



Evolving Approaches in BC's 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Counts

Presentation to the CAEH23
Hidden Homelessness from Coast to Coast
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2023 BC Point-in-Time Homeless Counts

- HSABC led Provincially-funded Homeless Counts in twenty communities across the province from March to early May.
- HSABC led the Federally-funded Homeless Count in Greater Vancouver on March 8.
- There were four additional Federally-funded Homeless Counts and two independently funded Homeless Counts.

Reports available at:

www.hsa-bc.ca/2023_Homeless_Counts.html

The 2023 Homeless Counts in BC took place on ancestral, traditional and unceded Indigenous land, including the territories Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, Malahat, Pacheedaht, Scia'new, T'Sou-ke, W̱SÁNEĆ (Pauquachin, Tsartlip, Tsawout, Tseycum) peoples, the K'ómoks First Nation (including Sathloot, Sasitla, leeksun, Puledge, Cha'chae), Tat'poos Peoples, Snuneymuxw, Snaw-naw-as, Quw'utsun, Tla'amin First Nations, x̱m̱əθḵəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), sə̱lilw̱ətaʔṯ (Tseil-Waututh), QayQayt First Nation, Kwantlen, q̱ícəy̱ (Katzie), Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen First Nations, ḵw̱iḵəł̱əm (Kwkwetlem), Stó:lō Nation, T'exelcəmc, Tsq'escenəmc, Nlaka'pamux People, Syilx Peoples, Secwepəmc Nation, Simpcw territory St'at'imc Nation territory that includes Nxwisten, Ts'kw'aylacw, Sekw'el'was, Lil'wat, Chalath, T'it'q'et, Xaxl'ip, N'quatqua, Xa'xtsa, Skatin, Samahquam, Ktunaxa, the Kinbasket (Secwepəmc), Syilx, Sinixt Peoples, Lheidli T'enneh, Haida, Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haisla, Gitxsan, Wet'suwet'en, Tahltan peoples, and on Treaty 8 territory, lands of the Sicannie, Slavey, Dene and Dane-Zaa, Cree, Saulteaux, and Métis Nation.



Table Discussion Activity

- What are some of the challenges you face when conducting Point-in-Time Counts?
- What are your expectations from this workshop?

Results – BC

	2020/1	2023	Populaiton	Per Capita	# Change
Comox Valley	132	272	66,527	0.41%	140
Prince Rupert	118	146	12,300	1.19%	28
Williams Lake	51	77	11,500	0.67%	26
Merritt	43	67	7,051	0.95%	24
Port Alberni	125	163	17,678	0.92%	38
Campbell River	116	197	38,108	0.52%	81
Parksville	87	103	13,642	0.76%	16
Smithers	33	57	5,401	1.06%	24
Fort St. John	76	102	21,000	0.49%	26
Cranbrook	63	116	20,047	0.58%	53
Sechelt and Gibsons	84	97	32,170	0.30%	13
Penticton	114	166	47,449	0.35%	52
Vernon	224	279	61,324	0.45%	55
Squamish	107	119	23,819	0.50%	12
Quesnel	121	127	9,889	1.28%	6
Terrace	NA	156	12,017	1.30%	NA
Dawson Creek	NA	52	12,323	0.42%	NA
Kitimat	NA	55	8,236	0.67%	NA
Powell River	NA	126	13,943	0.90%	NA
Salmon Arm	NA	69	19,432	0.36%	NA
Total		2546			

Results – Greater Vancouver

Total sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness by sub-region (2023)						
Sub-region	Unsheltered Total	Sheltered				Total
		EWR	Shelters	No Fixed Address	Total	
Burnaby	77	14	92	26	132	209
Delta	27	6	10	1	17	44
Langley	133	15	76	11	102	235
New Westminster	57	0	110	36	146	203
North Shore	51	11	104	2	117	168
Richmond	80	32	46	4	82	162
Ridge Meadows	49	7	62	17	86	135
Surrey	301	109	589	61	759	1,060
Tri-Cities	62	10	80	8	98	160
Vancouver	605	96	1,599	120	1,815	2,420
White Rock	11	0	0	6	6	17
UEL*	8	0	0	0	8	8
Total	1,461	300	2,768	292	3,360	4,821



