

*CARIBOO FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTRE*  
*"Strengthening the Quality of Personal, Family and Community Life"*



# **SOUTH CARIBOO COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS**

**A Research Project Funded by  
THE NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE**

**Prepared by**

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## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

**In 2001, BC had the largest proportion of working poor of any province in Canada – nearly twice the national rate.**

**The Cariboo-Chilcotin Region experienced an 8% increase in the number of renters in housing need between 1996 and 2001.**

**When a comparison is made between renters and owners in the Fraser Basin, it is evident that renters (31.4%) are far more likely to be in housing need than owners (8.6%).**

**RBC's Housing Affordability bulletin shows that BC had the highest (worst) Affordability Index (63.7% for a standard two-storey house) in Canada in the first quarter of 2006, which means that an average BC household will pay 63.7% of its pre-tax income to cover mortgage payments, property taxes and utilities.**

**BC has the highest proportion of people living below the LICO (poverty line) of any Canadian province. In 2004, 18% of families and unattached individuals were below the after tax LICO, compared to the Canadian average of 15.2%.**

**In BC, low income rates have decreased by only 1.6% over a 10-year period, compared to a decrease of 18.3% for Canada as a whole.**

**The index of Economic Hardship (2005), produced by BC Statistics, considers a number of indicators, including the percentage of the population on income assistance, average household income and income inequality. The Cariboo Regional District experienced high rates of economic hardship.**

*Sustainability Snapshot  
2006 State of the Fraser Basin Report  
Fraser Basin Council  
[www.fraserbasin.ca](http://www.fraserbasin.ca)*

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## **THE HOMELESSNESS PROJECT**

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*The Bowling Alley*  
*The Movie Gallery*  
*The Royal Bank of Canada*  
*The South Cariboo Community Planning Council*  
*Tim Horton's*  
*TJ's Chinese & Western Cuisine*  
*Wheating Facilitation*  
*Yummer's En Route*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Overview

In September, 2006 the Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre Society in 100 Mile House received a grant from the National Homelessness Initiative for the purposes of conducting a research project on Homelessness.

This project was the result of collaborative discussions among members of the local Community Planning Council who identified a need to develop a community strategy to deal with homelessness issues. The committee wanted to assess the extent of the homelessness issue in 100 Mile House and area, evaluate existing resources and their effectiveness, and identify gaps and ways to address them. Priorities were also identified to educate and increase awareness of homelessness issues among the general public, and to establish a communication and reference network to ensure that the community was working together to support the homeless and those at risk.

### Definitions

For the purposes of this research, the broader definition of homelessness was used to identify those who are *absolutely homeless* (without physical shelter) and those that are *relatively homeless* (those who live in spaces that are inadequate because they are temporary, not affordable, don't meet basic health and safety standards, are overcrowded or otherwise undesirable).

A household is in *core housing need* if its housing falls below at least one of the standards for adequacy, suitability or affordability, and it spends 30% or more of its pre-tax income to pay the median rent of local housing.

*Affordable housing* is defined by Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation as shelter for which a person pays not more than one third of their income, including utilities.

Those *at risk for homelessness* are generally defined as those who live in inadequate, unaffordable housing and are paying 50% or more of their income for shelter.

The project also attempted to identify the number of community members with *risk factors* that could lead to homelessness, such as inadequate income, economic hardship, chronic mental or physical health problems, substance abuse issues, lack of life skills or inadequate social supports.

### Methodology

The Project Coordinator developed two surveys, one for service providers and one for community members with housing issues. The community surveys were distributed through local agency and government offices, churches, the library, a local food bank and

a Laundromat. Donations enabled us to offer a \$10 gift certificate to those who completed and returned them. The Project Coordinator visited most of the local agencies and the Community Planning Council to distribute the service provider surveys. A total 115 community surveys and 34 service provider surveys were considered for this report.

The Project Coordinator also did a number of group presentations on homelessness and the results of the surveys, including the Mayor and Council, service clubs, special interest groups and youth gatherings. Two focus groups and a community forum were held to give the general public an opportunity for input.

### **Service Provider Perspectives**

Service providers reported that homelessness is definitely an issue in 100 Mile House and area. At the moment there is a critical shortage of rental properties within 100 Mile itself, due to a real estate boom in 2006 when many rental properties were sold. Service providers reported having clients who searched for several months to find accommodation. People have had to move to outlying areas and in some cases into substandard housing designed for recreational use, without basic amenities, poorly constructed or not properly insulated. Some are living in shelter not meant for human habitation, such as buses, horse trailers or garden sheds. Living outside 100 Mile creates transportation issues for those with no vehicle or lack of funds to make trips to town for work, health care, shopping or social supports.

Service Providers agreed that all populations of homeless exist in 100 Mile: single adults, families with children, abused women, youth, aboriginal people and seniors. When asked which categories should be the highest priority to target, the answers tended to reflect the population groups the service providers worked with. Some said it was a hard question because everyone deserves a home but some groups such as children and elders are more vulnerable and homelessness in childhood often leads to social problems later in life. However, the point was also made that there are a lot of social supports for families, but very little for single adults.

Service providers were asked the question, "If money were no object, what services could or should be provided to help address the issues of the homeless or those at risk of homelessness in this community?" The number one answer was more low income/subsidized housing. Other priorities included an emergency shelter/hostel, supportive or transitional housing, and a regular soup kitchen or meal program.

### **Community Perspectives**

Community Survey respondents identified a lack of good quality, affordable housing in 100 Mile area. Over half the respondents said they were not living in permanent housing but were doubled up with friends, relatives, boyfriends or girlfriends. About a third of respondents said they left their last permanent residence because they couldn't afford the rent. Another third cited poor quality housing or unhealthy living conditions.

Food security was an issue as well; over half of respondents said they regularly use the local food banks, and that they go hungry sometimes because there is no money for food. Over half the respondents said they needed counselling, especially in the areas of mental health, addictions and employment. When asked what other community services, programs or facilities should be in 100 Mile House to help reduce homelessness or risk of homelessness, those most mentioned were an Emergency Shelter/Hostel, a Drop-In Centre/Soup Kitchen, more affordable housing, transportation to and from rural areas, and an Addiction Treatment Program or Recovery House.

Participants at the focus groups and community forum identified the need for a community planner to coordinate homelessness initiatives, increased public awareness of homelessness issues and what resources are available, and an advocate to support low income individuals to access services. Other needs mentioned were an outreach centre, more free clothing and household goods distribution, back to work programs, and transportation solutions. A number of improvements around food security were suggested, including increased hours at food banks, food recovery programs, and increased support for community gardens/kitchens.

Some participants were emphatic about the need to move from just talking about the issues to actually doing something about them. There appears to be a good cross-section of community members willing to work together to find solutions and work in practical ways on an action plan.

### **Summary**

Much discussion has taken place with service providers and individual community members on what the homelessness issues are in 100 Mile House. The Coordinator was often asked with a certain amount of skepticism, “Do we even *have* any homeless in 100 Mile?” The answer to that question is a resounding “Yes!” We do have a homelessness problem, less obvious than in larger urban centres, but still it exists.

It has been said that there are three things that contribute to homelessness: lack of income, lack of social supports and lack of affordable housing. In 100 Mile House, the most critical need is for housing – available and affordable – and several types of housing are needed:

- low cost, affordable housing for individuals and families, and
- emergency, transitional and supportive housing, particularly for adults, battered women, youth leaving foster care, the mentally ill and those with substance abuse issues.

These needs cannot be addressed overnight. There are agencies working now on low-income housing projects for the area that may help to alleviate the situation over the next few years. This is an issue that needs to be kept to the forefront as new money becomes available from federal and provincial sources. In the interim, creative ways need to be explored to find or develop new housing options.

There are other physical needs that have come out of this survey that we may be able to address in the immediate future. The surveys have shown that there is a need for a regular daily hot meal for those who need it, increased access to food bank services, more free clothing for our harsh winter weather and some type of outreach or drop-in centre where individuals and families can access supports and obtain help navigating the system.

There are many community members who have the motivation, resources and capabilities to assist in practical ways. This could mean donating money, food, in-kind resources or volunteer hours. This Project has had some success in increasing awareness of homelessness issues but there is still work to be done to fully engage the communities in the Region, and make a real difference in our community in the months and years ahead.

### **WHY IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING IMPORTANT TO YOUR COMMUNITY?**

#### **Affordable housing:**

- **Helps seniors and people with disabilities maintain their independence.**
- **Helps people remain healthier, resulting in health & social support cost savings.**
- **Is a positive resource in our communities, which continues to meet local needs over the long-term.**
- **Helps create disposable income, enabling families to better participate in community life.**
- **Means jobs in housing development, construction and on-going management and maintenance work.**

**“Affordable Housing Backgrounder”**  
**BC Non-Profit Housing Association**  
[www.bcnpha.bc.ca](http://www.bcnpha.bc.ca)

## PART I      METHODOLOGY

### 1.1      Project Overview

The South Cariboo Community Response to Homelessness Project came about as a result of discussions by local service providers involved with the South Cariboo Community Planning Council. Previous research projects in the Williams Lake/Quesnel area confirmed the multi-faceted factors existing in the South Cariboo that contribute to people becoming homeless. In April 2006, these CPC member agencies identified the need for a local research project, and collaborated to prepare an application for funding of a homelessness response and prevention plan. The Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre Society was selected as the agency most suited to host the project, due to the diversity of services provided for young families and their designation as a COA accredited agency.

The Project was created with the following objectives:

- To develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to help homeless Canadians move out of the cycle of homelessness and prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness,
- To provide communities with the tools to develop a range of interventions to stabilize the living arrangements of homeless individuals and families,
- To encourage self-sufficiency where possible, and
- To prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness.

To achieve these objectives, the Homeless Advisory Committee outlined the following priority: **building a community response to homelessness through capacity and partnership development**. In addressing this priority the Cariboo Family Enrichment Center Society engaged a part-time Project Coordinator to build a long-term, sustainable, comprehensive, community-based and community-oriented approach to homelessness and at-risk of homelessness, in the community of 100 Mile House and surrounding area, through the development of a community strategy.

The activities of the Project were:

- To collect and evaluate homelessness information and data, such as social, legal and health needs, by conducting surveys and canvassing service agencies.
- To consult and educate in partnership with the community through two focus groups and one symposium/forum, which would seek community input on homelessness issues.
- To create and implement sustainable strategies by helping agencies modify mandates to dovetail cross-sectoral services, identifying possible funding resources, and establishing a communications and reference network.
- To conduct a community assessment and final report, this would include an evaluation.

The Expected Results were:

- Coordination of a local response to homelessness in order to increase the involvement of organizations in addressing homelessness issues.
- Implementation of responses into a comprehensive, sustainable cross-community strategy, to be documented in the final report.
- Establishment of a model for similar communities to assist with issues of homelessness and at-risk of homelessness, to be documented in the final report.

## **1.2 Characteristics of the Project Area**

The South Cariboo is situated in the Central Interior of British Columbia. The District of 100 Mile House is centrally located on Highway 97, the main north-south route through the province, between the communities of Cache Creek to the south and Williams Lake to the north. 100 Mile House was originally one of the stopping points along the Cariboo Gold Rush Trail of the 1860's, and was given its name because it is 100 miles from the starting point at Lillooet.

Today, the District of 100 Mile House is approximately 51 square kilometers in size with a population of just under 1900 residents. However, 100 Mile House provides services to 20,000 or more residents in the surrounding subdivisions and communities of the Cariboo Regional District. This presents a challenge to the service providers of the municipality, and must be considered when planning and funding community resources.

Although the unemployment rate in 100 Mile House is 13.2% and in the surrounding Cariboo Regional District 14.3%, as compared to the BC average of 8.5% (BC Stats 2001), a significant segment of the population is currently employed in forestry or related industries, which have enjoyed somewhat of a "boom" in recent years due to the harvesting of mountain pine beetle wood. While it remains difficult to predict how long this relative economic prosperity will last, members of the community anticipate eventual changes to the forest industry that could have drastic social and economic effects on the region. The Homelessness Project is seen as not only way to identify and meet present housing and social needs, but as a tool for obtaining new resources to address future housing and social issues.

## **1.3 Project Parameters**

The Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre Society administered the funds for the Homelessness Project, including hiring and supervising the Project Coordinator. CFEC is a society governed by a Board of Directors made up of community members, and is funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Interior Health, and community and corporate donations. The Centre provides confidential counselling and professional services for individuals and families such as one-to-one counselling for all ages, family mediation, family services, support and resources for child care providers, workshops, courses and fee for service programs.

