advisory Committee

Thunder Bay

- 30+% Indigenous
- Youth leaving Care a priority
- Pregnant and parenting youth
- Substance-using
- Youth transitioning from Northern/Rural
- Youth experiencing racism
- Youth identity

HOP-C South → HOP-C North



Dilico Housing Supports Initiatives

- June Steve Lendrum
- HOP-C
- Transitional Youth Residence
- Homes for Good collaboration
- LHIN partnership

HOP-C North!!!

- Varying levels of support
- Youth driven, youth centred, inclusive
- Access to cultural engagement, learning and activities
- Services provided in “unconventional” spaces
- Peer opportunities

Uptake

- 13 involved youth
- 8 females
- 5 males
- 3 accessing clinical counselling
- Active open & closed groups
- 1 Peer Mentor
- 8 in transitional housing

Challenges & potential solutions

- Housing availability
- Urban system design different
- Financial supports requirements
- Unfamiliar territory
- Food security
- Referral process
- Addictions

Discussion

- Models
- “scale”
- Leverage
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