Commitment to Decolonization

Partner with Indigenous-led organizations and First Nations.
Work towards Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

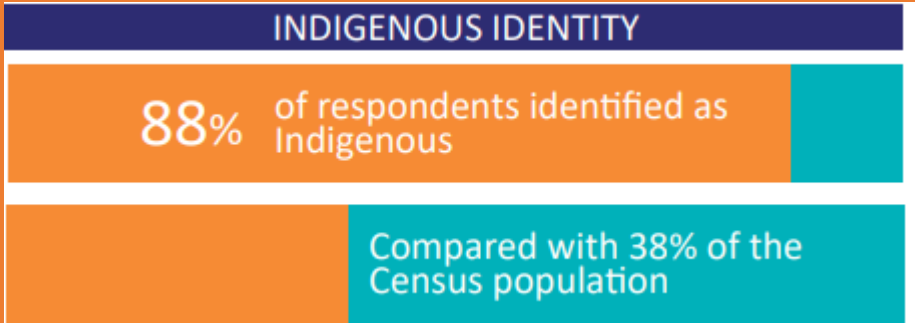




Did you, your parents, or grandparents ever attend residential school?



Prince Rupert





- Supported by the Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society.
- Context from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation.

“I almost don’t even know how to respond except the legacy of the Indian Residential School system continues to have a profound impact on Indigenous health disparities. It really does need to be addressed through an upstream approach. It moves the narrative on disparities from abstract to ongoing living experiences with systemic oppression, injustice, and a failure to reconcile with Indigenous people on equitable access to housing. If we are to see housing as a human right, than this data represents the ongoing violation of Indigenous human rights to access safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing.”

- Thiyustun “Rocky” James,
Indigenous scholar and entrepreneur

Peer and PWLLE-led

Aspire towards ethical community-based research following the 2019 *Research 101: A Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown Eastside*.

Peers involved in reviewing survey questions, approach, routes and analysis.

They were crucial members of our survey teams.





Pandemic Adaptation to Permanent Shift

Due to the Pandemic, only 8 of 16 Provincially-funded Counts were completed in 2020.

In 2021, HSABC, as part of our Communicable Disease Prevention Protocols, limited to role of volunteers in the remaining 8 communities in 2021. So, the 2021 Counts were largely conducted by outreach staff and peers.

In 2023, none of the BC Count Communities returned to using volunteers.



Training Adaptations

Focus on peers and service providers eliminated the pre-Count Day training session in most communities. Instead, held a morning meeting on the day of the Count.

Improved service provider ability to commit time, which was key in all communities, particularly those where populations were dispersed in encampments.

Table Discussion

How are peers involved in your work already?

What are some areas where there might be further opportunities for peer involvement?





Magnet Events

Aims to attract people who would take the survey to a location, through a meal or other event.

Examples of magnet events that are likely to improve participation include:

- Indigenous-Led magnet events. Example: Feast and entertainment at a longhouse in Smithers
- Events organized by members of a community who are typically underrepresented in the PiT. Example: Youth-led after school event in Port Alberni
- Events held in area with high traffic of the general population, that provides something for everyone. Example: Barbecue in park in Sechelt



Icebreakers

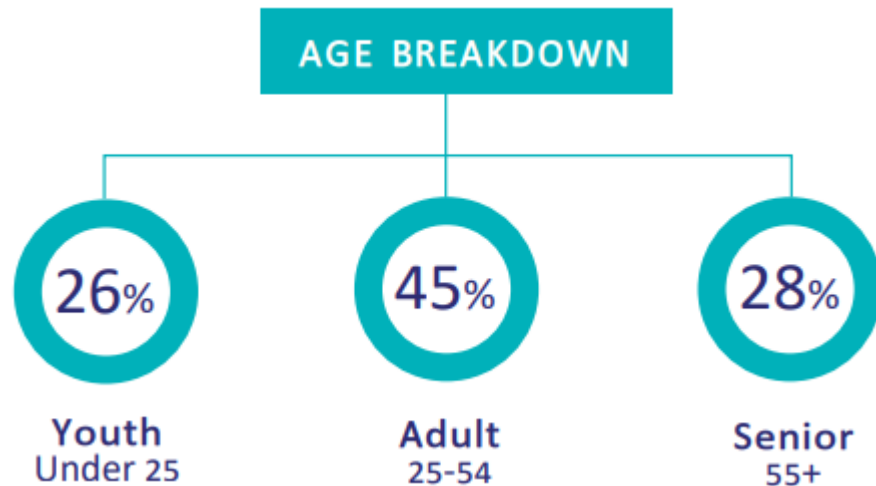
The small gift given to individuals to start a conversation about the survey.