The targeted area for the project was the District of 100 Mile House, and the outlying subdivisions and communities in the Cariboo Regional District whose residents use the services of 100 Mile House, i.e. Forest Grove, Canim Lake, Lac la Hache, 108 Mile Ranch, Horse Lake, Lone Butte, the Interlakes and 70 Mile House..

The Project was scheduled to begin September 1<sup>st</sup> but a Project Coordinator was not hired until October 30<sup>th</sup>. Surveys were developed, distributed and collected from November 2006 to the end of January 2007. Presentations were made to various groups over the five month period to increase awareness of homelessness issues and garner support for the Project. Results were compiled in February, and the final report was completed and circulated in March, 2007.

#### **1.4 Research Approach**

Much of the research data was obtained through surveys – one for service providers and another for community members with housing issues. The Coordinator circulated the surveys through various local agencies, churches and individuals, with the premise that these individuals would know people with housing issues who could be encouraged to complete the survey and assisted with the process if necessary. Gift certificates were donated by local businesses, and more purchased with cash donations from local bank employees and members of a service club. These \$10 gift certificates were given as an incentive for community members to complete and return the surveys.

Approximately 400 Community Surveys were distributed, with 115 of those completed and returned. One other was considered spoiled and removed from the survey results and another 14 came in too late to be considered in the results. Approximately 100 Service Provider Surveys were distributed, and 34 completed and returned.

The Coordinator personally contacted, and in many cases visited, the majority of service providers and churches in the area to explain the project and distribute both types of surveys. Educational presentations were done with client groups at the Canadian Mental Health Association, Youth Centre, Storefront and Alternate Schools, and the Cariboo Family Resource Centre. Presentations were made to the Mayor and Council of the District of 100 Mile House, the Old Age Pensioners Association of Lac La Hache, the Lioness Club and the Rotary Club. Unfortunately presentations scheduled for the Canim Lake after school club and the Foster Parent Association had to be postponed, and were unable to be rescheduled before the end of the Project term.

A focus group was held January 17<sup>th</sup> at the Evangelical Free Church in 100 Mile which was attended by 19 service providers and interested community members. The purpose of the Focus Group was to increase awareness of homelessness issues and to discuss the extent of the problem in 100 Mile House. On March 8<sup>th</sup> a community forum was held at The Lodge in 100 Mile House to educate the general public about homelessness, present the results of the surveys and give the community the opportunity to provide input. Approximately 40 people attended the Forum.

A Homelessness Advisory Committee was formed and has held regular month meetings since early December, with an average of 10 people in attendance each time. The group provided feedback to the Coordinator throughout the Project. On March 20<sup>th</sup> a special focus group, consisting of the Advisory Committee and other interested community members, assisted with developing the Recommendations of the report into an Action Plan of both short and long term initiatives. They will continue to work toward these goals after the Project completion date.

### **1.5 Advertising (Free and Paid)**

Posters were created by computer early in the project, and circulated to the local service providers via email and delivery to agency offices for posting on bulletin boards. Larger colored posters left over from Homelessness Week were copied in quantity, and the smaller poster attached with our local information. These were posted up all over town, at the two malls, in local shops and laundromats and on church bulletin boards.

The South Cariboo Community Planning Council provided free announcements of Project events in their newsletter, “Well on the Way”.

A press release was issued in mid-December, resulting in excellent coverage from both local newspapers, the 100 Mile House Free Press and the 100 Mile House Advisor. The Coordinator was interviewed by reporters from both papers and several pieces of varying lengths were published over the next three months. Three paid advertisements were purchased in each paper to promote the Community Form in the weeks prior to March 8<sup>th</sup> and a final ad on March 21<sup>st</sup> to express thanks for support received.

CKBX Radio (The Wolf) provided free advertising of the Project through several community announcements. A paid announcement was purchased for the Community Forum which aired three times. In addition, the Coordinator was interviewed on the morning show on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

Information on the first Focus Group and the Community Forum were placed free of charge on the Inside BC Web Site. Information was also circulated to several churches and posted on notice boards and in some Sunday bulletins.

### **1.6 Recurring Themes**

The following issues featured prominently in survey responses and community input at the Focus Group and community forum:

- Critical shortage of available and affordable housing in the area
- Social Problems – Alcohol & drug use, spousal abuse, mental illness, concurrent disorders.
- Unemployment and the need for back to work programs
- Welfare/disability rates too low
- The necessity of living in substandard or unsafe accommodation

- Food security issues
- Transportation challenges
- Lack of local support services such as emergency shelters, addiction treatment facilities, and legal aid.

## **1.7 Challenges Faced**

The main challenge faced during this project was getting the surveys returned. The gift certificates were helpful in motivating people to complete the survey; however, in some cases they were done quickly, with inconsistencies or questions left unanswered. The majority were dropped off anonymously at the office, and while this protected the identity of the participant, it didn't provide an opportunity for the researcher to meet or discuss any of the questions with the individual.

The Project Coordinator had difficulty finding opportunities to meet directly with the target group. Better data could have been obtained by the Coordinator personally interviewing each survey respondent. However, this was not possible due to time constraints and lack of venues to meet the target group. Some agencies did not want to be involved in distributing the surveys or persuading clients to complete them, due to concerns of confidentiality and a desire to avoid the perception that one had to complete the survey to obtain assistance. Unfortunately, many surveys went out but not too many came back from local agencies, probably due to heavy workloads. In spite of the challenges, though, about 25% of the community surveys were returned and 33% of the service provider surveys.

Unfortunately, no one over age 65 completed a survey, despite several attempts by the Coordinator to meet with local seniors groups. However, some information was gathered on seniors' issues through contact with local service providers.

The local churches were helpful when interviewed by the Coordinator but only one service provider survey was returned from a church. This was disappointing as the churches are doing a valuable work by providing assistance to transients and others who come looking for a meal or shelter. However, several clergy met one-to-one with the Coordinator to provide input, attended or sent representatives to the community events, supported the Project by donating space to hold a Focus Group, or made a financial donation for gift certificates.

## **PART II SERVICE PROVIDER SURVEY RESULTS**

These results are based on a total of **34 survey respondents**.

### **3.1 Service Provider Profile**

The following table shows the agencies and staff who completed the service provider surveys. There was a good cross-section of agencies represented, and those individuals who completed the survey appeared to put a lot of thought into their responses.

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Surveys Completed</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>Bridge Lake Community School</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
<b>Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Cariboo Family Connections Team, FASD Team, Child Care Resource &amp; Referral, Family Service Team, Dietician, Intake &amp; Facilitation Worker</b>
<b>Cariboo Mall</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mall Security</b>
<b>Success by Six/Make Children First</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
<b>St. Timothy's Anglican Church</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Minister</b>
<b>Canadian Mental Health Association</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Executive Director, Activity Outreach Workers</b>
<b>District of 100 Mile</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mayor</b>
<b>Interior Health</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Addictions Counsellor &amp; Mental Health Intake/Crisis Worker</b>
<b>Ministry of Children &amp; Family Development</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Social Workers</b>
<b>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Victims Services</b>
<b>School District # 27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Student Support Services, Sr. Secondary FN Counsellor, Alternate Program Youth Care Worker</b>
<b>Women's Centre Society</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>
<b>Landlord</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Property Manager</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	

### 3.2 Service Provider Survey Results

Although most agencies surveyed do not keep specific records of the number of people with housing issues, the respondents agreed that homelessness, or risk of, is definitely an issue in the 100 Mile House area. The following is a sampling of responses when questioned as to the extent of the problem:

- *“I believe the problem is much larger than it appears on the surface. Taking into account the broader definition, I think there is a large population locally that is homeless.”*
- *“Very extensive. Very little choice available for housing. It has taken our agency up to three months to find housing for a single person.”*
- *“I am not aware of any people with no shelter, but do know of women who cannot afford any local housing and are forced to live a distance from town with no transportation and thus no access to jobs – a real Catch 22!”*
- *“I believe it applies primarily to mentally ill adults as well as disengaged youth. As well, some really young children are victims of homelessness.”*
- *“Significant for youth and low income singles.”*
- *“Many people that live on pensions/disability/Income Assistance are at risk of homelessness.”*
- *“I know a few families have trouble paying rent and if they were evicted for non-payment of rent, they would have nowhere else to go.”*
- *“Most of the people are not on the street but have no suitable long-term accommodation.”*
- *“Families with children (have) concerns, fears, anxiety regarding possible homelessness.”*

Workers reported having to take time away from programming to help clients with their housing searches. Some related stories of unscrupulous landlords who held bidding wars to get the highest price for their rental unit. Others said it appeared that certain landlords would not return phone calls because they didn't want their particular clientele as tenants.

#### ***Factors:***

Service Provider survey respondents stated that the major factors contributing to homelessness in 100 Mile are lack of sufficient and affordable housing, social issues, welfare/disability rates too low, life skills deficits and unemployment. When asked what population group should be the highest priority to target, many said families with children, but recognized that everyone deserves a home, and that often singles don't have the supports that families do. And someone said stated bluntly:

*“There are no rental accommodations for any sector in 100 Mile at present.”*

#### ***Food Security:***

Several agencies responded to the question about providing food programs. Although the 100 Mile House Food Bank is the most used community service, some survey respondents expressed frustration that the hours of operation are limited to only two

days per month and it is closed during the summer months. It was also stated that the process requires the individual to produce an unrealistic amount of documentation, and applicants feel disrespected. Concerns were also expressed that although the recipients seem to appreciate whatever food is given to them, the donations are mainly dry goods and not nutritious enough, particularly to feed children.

Several service providers are helping those of their clients with food security issues, often with assistance from the 100 Mile Food Bank. The Cariboo Family Connection Program provides a weekly drop-in lunch program for women and their children, and has an emergency food cupboard. The Canadian Mental Health Association has a meal twice a week for its clientele. Area schools have lunch programs daily at the elementary level and several times a week at the secondary schools. The Youth Centre cooks dinner four nights a week for the youth in attendance. The Loaves and Fishes Outreach Program provides emergency food, clothing, counselling and spiritual support in times of crisis. Several agencies mentioned providing food hampers on an emergency basis and at Christmas.

However, there is no daily hot meal in 100 Mile House available to anyone who needs it. One survey respondent had this suggestion:

*“The community should work together to feed people – coordinate free meals and food banks so that there is free food every day. That way it would not fall all on one person or agency, but they could work as a team. They should present their plan to local businesses who could donate food. Town council, the RCMP and local businesses need to realize there would be less stealing/vandalism if more food were provided.”*

#### **Shelter:**

Another concern is the lack of a hostel or emergency shelter in 100 Mile House. Survey responses and interviews indicate that shelter is sometimes provided on an emergency basis by issuing vouchers to local motels or hotels. Most churches will provide this if someone comes to their door requesting assistance. They have also provided food vouchers or a bus ticket to get a client to a hostel in Williams Lake or Kamloops. The Women’s Centre has a safe house network in operation to serve their clientele of abused women. However, when asked what additional services should be provided to address issues of homelessness or at risk, there were some interesting responses:

- *“For youth – transition into independent living (i.e. homes with suites/resources) and adults willing to supervise.”*
- *“Programs to walk people through the bureaucracy to find social assistance and housing.”*
- *“Low income housing project with adequate services and supports, e.g. crisis management, counselling, budgeting”*
- *“Increase public transportation to outlying areas – I think people stay in inadequate housing because of transportation issues.”*

- *“In a rental market, landlords are not able to rent houses or apartments at that level that a lot of low income people can afford. Costs to maintain rental units go up but the rent increases don’t keep up with the costs.”*
- *“I know many people struggle with this and stay on a friend’s couch but do not think they are homeless.”*
- *“Drop-in Centres that provide food, essentials (soap, toothbrush etc.), clothing, as well as life skills programming, employment counselling, support, etc. (A one-stop facility).”*
- *“Emergency manual for agencies to use when locating help”*
- *“Detox and a halfway house – many people who want to get clean and sober do not have a support system.”*
- *“People caught up in poverty, homelessness, mental health and addictions develop anti-social coping mechanisms such as part-time jobs clipping marijuana. Conduct-disordered youth take advantage of people with disabilities. Old guys offer couch services to young girls, etc. Everyone seems to be exploiting someone else in order to “stay afloat”. Some people have become so complacent in this lifestyle (ingrained – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation) that change seems impossible, inconceivable and hopeless.”*

### **THE PRICE OF HOMELESSNESS**

**In 2001, the BC Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services published a study examining costs of homelessness in BC. It found that:**

**Homeless people cost taxpayers up to \$40,000 an year in service and shelter costs. By comparison, the costs of a person in supportive housing ranged to \$28,000 a year. Other Canadians spend an average of \$11,200 a year on shelter.**

**Homeless people cost taxpayers an average of \$11,410 a year in costs via the criminal justice system. The average taxpayer by comparison pays \$362 a year to maintain the system.**

**Homeless people cost \$7,893 a year in social services; the average taxpayer pays \$179 a year to support those.**

**Homeless people cost \$4,714 a year in health care; the average Canadian uses \$2,633 per year in publicly funded service.**

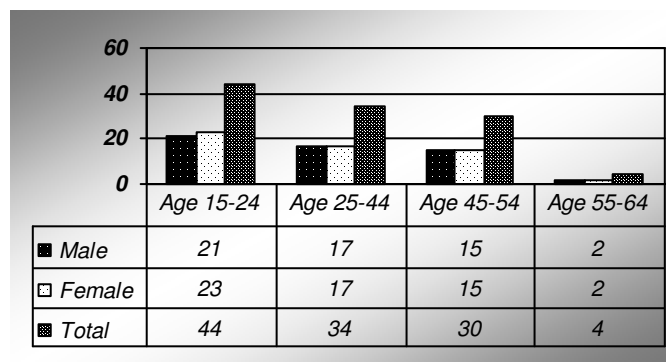
**Seven Solutions to Homelessness**  
**By Monte Paulson**  
<http://thetyee.ca>

## **PART III COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS**

The survey results are based on the responses of 115 respondents who completed the Community Survey. Of these, a total of 32 reported to be married or living common-law, and these had a total of 24 children living with them, so it is possible that the participants represented as many as 171 people. However, this is speculation, since the surveys were returned anonymously, and there is no way of knowing if the spouse of a participant also completed a survey.

Not all respondents completed the survey in full. On some surveys questions were left blank, either because the participant preferred not to answer or didn't know. Most questions had boxes which could be ticked off to make the responses easier. The last two questions required a written answer and were frequently left blank or answered minimally, which could be due to the length of the survey or perhaps to the respondent's literacy issues.

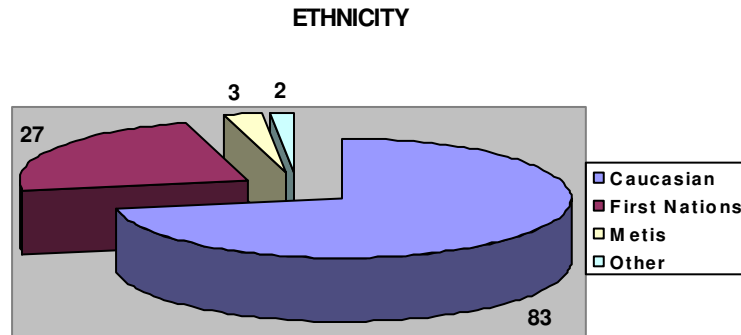
### **2.1 Participant Profiles**



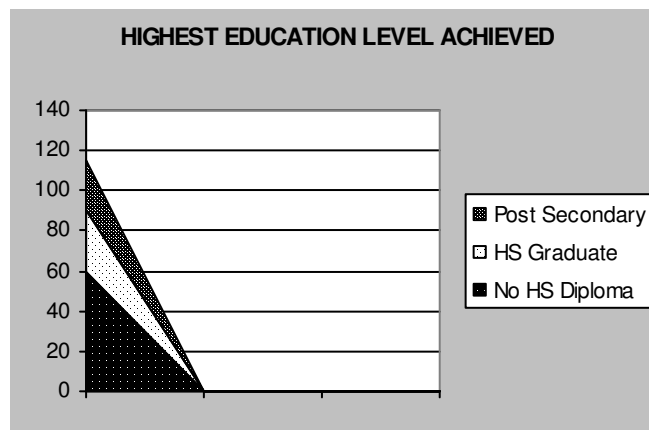
Participants were almost equally divided by gender. Over a third of respondents were young people in the age range of 15-24 years. This is in part due to the fact that we made a good connection with the staff at the Youth Centre and alternate schools, who encouraged their youth to complete and return the survey. However, it is likely also a reflection of the high numbers of youth with housing issues in the area. Youth Centre workers shared that it is not uncommon for them to close the doors at quitting time to youth who have nowhere to sleep that night. Some respondents are youth in foster care, who soon will reach age 19 and be forced to become independent, whether they are ready or not.

Thirty-five respondents were from the age group of 25-44, and 30 respondents were between the ages of 45-54. These two age groups represent the largest population group in the Cariboo, and include "baby boomers" in the range of 40-60 years of age, the largest segment of the Canadian population. Only four respondents were in the 55-64 range and no seniors over 65 completed the survey. Even though attempts were made to connect with seniors groups to talk about the survey, there was little interest, perhaps because

seniors are often reticent to share private information or admit to having housing difficulties.



The majority of survey respondents consider themselves to be of Caucasian ancestry. About one quarter of the participants were First Nations, no doubt due to the close proximity of the Canim Lake Band located about 35 miles northeast of 100 Mile House, although a few were from other bands..



Thirty respondents said they graduated from high school or had their GED, and another 25 had some post-secondary education. Certainly it was necessary for respondents to have some degree of literacy to be able to complete the survey, but the results showed that housing issues come to those with all levels of education. Forty-nine respondents had income from some type of paid employment, although the majority had only part-time or casual part-time employment.

The majority of respondents are not transients – 91 respondents are residents of 100 Mile and another 21 are from the surrounding communities (Canim Lake, Horse Lake, Lac la Hache, 103 Mile, 108 Mile). 84 respondents have lived in their community for two years or more, and of those, 67 for more than three years.

Twenty-eight respondents described themselves as living with a physical disability, and 35 as living with a mental illness.

## **2.2 Community Survey Results**

### ***Extent of Homelessness***

Most participants of the community survey didn't answer the question about the extent of homelessness in 100 Mile. Those that did (27) saw it as a significant problem and several mentioned that it is "overlooked", "going unnoticed", "more than people think" or "not as visible as in the cities". Several gave suggestions – "needs to be a center", "more subsidized housing", "need a shelter/hostel, soup line".

### ***Factors***

With regard to the factors that contribute to homelessness in 100 Mile, respondents checked social problems, unemployment, not enough decent, affordable housing, welfare rates too low, minimum wage too low, not enough supports for low income families and many jobs only part-time. Other factors cited:

- "Community Apathy"
- "All the money goes to drugs"
- "No hope for change"
- "Medicine too expensive, i.e. insulin"
- "Prejudice"
- "Poor parent/teen relationship skills"
- "Welfare waiting period too long – no emergency support available"
- "Welfare is very tough for some people to get. It's almost a full-time job just the process you have to go through. Waiting for income is three weeks!"

### ***Awareness of Resources Available***

It seems that most respondents are well aware of the local food banks. Others mentioned low income housing, "if you can get in!" It was noted that there is not enough of it, and that there is too long a waiting period. In truth, the only subsidized family housing project in town, Cariboo Trail Terrace, has not had a vacancy in five years. It was encouraging to note that 59 respondents were aware of the social service programs available to them. Another 32 respondents identified spiritual support as being available.

### ***Total Monthly Income***

Income levels of respondents varied quite a bit, with about almost half stating their income was less than \$400 per month. These may include individuals who have their shelter costs paid by income assistance directly to the landlord; consequently they only receive the "support" portion. Eighty-five percent of respondents had a total income of less than \$1000 per month.

### *Source of Income*

<b>Source of Income</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>
<b>Full time paid employment</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Part time paid employment</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Part time casual employment</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Income Assistance</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Disability Assistance</b>	<b>23</b>

When asked if they had ever supplemented their income through “alternative employment”, 25 responded theft of goods, 23 dealing drugs, 8 exchanging sexual favors and 11 stealing from family.

### *Current Housing Situation*

100 Mile House presently has a zero vacancy rate and this was reflected in the survey responses. Only 55 respondents (less than half) said they were currently renting an apartment or house by themselves or with a spouse or roommate

Twenty-two respondents admitted they had no permanent place to live and another 37 said they were living with family members, friends or in foster care. Thirty-two respondents said that in the month prior to completing the survey, they had couch-surfed at friends or family, and in spite of winter weather conditions, 13 said they had slept outside, or in a porch, barn, hut or other place not meant for residential use.

### *Reason for Leaving Last Permanent Housing*

When asked the reason for leaving their last permanent residence, here were the responses:

<b>Reason for Leaving</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>
Couldn't afford rent or rent & utilities	45
Poor quality housing, house needed repairs	22
Overcrowded	18
Unhealthy living conditions	26
Substance misuse by self or others	43
Other	29

### *Rental Costs*

The responses to this question were somewhat varied. It appears that some respondents have their rent paid for them directly to the landlord. Of those who said they paid rent, some did not disclose the amount. The majority of those who did give a dollar figure are paying between \$200-600 per month. Over half are paying 50% or more of their monthly income just in rent, not counting any utilities.

Several mentioned the necessity of having a roommate to be able to afford their current housing, the stress of finding and keeping good roommates, and the fear that they would lose a roommate and lose their housing. One respondent said *“The last three renters skipped the last month’s rent, leaving me broke.”* Some mentioned disadvantages of having people living with them who didn’t pay their share, had addiction issues, were abusive or stole from them.

### ***Basic Needs***

Food security appears to be an issue in 100 Mile House and area. 45 respondents said they do not have a regular supply of food. 60 respondents indicated that they use the local food bank, 53 once a month or more. 61 respondents said they go hungry because there is no money to buy food, 40 or those once a week or more. Some comments:

- *“Kids never go hungry...I’ll go without instead.”*
- *“I don’t go hungry but I have to stretch everything, and I can’t get (things like) juice, vitamins.”*
- *“There’s no food bank in my area, and I can’t afford to go to town. Also, I have managed so far.”*

Although the majority of respondents shop at second-hand stores, 39 said they don’t have enough clothing for all seasons of the year. 54 said they receive free clothing; sources include gifts or hand-me-downs from family & friends, the White Feather Centre, the Women’s Centre Free Store, shoplifting *“from clothing stores that sell it for too much”* or *“dumpster-diving”*. One mom commented, *“It’s hard to keep kids clothed because they grow so fast.”*

### ***Health Issues***

When asked if they needed counselling, 57 respondents said yes, 44 said no. The types most needed were mental health counselling (28 responses), alcohol counselling (24), drug counselling (24), and employment counselling (22). These numbers include those who said no to counselling but then filled in answers under the types needed.

Forty-four respondents said they have special health considerations – those checked off included mental health issues, back problems, diabetes, chronic pain and Hep B-C. Forty respondents said they need health care, 53 dental care, 53 eye glasses and 14 help with hearing problems.

Comments received regarding health issues:

- *“Due to disability, I have a hard time dealing with firewood for heat, and transportation to the doctor, etc.”*
- *“Pharmacare provides me with anti-depressants I can’t afford.”*
- *“Health – very dissatisfied – rural not there.”*
- *“Have a treatment centre for alcohol and drug abuse. To get their lives on the right track.”*

- *“Medical coverage for low income prescriptions is backwards. Maybe discounted rate year round instead of after you pay a certain amount. Medicine is too expensive.”*
- *“Medicine too expensive, i.e. insulin.”*
- *“Had to leave last permanent residence for medical reasons”.*
- *“Disability income is very low...\$1023/month for both of us and some single people get \$875.”*

### ***Community Services***

The services most used in 100 Mile House and area were stated as the Food Banks (54 respondents), Income Assistance (48), Health Services (32), Church (26), mental health services (25), counselling (18) and the women’s centre (17).

For the most part, respondents were satisfied with these services with the exception of Income Assistance and the Food Bank. There were several comments about the indignities, lack of respect and lengthy waiting period for welfare:

- *“Even with a place to live, homelessness is just a month away at any given time. And at today’s high costs, it is totally impossible to maintain any sort of comfort, if you are on social assistance...and if you try, you are penalized anyway.”*
- *“My perception of welfare is ‘Don’t bother’, their job is to keep people off assistance and they won’t help you.”*
- *“Welfare is a necessity – give it (to) those who need it without making them feel ashamed of needing help. Especially single parents!”*

When asked what issues they had received help with in the last year, the issues most mentioned were health (83), mental health (68), addictions (41), food (40), income assistance (38), assault/abuse (28), legal issues (24), family/parenting (22).and employment (21).