- Positive experiences with icebreakers that are different, and appeal to a wide audience.
 - Cookies from an Indigenous-owned business
 - Chocolate bars
 - Tobacco Ties
- While important, personal relationships with peers and staff are more effective.

Youth Strategy

Similar to 2020. Surveys conducted in schools across the region and dedicated magnet events.

Prince Rupert:



Youth Strategy

Similar to 2020. Surveys conducted in schools across the region and dedicated magnet events.

Prince Rupert:

49%

Experienced homelessness for the first time as a youth

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

20%

of respondents identified as 2SLGBTQIA+



Youth Engagement Example

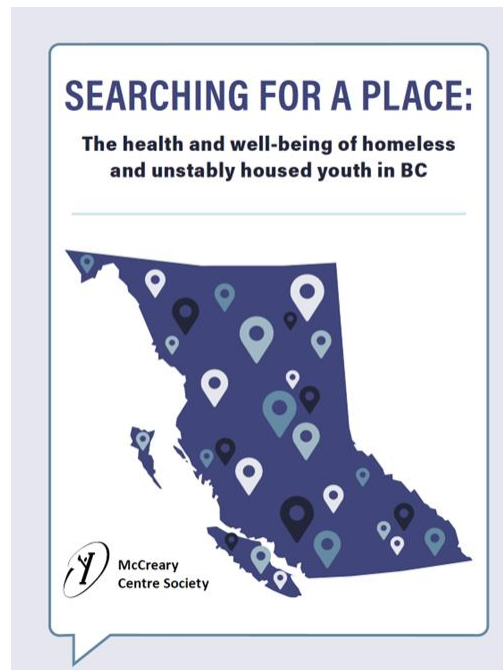
Working with schools involves legwork but can be an important way to include youth in the PiT Count.

- In Prince Rupert, no schools were included except one alternate school.
- While including all schools is ideal, focusing on those that are more likely to include students who meet the PiT definition of homelessness can be effective.
- Important to engage meaningfully with schools. Survey fatigue is a factor – this is not “just another survey.”



Youth Strategy:

Collaboration with Qualitative Survey



https://www.mcs.bc.ca/download_resources

Some key findings from the report:

- 📍 Youth most commonly first became homeless at age 16 or younger (70%); had been homeless on more than one occasion (77%); and had been homeless in excess of three months (60%).
- 📍 The most common reasons youth became homeless included being kicked out of their home, not getting along with their parents, experiencing mental health challenges, and violence or abuse at home. The main barriers youth experienced to exiting homelessness included not being able to afford housing and a lack of support.
- 📍 Most youth who had been homeless had experienced additional challenges to their health and well-being. For example, 58% went to bed hungry at least sometimes, 24% had attempted suicide, 40% had overdosed while using substances, and 87% had experienced bereavement (including 57% who had lost someone close to them due to an overdose). Also, 71% of those who used substances other than alcohol and cannabis (such as heroin, fentanyl, and other opioids) had done so alone.

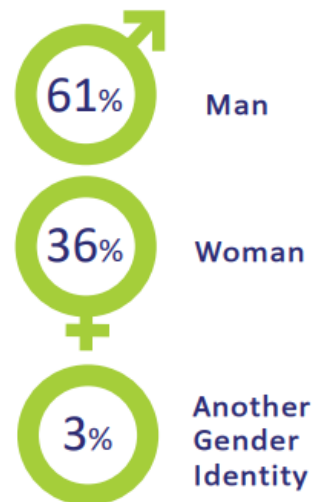


Marginalized Gender Strategy

Survey changes: Addition of “A Client’s Place,” addition of “Sex Work” as an income option, and new question on perceived safety on the unsheltered survey.