### ***Suggestions For Other Community Services, Programs Or Facilities***

- *“A 24 hour hotline to aid with food/clothing/housing/cash. A person should (get) aid when they need it, not two weeks later.”*
- *“There are a lot of rural areas, people need rides into town.”*
- *“Don’t know where to go for help and don’t have a ride.”*
- *“Better monitoring of rental property quality.”*
- *“A proper advocate who knows social services and disability regulations to explain and help fill out applications properly.”*
- *“Need an emergency shelter because kids fight with their parents over drugs or not getting along and end up staying with the wrong crowd or on the streets.”*
- *“Need a hostel of some sort ASAP, for example people just moving to 100 Mile and they don’t have a place to stay.”*
- *“I think the biggest issue is housing. I searched for three months before getting a place.”*

### *Final Comments on the Issues*

- *“I know at least ten people who are homeless and sleep in dumpsters or hallways in apartment buildings (cars, baseball diamond when it was warmer).”*
- *“I lost two friends that froze to death because they could not receive any income and had no place to live.”*
- *“The public needs to be educated about homelessness. They need to be encouraged to rent out a bedroom...or convert part of a basement into an affordable rental unit...”*
- *“We as a community need to work on helping the homeless.”*
- *“Is something going to be done? Past this survey?”*
- *“Start doing something about it. Don’t just talk about it.”*
- *“If I had a home, I would go there!”*

#### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS THE BEST CURE**

**New York University researchers, following poor and homeless New Yorkers for five years, found that the main cause of family homelessness is the scarcity of affordable housing. Furthermore, they found that drug addiction, mental illness and other social problems were not the main cause of homelessness among families living in NYC.**

**Professor Marybeth Shinn said, “For the last six years, government and private foundations have worked under the assumption that behavioral disorders are the root cause of homelessness and that an individual cannot be stably housed until these disorders have been addressed....We found that subsidized housing succeeds in curing homelessness among families, regardless of behavioral disorders or other conditions. Whatever their problems – substance abuse, mental illness, physical illness or a history of incarceration – nearly all of the families in our study became stably housed when they received subsidized housing.**

**Professor Beth Weizman said, “Our research indicates that homelessness is not a permanent condition. People do get themselves out of the problem. But it only happens when some intervention occurs that provides them with access to the housing market.**

**Affordable Housing is the Best Cure for Family Homelessness  
[http://www.nyu.edu/publicaffairs/newsreleases/b\\_NYU\\_S5.shtml](http://www.nyu.edu/publicaffairs/newsreleases/b_NYU_S5.shtml)**

## **PART IV EDUCATION & AWARENESS**

### **4.1 Focus Group # 1 - Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>**

The first focus group was held in the lower auditorium at the Evangelical Free Church in 100 Mile House. It was a very suitable location as it has a number of small rooms which were used for the breakout groups. There were a total of 19 people in attendance, including representatives from the Youth Resource Centre, Cariboo Mall security, South Cariboo Community Planning Council, Bethel Chapel, St. Timothy's Anglican Church, School District #27, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ministry for Employment and Income Assistance, Nimshi Youth Ranch, White Feather Centre (Canim Lake), Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre, and several community members.

The agenda for the day included an educational presentation on homelessness issues ("Homelessness – What's it all about?") with discussion and handouts on the myths and stages of homelessness. Participants discussed four questions in small groups:

1. What is the extent of the homelessness issue in the 100 Mile area?
2. What are the risk factors that contribute to our residents being homeless or at risk of homelessness?
3. What are the barriers that our residents face in finding and keeping safe, affordable long-term housing?
4. What are some solutions, both short-term and long-term, to the homelessness issue in our area?

During the lunch break, the participants played "The Homelessness Game", a series of cards depicting various scenarios and the frustrations experienced by the homeless or those at risk. There was time for discussion afterwards and many commented on the effectiveness of the game.

Evaluation forms indicated that all felt the focus group was useful and most indicated that it increased their awareness of the issues. Thirteen participants indicated that they would like to be involved in future community meetings/activities to address the homelessness issue. The results of the focus group discussions have been expressed in various sections of this report. Please see the Appendices for the detailed notes taken that day.

### **4.2 Community Forum – Thursday, March 8th**

The all-day Community Forum was held at the Lodge Valley Room in 100 Mile House. There were approximately 40 people in attendance.

Drummers and singers from the Canim Lake First Nation opened the day in a good way. The first small group activity was an "At Risk Challenge" – each group was given a scenario describing an individual or family at risk for homelessness, and the assignment was to come up with a solution. The groups participated with enthusiasm and each presented their solutions to the larger group.

At various times throughout the day, four individuals shared their personal stories of past or present housing issues involving addiction, brain injury, disability and foster care. The Project Coordinator made a presentation of the results of the Project surveys, and we had a “Brainstorming Solutions” session. Just before lunch, the facilitator in another experience of “The Homelessness Game”.

In keeping with the theme of the day, lunch was simple but hearty fare – “Soup Kitchen Style”. During the lunch break participants were asked to rate the Solutions from the morning session according to priority. They were identified as follows:

- Community Planner, Advocate, Support Agency (75)
- Food Security Issues, including Food Bank, Food Recovery, Community Garden/Kitchen, Need for Collaboration, Soup Kitchen (43)
- Low Cost, Affordable, Appropriate, Accessible Housing (31)
- Raising Awareness (16)
- Back to Work Programs (15)
- Outreach (12)
- Transportation & Access (10)

Please see the Appendices for more detailed notes from the Brainstorming Solutions session.

A lively panel discussion in the afternoon featured the Executive Director of CMHA, the CMHA homelessness outreach worker, a local property manager and the Health Director from Canim Lake Band. The pastor of a local church shared information on their plans to build a new low-income senior’s housing project and a Community Outreach Centre.

Evaluation forms were completed by participants and here is a sampling of responses:

- *“The stories were very impactful; game was a great way to promote awareness”.*
- *“I particularly appreciated the stories of people who experienced homelessness.”*
- *“I liked the panel discussion and the stories of survivors.”*
- *“Lots of food for thought...It is important that the community be aware of the fact that people are homeless.”*
- *“The stories – the emotion injected the reality of the issue.”*
- *“Offering our students as workers or volunteers (community service projects) to assist with projects such as soup kitchens and construction etc.”*
- *“100 Mile does have homelessness. You may not see it like in the big city but it is definitely there...We need to decide on an action and do it. Start getting something done.”*
- *“We could use a central location with all organizations together in one building.”*
- *“Different people from the community, interest in the same issue. Stories were very helpful for people with ‘hands-on’ understanding.”*
- *“Finally more community people/services are willing to work together!”*
- *“Ideas that are generated to form a community plan.”*

Door prizes at the end of the day were carefully selected to match the theme, and each item was something normally considered rather insignificant but which would mean a lot to a homeless person, e.g. a bottle of water, a pair of socks, a phone card, a small blanket, a bag of buns with a can of sardines, etc.

### **4.3 Focus Group #2 – Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>**

Members of the Homelessness Advisory Committee met for the whole afternoon at the District Council Chambers. The purpose of the meeting was to review the Draft Recommendations of the Homelessness Project and create an Action Plan. There were 13 people present and several were new “members” who had attended the Community Forum and wanted to become more involved.

The meeting began with a guest speaker, the Executive Director of the Youth Centre, who shared his vision of creating a youth semi-independent living space and youth shelter on the second floor of the Youth Centre, a space which is currently vacant and available for lease. The proposed plan would subdivide the existing space into four sleeping rooms with a common kitchen and washroom facilities, to be used for older youth in foster care. The youth could live in the complex for up to one year, under the guidance of staff, as a preparation for living on their own. Two more bedrooms would be created for emergency shelter beds for youth. The project has the backing of the local Ministry of Children and Family Development, who urgently need such a facility for their youth in care. They would provide the operating funds. Some funding is needed for renovations to the building. It was agreed by all that this was an excellent project and the Committee would support it in whatever way possible.

Following this presentation, the group looked at the Draft Recommendations for the final homelessness project report and discussed each one in turn, making some adjustments and suggesting a couple of others to be added. Some priorities were defined and suggestions made for an Action Plan. This will be further discussed and developed at the next meeting of the Advisory Committee, scheduled for May 15<sup>th</sup>.

The name of the committee was amended and will now be “The South Cariboo Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee”. The Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis to work on developing a continuum of care for housing and homelessness issues. A Draft “Terms of Reference” for the Committee can be found in the Appendices.

#### 4.4 List of Activities During the Project

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>ATTENDING</b>
Nov. 21	Canadian Mental Health Client Group	CMHA	Presentation and help to complete surveys	10
Nov. 23	Community Planning Council	MCFD	Brief Presentation about Project and handed out surveys	15
Nov. 29	Storefront School	Behind Youth Center	Presentation on Homelessness & Project	9
Nov. 29	PSO Alternate School	PSO Senior High School	Presentation on Homelessness & Project	30
Nov. 0	Moms Drop-in Lunch	Cariboo Family Connections	Presentation on Homelessness & Project	20
Dec. 7	Homelessness Advisory Committee	Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre	Inaugural Meeting	9
Dec. 14	Evangelical Pastors Group	Evangelical Free Church	Info on Project, Distributed Surveys	5
Dec. 14	Rotary Club	Happy Landing Restaurant	Presentation on Homelessness & Project	25
Jan. 10	Homelessness Advisory Committee	Council Chambers	Project & community updates	10
Jan. 17	Focus Group	Evangelical Free Church	Increase awareness of homelessness; focused discussion on local issues	19
Feb. 8	Homelessness Advisory Committee	Council Chambers	Project & community updates	10
Mar. 8	Community Forum	The Lodge Valley Room	Increase awareness, share survey results; community input	40
Feb. 28	Lioness Club	United Church	Increase awareness; share project results	20
Mar. 7	OAP Assoc.	Lac La Hache	Increase awareness; share project results	18
Mar. 13	District of 100 Mile Council	Council Chambers	Increase awareness; share project results	13
Mar. 20	Homeless Advisory Committee	Council Chambers	Focus Group – develop recommendations into Action Plan	13

## **PART V MAJOR INFLUENCES ON HOUSING SITUATIONS**

This section discusses the major influences on the housing/homelessness issue in 100 Mile House and the surrounding area. This information was garnered from the brainstorming sessions of the Focus Groups and Community Forum, the comments on the surveys, and research done by the Project Coordinator.

### **5.1 Lack of Affordable Housing**

The District of 100 Mile House, a municipality of just under 1900 residents, is the “hub of the wheel” for the surrounding area of an additional 20,000 residents who live in the Cariboo Regional District. Most services are located in 100 Mile House, but at the moment there are no rental properties vacant, and no land on which to build any new housing developments. There are properties available out of town, but not necessarily rentals, or affordable for those on a low income, especially when considering the cost of transportation back and forth to work, shopping and health appointments. There are no buses in from most outlying communities and no taxi service in 100 Mile. And living in the country can be difficult if the person doesn’t have the money or the expertise to look after a country property.

There are people living in what might be termed “substandard” housing, both in town and in the rural areas. But what does substandard mean? Someone living in a cabin in the country may not feel they have “housing issues”. After all, one might think, this is the Cariboo - people may choose to live in a small, rustic home without indoor plumbing facilities in their quest to get away from the rat race of city life, or establish themselves on a newly purchased plot of land. “Choose” is the operative word here; many are living in substandard housing because they have no other option. It may be all they can find that is affordable, and they may have a landlord that is unwilling or unable to maintain the property.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Authority has provided guidelines around adequacy, suitability and affordability:

- Adequacy – indoor plumbing, hot and cold running water, bathing facilities; home generally in good repair (no damp or moldy areas, sturdy stairs and porches, solid foundations).
- Suitability – no more than 2 persons per bedroom; parents in a separate room from their children; separate bedroom for those 18 or older unless married or living common-law; children of opposite genders and over the age of 5 should not share a bedroom.
- Affordability – paying no more than 30% of income on shelter costs (rent or mortgage, water, electricity and fuel). Those households paying more than 50% of income on shelter costs are considered “at risk of becoming homeless”. Such persons are referred to as having a “core housing need”.

In some cases, in order to find a place in good condition, people are forced to pay a higher rent than they can afford, and they are unable to make ends meet unless they let

other things go, or find a roommate to share costs. Survey responses showed that living with someone else doesn't always work, for lots of reasons, but particularly if the other person doesn't pay their share, or moves out suddenly, leaving the main tenant in financial jeopardy. Once a person gets behind in rent it is very difficult to catch up, and if evicted, there are few places available. In 100 Mile House, a few landlords own most of the rental property, so once a person is evicted, they'll likely be blacklisted, and there's almost no chance that their application for another unit will be accepted.

## **5.2 Low Income Levels**

The main industry in 100 Mile House is forestry, and many working residents are employed at either one of the two mills, or in a related industry. As previously mentioned, the harvesting of Mountain Pine Beetle trees has given the area a boost for a time, but it is anticipated that this won't last, and the full impact of the situation will hit our community within a few years. There are other jobs available, primarily laboring or working in the retail or food service sector, but many are only part-time and don't pay enough to live on. Depending on their line of work, a person may have to work at more than one job to survive without going on welfare.

When people talk about the homeless, many say, "Why don't they just find a job? There are employers out there who can't find workers!" Unfortunately, for a person on a low income, it's not that simple. Finding employment when you have limited education, skills or experience is not easy. One student stated that at one of the food outlets in town, "*you have to be on the honor roll to get hired*". Many on low incomes find it difficult to do job searches because they can't afford the required deposit for a telephone, nor do they have the transportation resources to look for work. Employment may be seasonal, or the hours may fluctuate so the income is unreliable. If a person manages to get a job, there's the expense of purchasing work clothes and sometimes tools, finding or affording transportation to and from work, and vehicle maintenance. Shift work or split shifts may be required which makes finding child care extremely difficult.

Most low paying or part-time jobs have no benefits. If the person is ill and unable to work for a few days or longer, they won't get paid for the time off. Parents with children and no extended family nearby often have difficulty when a child gets sick and can't attend day care or the babysitter's home because they might be infectious. Just being able to afford child care on a low paying job is a feat. Some may be forgiven for staying on welfare, particularly those with children or chronic medical problems. At least their medical costs are covered.

Almost half of the survey respondents stated they were employed in some way, whether full-time, part-time or casual. A person working full-time at minimum wage is at risk for homelessness. Consider that taxes, CPP and EI must be deducted so the take-home pay is even less. The person may support a family, and their shelter costs are a huge factor. Some low income individuals must choose between paying rent or buying food, and end up spending all their income just to survive. There are many in our area that are "one

paycheque away from homelessness” because they are paying too much for shelter and have no safety net if something unforeseen happens.

One quarter of survey respondents stated they are on Income Assistance and another quarter on Disability Assistance. Earning exemptions for “employable” income assistance recipients receiving temporary benefits were eliminated in 2002. Any additional income earned is now deducted dollar for dollar from their welfare cheque. (Those on disability assistance are allowed to earn up to \$500 per month.).

The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (MEIA) recently announced an increase in welfare rates which will be effective April 1<sup>st</sup>. While this is a step in the right direction, income assistance rates are still much too low to meet basic needs of recipients.

The Social Planning and Research Council of BC did a comparison in 2005 of living costs and income assistance rates in BC.\* The following table shows the new MEIA monthly rates compared with SPARC BC’s estimate of “the cost of goods and services required for daily living (food, clothing, household supplies, personal care, transportation, child care, shelter and other costs associated with participation in community life”. The final column shows the Before-Tax Low-Income Cut-offs (LICOs), more popularly known as Canada’s poverty lines, as published by Statistics Canada. Persons and families living below these income levels are considered to be in “straitened circumstances” (subject to distress, privation or deficiency).

<b>Recipient (employable)</b>	<b>Income Assistance (2007)</b>	<b>SPARC BC’s Estimated Costs (2005)</b>	<b>Low-Income Cut-offs (Poverty Line) (2005)</b>
Single Male	\$610	\$1233.13	\$1356.08
Couple	\$877	\$1824.38	\$1688.08
Single Parent – one child	\$946	\$1882.39	\$2075.33
Couple – two children	\$1101	\$2474.42	\$2519.83

In our area, as in other parts of BC and Canada, there are low-income jobs available which employers find it difficult to fill. If those on income assistance could earn extra income *up to the poverty line* without having earnings deducted from their Income Assistance cheque, it would be an increased incentive to find employment. Employers would fill their jobs, those new or returning to the work force would gain experience and be able to get on their feet financially, and there would be no additional cost to MEIA.

\* For more information see [http://www.sparc.bc.ca/resources\\_publications/left\\_behind](http://www.sparc.bc.ca/resources_publications/left_behind)

### 5.3 Aboriginal Issues

A relatively high percentage of respondents were First Nations, which may be due to the close proximity to 100 Mile House of the Canim Lake First Nation. Community members have shared that First Nations housing issues are often not as visible because the family unit is very strong and members will take in other family members and care

for them when they are in need, so those individuals will often not see themselves as being homeless. However, there is a severe housing shortage at the Canim Lake Band due to the fact that the amount received from Indian Affairs to build a house is far below the actual costs involved, and results in a high mortgage debt load for the band. It is difficult to get money for more housing starts until the mortgage debt is paid down. There are many people sheltering their large extended families and struggling to make ends meet. Helping others puts a severe strain on their own resources.

#### **5.4 Youth Special Needs**

Looking at the broader definition of homelessness, we must include youth whose parents have been unable to properly care for them due to issues of poverty, neglect, abuse or addiction. These youth are now permanent wards of the province in “Continuing Care”, until the age of 19 years at which time they legally become adults and the province is no longer required to support them. In the past there was provision for youth to stay in care for a few years longer, providing they enrolled in post-secondary education. Unfortunately this is no longer the case, and youth are “off the payroll” as of their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Many do not have the necessary skills or resources to cope with this sudden independence.

At the moment there are many homeless youth in 100 Mile House and area. It would be easy to assume that if youth are homeless, it is because they didn’t want to live by the rules at home. In some cases that may be a factor, but many homeless youth are victims of family violence, physical or emotional abuse, substance abuse in the home or childhood sexual abuse. Others come from impoverished families where there are simply not enough resources for everyone. Some may simply need some time away from home to deal with family conflicts or other stressors.

Homeless youth in 100 Mile and area “couch-surf” wherever they can find a place to stay. Some youth have jobs and when one gets their own place, other youth may be able to stay until it gets too much, and then they have to find somewhere else. Often that means placing themselves in unsafe situations, resulting in exploitation and substance misuse. The Ministry of Children and Family Development has “youth agreements” with several in our community, and are doing whatever they can to support and protect these youth living on their own. But for some, it is not enough. There is a critical need for foster homes for older teens in our area and for semi-independent living situations where a mentoring adult can provide support, supervision and guidance as youth transition from their teen years to independence.

#### **5.5 Seniors Issues**

As mentioned previously, no seniors over the age of 65 completed our survey. It was difficult to find opportunities to connect with them to explain the Project and distribute the survey. However, local service providers who work with seniors were able to shed some light on the housing difficulties faced by some low income seniors in our area.

There are two excellent seniors housing facilities in 100 Mile House, Carefree Manor and Pioneer Haven. However, both are filled to capacity and rarely have a vacancy. Other seniors may own their own homes or live in a rental home or apartment block in town or in an outlying area, and may be experiencing housing issues that put them at risk of homelessness.

- Seniors living on country properties may experience difficulties as they age, due to the amount of physical labor required for property upkeep, especially in case where the home is heated with wood or a lot of snow shoveling is required.
- Seniors may be somewhat isolated from family support, if their children have grown and moved away from the area.
- In some cases a spouse has passed away, leaving the other to take over what may be unaccustomed duties such as food prep. This could result in health problems due to being poorly nourished.
- Income from pensions can be severely reduced with the death of a spouse. Heating costs in particular have risen dramatically in the last few years.
- Health care needs may become more acute, and require trips to the Health Centre or doctor in town.
- A senior may have lost his or her drivers license due to age. Many older women have never obtained a license. Independence is lost, and they are forced to rely on neighbors or the Handi-Dart for transportation.
- Because seniors tend to be private people who find it difficult to ask for help, the isolation may lead to health problems or depression.
- In some cases, seniors are vulnerable to abuse or exploitation by others, even their own family members, particularly if there are addictions involved.

Fortunately there are various supports available to assist seniors who are identified and connected to relevant community resources, such as the Home Support staff at the South Cariboo Health Centre who provide an essential outreach to their clients. There are some excellent seniors' organizations in both 100 Mile House and Lac la Hache who have a very active membership.

## **PART VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Support the hiring of a Coordinator of Housing/Homelessness.**

This suggestion came up several times at the focus group, community forum and Advisory Committee. It is necessary in order to continue forward momentum on the issues identified in the Project research. Most service providers have an interest in supporting the Action Plan but have their own agency mandate and workload to consider. Volunteers can be utilized from many that have attended the Project activities and indicated an interest in becoming involved in further initiatives. However, there is a need for someone to coordinate activities, volunteers and projects, write proposals and manage future funding contracts.

### **2. Develop more decent, affordable housing in 100 Mile House and the South Cariboo region.**

Numerous studies have shown that the homeless, or those at risk, need stable, secure housing first, before they can successfully address other issues. This is particularly difficult to obtain in the 100 Mile area, where there is a zero vacancy rate and a severe shortage of rental properties due to the booming real estate market of the last few years.

- Continue the process of establishing low income/subsidized housing projects. This is crucial to do now, since these can take years to become a reality. There is a need for both family units and single occupancy units (bachelor or one-bedroom).
- Provide supports so that those who are accepted into certain units have a greater chance of maintaining their residency by dealing with any social or mental health issues which makes them at risk for eviction. This can be done in subtle ways (e.g. a common room or building where family programs or support groups meet) or more definitive ways (develop partnerships between agencies to collaborate whenever possible, e.g. health nurse, addiction counsellor or mental health worker available on site).
- Develop initiatives to encourage home owners to create legal suites in their homes, or to consider renting spaces that they already have, whether rooms or suites. Perhaps tax incentives from local governments for legal suites and a forum to educate the public on landlord/tenant issues (how to be a good landlord, how to get a good tenant, ensuring the tenant takes care of the space, dealing with unsatisfactory tenants, property management options, etc.).

### **3. Utilize the South Cariboo Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee (SCHHAC) to support local service providers who currently have projects they are working on.**

The SCHHAC will continue as an advisory group, for collaboration and support to service providers whose projects fit within the committee's terms of reference, and to help develop a continuum of care for housing and homelessness issues in the region.

A number of local initiatives are currently being considered or in the planning stages, and should be supported in whatever way possible. These include:

- The Cariboo Mental Health Association – BC Housing project.
- Possible Youth Centre expansion - to create second-floor semi-independent living units and a few emergency beds.
- Bethel Chapel – a low-income senior’s housing project and a new building which would include two things: a new expanded facility for the Loaves & Fishes Outreach Program, and a shared Community Outreach Centre.
- 100 Mile Women’s Centre - long-term goal of building a local transition house.
- Food Action Network

#### **4. Improve the quality of existing housing to assist residents to stay in their present living situation.**

With the severe housing shortage in 100 Mile House and area, the lack of rental properties, and the relatively few number of landlords who own what rentals exist, a person who loses their housing for whatever reason has almost no chance of finding something else. Every effort should be made to ensure that residents maintain their existing housing, unless it is unsafe or otherwise puts them at risk.

- Support initiatives that assist residents to manage issues that may put them at risk of losing their housing, such as rent, utilities or relief programs or a volunteer pool to assist seniors or the disabled with transportation to medical appointments or grocery shopping, yard work, hauling and splitting firewood, etc.
- Institute an education program for landlords and tenants to clarify the responsibilities of each.
- Utilize the expertise of regulatory bodies to educate landlords on what housing regulations are enforceable and what aren’t, what grants are available to upgrade their properties and who qualifies.
- Assist seniors to access government funding opportunities to renovate their homes.
- Support community fundraisers for housing and “at risk of homelessness” projects.

#### **5. Lobby the Regional District in increase regular transportation to outlying areas.**

While a bus system is still in place to run back and forth to 108 Mile Ranch five times a day, similar service to other outlying communities was cut back several years ago. This has resulted in hardship for various segments of the population, including those who are unable to work or access the various services in 100 Mile House because they have no other transportation to town. School children cannot take part in after school programs because if they miss the school bus, they have no other way to get home. With the shortage of available rental accommodations in the District of 100 Mile House, more and more people are moving to outlying areas, making transportation a huge issue.

## **6. Establish a coordinated referral system and shelter/hostel program in the South Cariboo region.**

This need was clearly identified in survey responses: shelter beds for men, women and youth, but particularly for the largest population of the homeless - single men. Local churches are often approached directly by those in need, and occasionally give vouchers for motel rooms, but have expressed frustration with the process and the lack of opportunity to affect any real change in the person's situation.