Port Alberni:

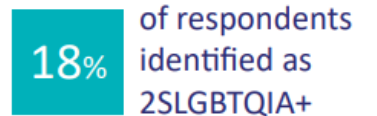
GENDER



59%

Experienced homelessness for the first time as a youth

SEXUAL ORIENTATION



TRANS EXPERIENCE





Marginalized Gender Engagement Example

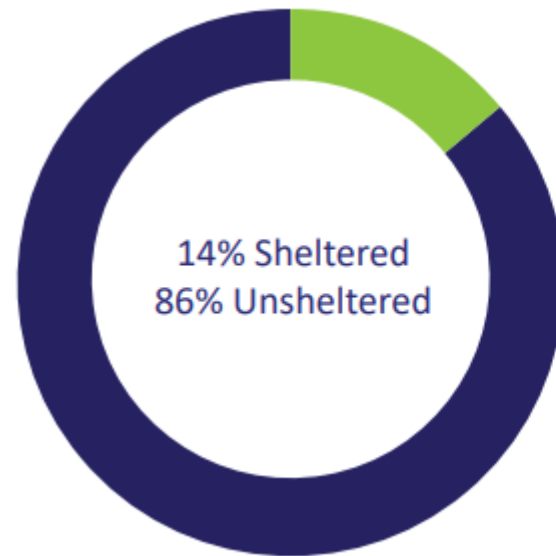
What can make a difference:

- Engagement with organizations serving these populations, even if they are not traditionally involved in homelessness. Many reported increases in couch surfing etc.
- Making sure surveys are completed at transition houses; not relying on shelter occupancy forms.



Vehicle, Peer and Encampment Strategy

Dedicated peer and outreach worker teams, and magnet events. Additional training for vehicle teams.



Of Unsheltered Respondents*

- 56% Vehicle
- 15% Someone Else's Place
- 12% Outside



Vehicle Resident Engagement Example

In Squamish, engagement with vehicle residents relied on:

- Involving members of the vehicle resident community in count planning and surveys.
- Friendly approach to spaces with many vehicles.
- Icebreakers that are different than general icebreakers, and valuable (community centre/coffee chain gift cards).



Engagement with Persons using Opiates Example

Key message: reducing the undercount of populations traditionally underrepresented in the PiT relies on engagement with all communities of people who do not have a place to pay rent.

“Meeting people where they are at” is important.

Example: peer witnesses at supervised consumption sites.



Rural and Remote Communities

- Engage with First Nations
- Peer and PWLLE-Led
- Focus on local magnet events and icebreakers
- Strategies to connect with traditionally under-counted communities (ie: youth, marginalized genders)
- Approach for encampments and vehicles



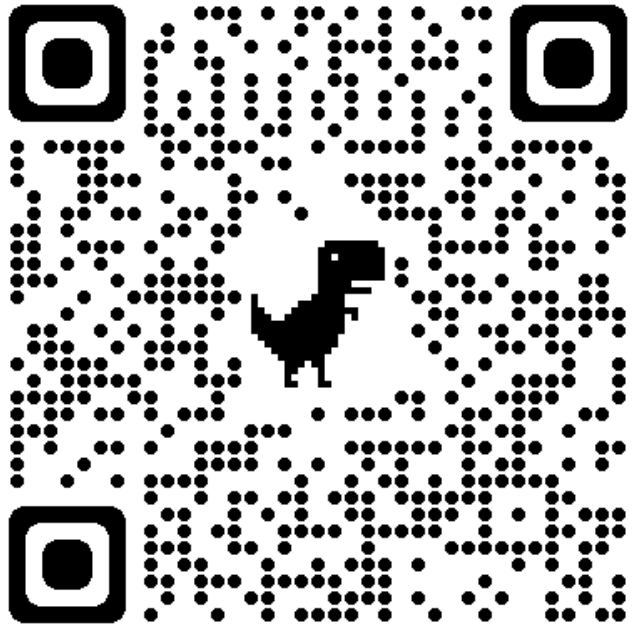
Relevance in Communities Adopting By-Names-List

- PiT participation does not require or lead to participation in other services.
- Community engagement can introduce new people to homelessness and housing services.
- Value as a “benchmark” can be important when adopting new interventions.
- Can be cost effective and integrated with other community events.



Table Discussion Activity

- What from this discussion can you take back to your communities?
- What challenges might come up when doing so?



Thank you

For more information
Visit: www.hsa-bc.ca/2023_Homeless_Counts.html
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