The RCMP has stated their concerns that there is nothing available after hours when the agencies and churches are closed. There was a time when they could put the homeless in a cell as an alternative to leaving them outside in the cold, but this is no longer possible.

- Explore the options for creating a few hostel beds locally, by networking with The Salvation Army or the Friendship Centre Society to provide a facility, or if not feasible, creating and funding a central referring agent who could provide the voucher to a motel, and follow-up afterward.
- Shelter programs should be considered “transitional” housing if possible. The aim should be to provide social services supports to those using the shelter beds to assist them in escaping or avoiding the downward spiral into homelessness.

## **7. Address Food Security Issues in the community.**

Over half the survey respondents said they depend on the local food bank to supplement their grocery budget each month, and that they sometimes go hungry because there is no money to buy food. While some agencies in town provide meals to their particular clientele on occasion, there is nowhere in town where a daily hot meal is available to anyone who needs it.

- Support the food bank in whatever way is needed to become more accessible, provide nutritious food and stay open through the summer months. Summer hours would provide residents with the opportunity to donate excess garden produce, helping those on low incomes who often cannot afford fresh vegetables and fruit.
- Collaborate with local service providers to ensure that there is at least one nutritious hot meal available daily for anyone who needs it. This could be done from one location, or agencies and churches could take turns providing it at their site, staffed with their own volunteers. Those who are unable to take a turn could support the initiative with a financial donation instead. This may eliminate the need for churches to issue food vouchers directly as they are doing now.
- Support the activities of the Community Garden so low-income residents can grow their own produce if they wish.
- Have a “Community Meal” on a regular basis to bring everyone together to meet and greet. This has been done successfully in other communities with no hidden agenda, and no stigmatization, at a nominal cost (e.g. \$2 per person) with the understanding that those who can't pay are welcome anyway.

**8. Establish an Outreach Program in the community, a “one-stop shop” where the homeless or those at risk can access an advocate and other support services.**

This is essential in order to connect with the “hidden homeless” who otherwise may not be reached. It must begin with acceptance of the individual as they are in order to build a relationship and possibly be the catalyst to effect positive changes in the person’s life.

- Individuals or families may be given support and counselling, information and referrals to local service providers, help to complete income assistance, employment insurance or disability applications or appeals, eviction prevention assistance, etc.
- Other services could be provided under the same roof, with the assistance of volunteers, such as a free meal or bread giveaway, use of showers or laundry facilities, free change of clothing, use of telephone or fax, free haircuts, assistance with obtaining work clothing, referrals to employment programs, temporary labor, etc.
- An outreach program can start small by working out of an existing building. For example, Kitsilano Community Centre has opened its doors every Saturday morning to allow volunteers from neighboring churches to take turns running a weekly drop-in program. People who are homeless are offered coffee, breakfast, use of the washrooms and showers, new undergarments, donated clothes and shoes, towels, toiletries and a takeaway sandwich. Referrals are made to dentists, opticians, nurses and social services agencies.
- Staffing for various projects could be supplemented with income assistance recipients. EIA recipients who become community volunteers with a non-profit agency are eligible for an additional \$100 per month and can gain valuable work experience and references for the future. There may also be employment grants available through Service Canada to hire individuals presently on assistance or Employment Insurance who are trying to re-enter the work force...

**9. Continue to educate the general public on homelessness issues.**

Many citizens are unaware of homelessness issues and that we have homeless people, or those at risk, in the community. There are myths about homelessness being perpetuated, and community members fear that large numbers of homeless people are or will be moving up from the lower mainland.

- Create a booklet for circulation to the entire community. The booklet would be similar to the one created on Suicide Prevention in partnership with the Free Press, and would go to every home, helping to put a face on the homeless and increasing support for future housing and homelessness projects.
- Encourage the public to donate volunteer hours, money, food or other items to help alleviate the impact of poverty and homelessness in the area.
- Plan some local activities to acknowledge Homelessness Week (October).

## **ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES**

**(Draft –to be continued by the South Cariboo Housing &Homelessness Advisory Committee at future meetings.)**

1. Develop a proposal for a Coordinator of Housing/Homelessness and submit for funding to applicable agencies.
2. Develop a booklet on Homelessness, to be circulated to every household in 100 Mile House and area via the 100 Mile Free Press newspaper.

### **LIGHTS, CAMERA, APATHY**

**There are solutions, but they require the political will to be bold. We need to double the supply of affordable housing. We need to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour so that anyone working full-time and full-year is above the poverty line. We need to raise welfare rates by 50 percent so that they are adequate to basic survival, and we should allow people to combine welfare and paid income in ways that are currently not permitted.**

**Mostly, we need to stop moralizing about the poorest and whether they are sufficiently deserving of help. The economics of doing the right thing are favorable: more money in the hands of the poorest goes right into children's bellies and benefits local merchants; we spend more on homeless people right now – through health care, social services and the criminal justice systems – than we would if we were to provide them with homes; and it makes more sense to pay for addiction services through our taxes than after the fact by replacing broken car windows**

**...Did I mention that the Olympics are coming? Think lots of visitors and lots of cameras. But what will the world see when the spotlight goes on?**

**Marc Lee, Senior Economist  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives  
<http://thetyee.ca/views/2006/08/14/Poverty>**

## **PART VII COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

### **100 Mile House & District Women's Centre Society**

#102-495 S. Birch Ave, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E0

Hours of Operation: Mon-Thurs 10 - 4 p.m., Telephone 250-395-4093

A non-profit charitable agency offering services in advocacy, counseling, safe housing, stopping the violence, confidential, women centered.

### **100 Mile House Food Bank Society**

199-7th Street, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E3, Telephone 250-395-4661

Hours of operation 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month

Documentation required for first time users.

### **100 Mile House Victim Services**

726 Alpine Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-2456

Open Hours: Mon-Thurs 8:30-1:45

Provides free and confidential support, information and referral to victims of crime or personal tragedy, including file and court updates

### **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**

555 S. Cedar Ave., 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-4883

Open Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30am – 4:30pm

Mental Health Resource Center, literature, brochures, materials, housing branch, personal assistance.

### **Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre**

486 South Birch Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-5155

Hours of Operation: 8:30am – 12pm, 1pm – 4:30pm

Counselling, support, information for families, and educational workshops.

### **Cariboo Friendship Society Hospice**

99 South Third Ave, William Lake, BC, V2G 1J1, Telephone 250-398-6831

Open Hours: 24/7

The Cariboo Friendship Society is a First Nations organization committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and to fostering fellowship and understanding between people by providing programs and services to anyone who needs our help.

### **Chiwid Transition House**

99 south Third Avenue, Williams Lake, BC, Telephone 1-250-398-5658

Open 24/7

We offer shelter where you can discover your strengths and regain your self esteem. Support, information, and advocacy for your rights and choices that are available to you. Counselling assistance with legal, financial and medical matters. Food and Clothing.

**Circle of Life –Tsqlexs re Wumec**

Canim Lake White Feather Family Centre, Telephone 250-397-2717

Monthly Meetings, support as needed

Circle of Life supports persons living with HIV/Aids, their family and friends. Education for individuals and community outreach to others is available.

**Clinton RCMP Victim Services**

1204 Kelly Lake Rd, Clinton, BC, V0K 1K0, Telephone 1-250-459-2299

Hours: Monday – Wednesday 8:30am – 2:00pm

Provide emotional, practical support to victims, witnesses of crime. Support through the court process. Court Support, Referrals, Victims Services and Emotional Supports.

**Community Employment Services**

808 Alpine Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-5121

[Employ1@telus.net](mailto:Employ1@telus.net)

Providing quality employment assistance services to the unemployed in 100 Mile House and the surrounding area. Services provided by CES are available free of charge to all unemployed and underemployed individuals.

**Creekside Seniors Activity Centre**

501 Cedar Street, 100 Mile House, BC

Telephone 395-3919

**Crisis Line Services**

100 Mile House and Area

Telephone 1-800-704-4262 toll-free

24 Hour Crisis and Suicide Prevention Line

**Homelessness Outreach Coordinator**

[Susann.collins@cmhawl.org](mailto:Susann.collins@cmhawl.org)

Telephone 250-706-3660

Outreach Coordinator working to connect with homeless people, connect them with Income Assistance, and support them to find housing and other relevant supports.

**Interior Health – Addiction Services**

555 S. Cedar Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-7676

Hours Open: Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Provides counseling and addictions services.

**Interior Health – Crisis Stabilization Program**

555 S. Cedar Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E0

Telephone 1-250-395-7676

Open Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Offers services for anyone with mental health or addiction problems. Assessment, diagnosis, stabilization, short term treatment & emergency outreach.

**Interior Health – Home Support**

555 S. Cedar Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-7676

Open Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Offers services to seniors who require in-home support.

**Interior Health – Public Health Nurses**

555 S. Cedar Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-7676

Open Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Public Health Nursing offers services which focus on health promotion, Community development, injury and disease prevention, and early childhood growth and development.

**Interior Health – Youth & Addictions**

555 S. Cedar Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-7676

Open Hours: 20 hrs Mon/Tues/Fri

Working with youth to provide alcohol and drug prevention services through community collaboration.

**Interior Metis Child and Family Services**

#70 South 1st Ave, Williams Lake, BC, V2G 3W2, Telephone 1-250-398-7836

Open Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Deal with children in MCF care. Identify Metis children and reconnect to family and community. Provide support for family drop-ins. Serving Williams Lake and 100 Mile House.

**Lac la Hache Old Age Pensioners Organization #176**

4822 Clarke, Lac la Hache, BC

Telephone 396-4445

**Loaves & Fishes Outreach Program**

Exeter Truck Rd, Telephone 250-395-2708

Emergency food, clothing, counseling and spiritual support in times of crisis.

**Ministry of Children and Family Development**

160-B Cedar Ave, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0

Telephone 250-395-5633

Open Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Programs and services to ensure that healthy children and responsible families are living in safe caring and inclusive communities. Offering programs and services on Child protection-safety, family development, adoption and foster care.

**Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance**

160-B Cedar Ave, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0

Telephone 1-866-866-0800

Hours of Operation: 8:30am – 12pm, 1pm – 4:30pm

Financial Resources, Government Services, Social Services and Employment Resources.

**Partner Assisted Learning**

Telephone 250-395-0404

Free program to help adults who need help with reading, writing or basic math. Offering once-to-one help in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. All inquiries are confidential. To become a tutor, a free training program is offered.

**Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

726 Alpine Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0, Telephone 1-250-395-2456

Open Hours: 24/7 office: 8:30 – 4pm Monday to Friday

Emergency Services

**Safe House Program**

#102 475 South Birch Avenue, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0,

Telephone 1-800-563-0808

Assisting women (and their children) to leave abusive relationships □ providing short term place to stay, referrals and advocacy

**Seventy Mile Access Centre**

2545 North Bonaparte Road, 70 Mile House, Telephone 1-250-456-6061

Open Monday, Wednesday & Saturday – Noon to 4 p.m. and 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Sundays for teens – Noon to 4 p.m.

A dynamic meeting place for area residents, tourists and guests. Recreational activities held in Library, Computer Lab, Crafts Room, Gymnasium, Games Room, Kitchen, Outdoor Play Area, and Ice Rink in season. Thrift Shop and used furniture store.

**White Feather Family Centre/Canim Lake Band**

Canim-Hendrix Road, Telephone 250-397-2717

Open Hours: Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm

Promotion and Prevention in Health, under direction of Chief & Council & Health Committee, with provision of Health Programs and Services.

**Youth Resource Center**

372 South Highway 97, 100 Mile House, BC, V0K 2E0, Telephone 250-395-3636

Recreation, resource information, and living-skills training for youth ages 13-18.

## **PART VIII                      COMMUNITY RESPONSE MODEL**

A sampling of items has been included with this report as an aid to those who wish to do some activities on homelessness in their community:

**Job Description – Coordinator**

**Terms of Reference for Advisory Committee**

**Press Release**

**Letter to Businesses**

**The Homelessness Game**

**At Risk of Homelessness Challenge**

**Focus Group Agenda and Discussion Questions**

**Community Forum Poster, Agenda, Evaluation Form**

**True and False on the myths of Homelessness –handouts**

**Three Stages of Homelessness - handout**

## ***JOB DESCRIPTION***

Co-coordinator

### **South Cariboo Community Response to Homelessness**

#### Job Summary:

Under the direction of the Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre, the coordinator for the South Cariboo Response to Homelessness will develop a community response to homelessness.

#### Duties and responsibilities to include:

- Collect and evaluate homelessness information and data including social, legal, and health needs by conducting surveys and canvassing community organizations
- Consult and educate, in partnership with community members, through two focus groups and one symposium to provide awareness of and seek input on homelessness issues
- Implement responses into collaborative community short-term and long-term strategies to deal with homelessness
- Build capacity and develop partnerships to support a coordinated response to homelessness
- Conduct community assessment and final report, including an evaluation of the project
- Document a homelessness response model that could be used by similar communities
- Other duties as required to complete the project

#### Skills Required:

- Research and data interpretation
- Survey design and implementation
- Group facilitation and capacity-building
- Ability to write reports and recommendations related to homelessness response
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively

#### Desired Training and Experience:

- Combination of training/education and minimum 5 years related professional work experience with proven knowledge of social planning and development that can be adapted to small rural communities.

#### Hours and Pay:

- This is a contract position requiring a final report by March 31, 2007.
- A remuneration package will be offered according to the successful applicant's qualifications and work experience.

# **D R A F T**

## **SOUTH CARIBOO HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **MANDATE:**

- To research, plan and advocate for collaborative short-term and long-term inclusive strategies and partnerships to enhance the community's capacity to address the needs of the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless in the South Cariboo area.

### **PRINCIPLES:**

- To work collaboratively in an open, transparent manner.
- To ensure communication between the agencies and the sectors they represent and the Homelessness Advisory Committee in a flow of respectful and supportive dialogue.
- To develop a shared vision and non-competitive community of service providers, (including government and funders), incorporating best practices and working towards shared goals.
- To work with the community-at-large in ways that build understanding and awareness to reduce discrimination and to build a strong and supportive community.
- To support the positive work emerging from the community that is consistent with the community vision and this committee's mandate.
- To work through the challenges and divisions created by biases, resources and barriers, by building effective and enduring alliances including opportunities for a more involved community.
- To recognize that a continuum of supports is integral to addressing homelessness and risk factors.
- To be flexible in responding to emerging community needs, respecting individual choices and life experiences.
- To develop membership that is supportive of shared values and objectives embedded in the mandate.
- To develop mechanisms that encourage diverse voices to be heard on the issues surrounding homelessness.

### **DESIRED OUTCOMES:**

- Facilitate the process of developing short-term and long-term strategies and solutions to manage and mitigate the social issues related to homelessness and risk of homelessness.
- Reports, recommendations, strategies and proposals to increase the amount and availability of short-term emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent affordable housing for individuals and families.

### **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MEMBERS:**

The Homelessness Advisory Committee is made up of members willing to commit time to take on the following tasks:

- Coordination
- Administrative support such as chairing, agenda and minute preparation, booking meeting rooms, etc.
- Maintenance of connection to emerging issues in the community and on the committee
- Commitment to serve on one sub committee or working group related to interests or skills
- Revision and updates to the Terms of Reference
- Responsibility to contribute to the effective functioning of the Homelessness Advisory Committee including the sharing of knowledge and linkages to their respective personal experiences, organizations, professions and/or sectors.
- Regular attendance at Committee meetings.

## **Membership**

*Representation:* The Homelessness Advisory Committee will strive to be representative of those with an interest in reducing and alleviating the effects of homelessness, and members attending are willing to share their expertise and knowledge.

*Commitment:* All members are committed to developing and moving forward the Homelessness Strategic Plan.

*Process:* the Homelessness Advisory Committee will strive to provide opportunities to gather the diversity of opinions and expertise on the issues, including supports that will ensure the “first voice” is heard.

*Inclusion:* Recognizing the barriers some groups may face in attending meetings, the Homelessness Advisory Committee will ensure that invitations, notification and information continue to flow to members.

*Participation:* The success of the Homelessness Advisory Committee depends on the full participation of its members. Sub committees will be drawn from the membership while working groups would call on people with expertise who may not necessarily be members of the Homelessness Committee body. Members commit to receiving information and are welcome to provide input and feedback.

*Evaluation:* The Homelessness Advisory Committee will undertake annual participatory evaluation of its work, progress and process.

## **REPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Homelessness Advisory Committee agrees to share information on a reciprocal basis with the South Cariboo Community Planning Council.

Chair or designated member will speak on behalf of the Homelessness Advisory Committee in public forums.

## **MEETINGS**

- The Homelessness Advisory Committee will meet on a monthly (?) basis or as needed to complete tasks outlined in the above terms of reference.
- The regularly schedule meeting will take place on ..... starting at ....and concluding at...
- The meetings will support the participation of all members.
- All meetings will be governed by courtesy, respect and acceptance of all at the table.
- Meetings will adopt tools to ensure participation and inclusion such as the talking stick, round robin, speaking list etc.
- Members agree to watch their own participation and work to ensure equity and sharing of time.
- Meetings will encourage positive expression and learning. Passion and enthusiasm are welcome.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

- Each member of the Homelessness Advisory Committee has a duty to keep confidential any information which is identified as such. Such information will be considered confidential and discussed only within the working group. Confidential information will be shared as required but is not intended for general public circulation.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- Conflict of interest occurs when a member of the Homelessness Advisory Committee participates in a discussion or decision-making about a matter that may result in financial or other benefit to that member, their organization or someone with whom the member has a close personal or external professional relationship, regardless of the size of the benefit.
- Prior to the commencement of any meeting, members will declare conflict of interest regarding specific agenda items. The member will then leave the meeting for the discussion of the identified agenda item and may return as the meeting moves to the next agenda item. Departure and return of the member will be noted in the minutes of the meeting.

## **DEFINITIONS**

*Service Providers:* Includes organizations, businesses, local governments, funders, etc. understanding that service takes many forms.

*Community:* A group of people/agencies having a common interest.

*Community-at-Large:* The general population of the South Cariboo.

*Sub Committee:* Task-driven, task-specific group drawn from the membership and directed by the membership.

*First Voice:* The experiences and knowledge of those who have had direct experience (past or present) with homelessness.

*CARIBOO FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTRE*  
*"Strengthening the Quality of Personal, Family and Community Life"*

**Are you experiencing  
difficulties finding safe,  
permanent, affordable  
housing?**



## **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

Please take a few moments of your time to complete a ***confidential*** survey of housing issues. The results of the survey could help us bring new services to 100 Mile House.

It's easy! Just complete the survey, seal it in the envelope and drop it off at the Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre. Nothing on the survey identifies you and no one will see your answers except the researcher. You may choose to remain completely anonymous, but if you leave your name and contact number, you will receive a **THANK YOU GIFT** (courtesy of a local business or church) for participating in the study.

**For more information contact:  
Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre – 395-5155  
or drop by 486 South Birch Avenue**

*CARIBOO FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTRE*  
*“Strengthening the Quality of Personal, Family and Community Life”*



**PRESS RELEASE – December 12, 2006**

Some time ago the Cariboo Family Enrichment Center, with support from a local committee of service providers, was successful in obtaining a grant to research the issue of homelessness in 100 Mile House. Statistics show that 80% of the homeless in Canada don't live on the street - over half are the “working poor” who may be only one paycheck away from homelessness, many are families with children, and some are youth fleeing abusive situations. All are unable to find stable, secure, affordable housing.

Judith Staples was recently hired as the Coordinator of the CFEC Homelessness Project which runs until March 31, 2007. The project involves conducting surveys of both local service providers, and low-income individuals and families in our community with housing issues. Focus groups and a community forum will be also be held to provide awareness and seek input from the public on homelessness issues. A final report will be generated with recommendations for a homelessness response model that can be used in 100 Mile House and other similar communities. This will include strategies to help bridge service gaps through the creation of collaborative short-term initiatives, and provide the necessary data to support applications for new housing resources for our community in the future.

If you are interested in the issue of homelessness and would be willing to complete a survey or be involved in a focus group, please contact the Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre at 486 S. Birch Avenue or call Judith at 395-5155.

*CARIBOO FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTRE*  
*“Strengthening the Quality of Personal, Family and Community Life”*



(Date)

(Business Name)

Attention: The Manager

Dear Sir/Madam:

Some time ago the Cariboo Family Enrichment Center, with support from a local committee of service providers, was successful in obtaining a grant to research the issue of homelessness in 100 Mile House. Statistics show that 80% of the homeless in Canada don't live on the street - over half are the "working poor" who may be only one paycheck away from homelessness, many are families with children, and some are youth fleeing abusive situations. All are unable to find stable, secure, affordable housing.

I have recently been hired as the Coordinator of the South Cariboo Community Response to Homelessness. Over the next few weeks we will be conducting a survey of low-income individuals and families in our community. The results of the survey will enable us to identify local needs, help bridge the gaps by working collaboratively with existing agencies, and perhaps bring new resources to 100 Mile House. In order to get a good response to the survey, we would like to offer an incentive for people to complete and return it. I am writing to request your consideration to provide us with some gift certificates or vouchers valued at approximately \$10 each. We hope to have about 100 participants, and several other businesses have agreed to assist in this way. We would appreciate anything you are able to contribute.

If you would like more information on the Project, please give me a call at the number below. I will follow up with you shortly by phone to get your response. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

## **THE HOMELESSNESS GAME**

### **PREPARATION:**

Cut up the small squares and sort into categories. (These should be made larger than shown for ease of playing.) Paste each one on a slightly larger rectangle of colored construction paper to make “cards”, ensuring that you use one color of paper for each category of cards. For example, all the HOME cards on yellow paper, the BILLS cards on blue, etc.

If you wish to laminate your cards, lay out the white squares on the construction paper first, spacing to leave a border around each card, fasten each with tape and laminate the whole sheet, then cut them apart. This will stiffen them and they will last longer. Each of the large signs could also be pasted on a large piece of construction paper and laminated.

Place the large signs randomly around the room. Taping each one to the back of a chair works well. Then put the small cards for that sign on the seat of the same chair, face down.

### **HOW TO PLAY:**

Everyone starts at HOME.

Pick up a card and read what it says, then replace the card face down and go to the chair indicated on your card. Continue to pick up and read cards in this way, replace and find your new destination around the room.

This works well if time-limited to 5-10 minutes. Then have a discussion of how people felt while playing the game, what they learned from the experience, etc.

<p>You are behind on your rent and receive an eviction notice.</p> <p>Go to <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b>.</p>	<p>You are laid off from your job. Your employment insurance will not cover your living expenses.</p> <p>Go to <b>EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLOR</b>.</p>	<p>Your septic system has to be replaced at a cost of \$8000. You have no savings and must replace it or your residence will be condemned. Go to <b>BANK</b>.</p>
<p>You receive notice of a rent increase, and realize you can no longer afford to live in your present location. Go to <b>WANT ADS</b>.</p>	<p>You moved into this cabin in the summer. Now that winter is here, the pipes are frozen and so are you and your children! You give your landlord notice, and Go to <b>WANT ADS</b>.</p>	<p>You and your partner are sharing a two-bedroom home with your sister and her family. The overcrowded conditions are getting on everyone's nerves. Go to <b>WANT ADS</b>.</p>
<p>Your partner reveals an extra-marital relationship and moves out leaving you with high housing costs, putting you at risk for eviction. Go to <b>EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLOR</b>.</p>	<p>Your partner has physically abused you for a period of time. This time your partner went too far and you realize you are no longer safe in your home. Go to <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b>.</p>	<p>As a result of your neighbors' complaints, the building inspector has condemned your house. You have to move out immediately. Go to <b>MOTEL/HOTEL</b>.</p>
<p>You are a single parent on income assistance. Your children are removed due to a child protection concern. You lose your child tax benefits and you can no longer afford the rent. Go to <b>ROOMMATE</b>.</p>	<p>Your summer tenting is no longer appropriate for the weather conditions. Go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b>.</p>	<p>Your low-wage job has no benefits and you come down with a serious illness that leaves you unable to work. Go to <b>BILLS</b>.</p>
<p>Your partner of many years passes away, and due to health and transportation issues, you must find housing closer to services. Go to <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b>.</p>	<p>Your hours get cut back at work and you get behind on your rent. Go to <b>LANDLORD</b>.</p>	<p>You are a foster child who turns 19 years old and is no longer in care. Although you have income from two part-time jobs and have looked hard for housing, you can't find anything you can afford. For the past month you have slept on a co-worker's sofa. Go to <b>WANT ADS</b>.</p>
<p>You have a physical disability and struggle with alcoholism. Your hotel apartment was condemned. Go to <b>STREETS/GREAT OUTDOORS</b>.</p>	<p>You are a middle-aged man with a disability who also struggles with an addiction. Your health is declining. Go to <b>MEDICAL</b>.</p>	<p>Your kids need clothing and supplies to start the school year. Go to <b>MONEY</b>.</p>
<p>Bank turns you down. Go to <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b>.</p>	<p>You qualify for re-mortgaging/consolidation loan and you get your housing issue remedied. You are <b>HOUSING SECURE</b> – leave the game.</p>	<p>You get temporary relief from your housing issue by cashing in an RRSP. Go <b>BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM</b>.</p>
<p>Family/friends are supportive and willing to let you stay with them until you find a place. Go to <b>WANT ADS</b>.</p>	<p>Family/friends have already lent you money which you haven't repaid. They are unwilling to help you further. Go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b>.</p>	<p>Family/friends refer you to a local agency for assistance. Go to <b>SERVICE AGENCY</b>.</p>
<p>Family/friends reluctantly let you stay. Your self-esteem takes a nose-dive and you sink into deep depression. Go to <b>SERVICE AGENCY</b>.</p>	<p>Family/friends let you stay, but use you for free childcare and household help. This impacts your employment situation and you realize you must get your own place. Go to <b>WANT ADS</b>.</p>	<p>Family/friends let you move in and share the rent. They move out leaving you with a house you can't afford. You advertise for a roommate. Go to <b>ROOMMATE</b>.</p>

Family/friends' home is very stressful – substance abuse, partying, overcrowding. Put this card back and take another <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b> .	You are able to raise money by selling off a few prized possessions. Go <b>BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM</b> and pick another card.	You pawn your guitar and jewelry. You have enough money for the immediate crisis. Go to <b>HOME</b> and pick another card.
Nothing decent is affordable. You are forced to live in sub-standard housing. You are <b>OUT OF THE GAME</b> .	Nothing is affordable – Go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b> .	Nothing is affordable – Go to <b>STREET/GREAT OUTDOORS</b> .
Nothing is available – Go to <b>MOTEL/HOTEL</b> .	Nothing is available – Go to <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b> .	Nothing is available – Go <b>BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM</b> .
You find shared accommodation – Go to <b>ROOMMATE</b> .	Rental costs are high and you end up renting something you really can't afford. Go to <b>BILLS</b> .	Rental costs are high and you end up renting something you really can't afford. Go to <b>FOODBANK</b> .
Rental costs are high and you end up renting something you really can't afford. Go to <b>LANDLORD</b> .	Rental costs are high and you end up renting something you really can't afford. Go to <b>BANK</b> .	You find a caretaking position with accommodation provided. You are housing secure (for now) and are <b>OUT OF THE GAME</b>
You find a caretaking position with accommodation provided. Although you do this for three months, the situation becomes intolerable. Go to <b>EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLOR</b> .	You are given a voucher for accommodation. Go to <b>MOTEL/HOTEL</b> .	They don't really provide direct service for people with your issues. They suggest you go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER, CHURCH or WANT ADS</b> . Pick one.
They are able to help you problem-solve and send you to apply for subsidized housing but there is none available. Go to <b>WAITLIST</b> .	They do provide services for people with your issues. You are waitlisted for an appointment. Stand here for one minute and then go to <b>WAITLIST</b> .	You are forced to make a choice between paying your rent/mortgage, buying groceries or paying your overdue hydro bill. Go to <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .
You cut back on food to pay your rent. Go to <b>FOOD BANK</b> .	Your heating bill arrives in the mail and it is twice the normal amount. In order to pay it, you won't have enough for the rent/mortgage. Go to <b>LANDLORD</b> .	You can't pay your telephone bill and as a result, your phone gets cut off. Your job search is compromised. Go to <b>EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLOR</b> .
You need your vehicle for employment/medical/family reasons and it suddenly breaks down. Go to <b>MONEY</b> .	The motel will not allow you to bring your dog. You have no one to leave him with. Go to <b>STREETS/GREAT OUTDOORS</b> .	You receive an eviction notice for being behind on the rent. Go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b> .
You spend one night in an emergency shelter and you hardly got any sleep due to the noise and smell. You vow not to spend another night there. Go to <b>STREETS/GREAT OUTDOORS</b> .	The emergency shelter doesn't open until 10 PM and you have to be out by 7 AM the next morning. Go to <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .	The nearest hostel is in a town 60 miles away and you have no transportation. Go to <b>CHURCH</b> .

The only available jobs are part-time minimum wage or don't match your qualifications. Go to <b>MONEY</b> .	You qualify for retraining but it requires that you move out of town. Choose between moving away <b>OUT OF THE GAME</b> or <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .	You qualify for retraining in town. You receive a living allowance which barely covers your costs. Go to <b>FOOD BANK</b> or <b>BILLS</b> .
You hit "Pay Dirt" and land a well-paying job. Your issues are resolved. You are <b>OUT OF THE GAME</b> .	You land a job but it won't cover your housing costs. You apply for subsidized housing. Go to <b>WAITLIST</b> .	Food Bank closed today. Go to <b>MONEY</b> .
You are not eligible for Income Assistance. Go to <b>MONEY</b> .	You only have enough money/vouchers for a few days in the motel. Go to <b>MONEY</b> .	You spend one night in an emergency shelter and you hardly get any sleep due to the noise and smell. You vow not to spend another night there. Go to <b>STREETS/OUTDOORS</b> .
The emergency shelter doesn't open until 10 PM and you have to be out by 7 AM the next morning. Go to <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .	The nearest hostel is in a town 60 miles away and you have no transportation. Go to <b>CHURCH</b> .	Your Income Assistance cheque is barely enough to cover your rent and a few groceries. By the second week in the month, you are out of food. Go to <b>FOOD BANK</b> .
Your roommate doesn't pay their share of the expenses and you don't have enough money to get through the month. Go to <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b> .	Your roommate eats your food and doesn't help pay for it. Go to <b>FOOD BANK</b> .	You suspect your roommate is stealing money and possessions from you. Go to <b>HOME</b> and take another card.
The Food Bank requires you to provide documentation that you need the assistance. You feel ashamed and angry. Go to <b>MONEY</b> .	The Food Bank provides you with enough food so that you can manage until you get your cheque. Go to <b>HOME</b> and take another card.	Because you are such a good tenant, your landlord accepts that you are having a hard time and allows you to be late on the rent this time. Go <b>BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM</b> and pick another card.
Income Assistance gives you an appointment for three weeks away, and says you must provide proof of your job search during that time. Go to <b>MONEY</b> or <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b> .	You receive three months of assistance and then manage to get a full-time job although it is only a term position for a few months. Your issues are resolved for the moment...you are <b>OUT OF THE GAME</b> .	You manage to find a small cabin that appears to be abandoned and you move in. Although it is in pretty bad shape, at least you have a roof over your head. Go to <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .
You are unable to raise any extra cash. Go to <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .	You find temporary work to alleviate your financial situation. Go back to <b>HOME</b> and pick another card.	You are sick and can't work so you lose your job. Go to <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .
You receive a voucher for a free meal and are referred to <b>INCOME ASSISTANCE</b> .	You find a listening ear and are able to problem solve. Go to <b>HOME</b> and begin again.	You are able to talk with a compassionate service provider who provides encouragement and assistance with some of your issues. Go <b>BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM</b> .

<p>You lose your housing due to a lengthy illness. Go to <b>FAMILY/FRIENDS</b>.</p>	<p>You are in hospital for six weeks and by the time you are discharged, the landlord has rented your home to someone else. Go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b>.</p>	<p>No Emergency Shelter in your town. Go to <b>STREETS/GREAT OUTDOORS</b>.</p>
<p>Your roommate works out well. Go to <b>HOME</b> and pick another card.</p>	<p>You sleep in the park and panhandle during the day. This has become your life and you won't accept help from anyone. You are <b>OUT OF THE GAME</b>.</p>	<p>You start to feel your situation is hopeless and begin to drink heavily. Go to <b>CHURCH</b> or <b>SERVICE ANCY</b>.</p>
<p>You spend your days at the mall and sleep in the tunnel at night. Go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b>.</p>	<p>Your landlord gives you the opportunity to fix up the place in exchange for reduced rent. Go to <b>HOME</b> and pick another card.</p>	<p>Wait here for one minute – then go to <b>HOME</b> and begin again.</p>
<p>You wait “forever” and eventually give up. Go <b>BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM</b> and take another card.</p>	<p>The church is closed. Go to <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b>.</p>	<p>You are offered a bus ticket to the nearest town. Choose to go and be <b>OUT OF THE GAME</b>, or go to <b>STREETS/GREAT OUTDOORS</b>.</p>

## **SAMPLE SIGN FOR HOMELESSNESS GAME**

**This was done with clip art available on the computer.  
(You need a sign for each category of cards you create.)**



# **HOME**

## **“AT-RISK OF HOMELESSNESS” CHALLENGE**

These scenarios were adapted from the booklet:

**“Williams Lake Poverty Challenge -  
A Resource Book for Creating Your Own Community Poverty Challenge”  
Social Planning Advisory Network  
Box 20045, Williams Lake, BC V2G 4R1**

We used the adapted scenarios in a Community Forum on Homelessness, as an activity to energize everyone early in the day. Because we had a full agenda, we adapted the scenarios so they could be done in a round-table discussion.

The Williams Lake Poverty Challenge actually gives people the scenario with bus tickets, cash or whatever fits, and sends them out for a few hours or the whole day, whatever it takes to do the scenario.

### **“AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS” CHALLENGE Scenario # 1 - Trying To Eat Nutritiously On \$1.00**

In this scenario, you are on BC Employment & Assistance (welfare). The amount you receive as a living allowance for your family of five means you have to budget for approximately \$1.00 per person per meal.

Today we challenge you to plan a nutritious lunch for your family.

We will supply you with this week’s grocery flyers and a copy of Canada’s Food Guide to help you select a nutritionally balanced menu. Please include a beverage with lunch.

Some of your family members have nut allergies.

You may shop wherever you like but you cannot borrow money from anyone else.

Keep in mind that this challenge is reality for many in our community. One out of five children live in this reality.

### **“AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS” CHALLENGE Scenario # 2 - Congratulations, you’ve been hired!!**

Your job starts in one week and pays minimum wage (\$8.00 per hour). You will work 28 hours/week (\$224.00/week minus deductions).

Your shifts are variable: split shifts, some evening, some day shifts.

Your challenge is to find childcare and buy suitable work clothes.

You have three children that need childcare. One is eight years old (in school), one is three years old, currently at an elderly neighbor’s, and one is one year old.

Your nearest relative is 30 minutes away and works full time.

You have no credit card, car or savings.

Your phone has been disconnected so you will not be able to call from home to make arrangements for child care.

You need to buy the following work clothes: black pants, white shirt, black comfortable work shoes (you’ll be standing for work).

You have a \$10 budget.

Please create a plan of ways you could manage all this so you can accept the job.

### **“AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS” CHALLENGE**

**Scenario # 3 - You recently left a domestic relationship involving violence.**

You are staying at the local transition house. Your two children are with you. To get away, you have moved to this town. You don't know anyone here and have no relatives here either. Nor do you feel you can trust previous mutual friends you had with your husband. Your time will soon be up at the transition house and you need to find a place to live, and furnish your new home. You have applied for assistance and will receive a total of \$1036 per month, which includes a maximum shelter amount of \$640. Your challenge is to find a place to live for you and your two children. You will also need to set up your utilities and phone. Consider your monthly income when phoning around about a new place to live. Don't forget you will need to buy food too. You will also need to find furnishings etc. for your new place. Beds, chairs, pots and pans. Consider your budget and estimate when you will be able to purchase these things and from where. How would you get them to your new place? You do not have a credit card. Please figure out how you will manage the financial particulars for this challenge: rent, utilities, food, furniture etc.

**“AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS” CHALLENGE**

**Scenario # 4 - You have a household emergency.**

You are one of two parents of two children ages two and four years old. You have family with alcohol/drug dependency issues, so you are unable to rely on them for help. You live in a basement suite and your landlord is very difficult to deal with. You left your \$12/hr job with poor working conditions to go to an \$18/hr forestry job with better working conditions. Spring is here and break-up (annual shutdown) hits. You did not know that EI (Employment Insurance) has a no-benefit policy about leaving a year-round job to go to seasonal work, even if there is a positive change in working conditions. You will have a case review in two weeks. Overnight, your hot water tank blew and flooded your suite. The fridge quit working, and your belongings were damaged. All your food has been spoiled by the water and fridge problems except for your meager supply of canned goods (5 cans – 3 soups and 2 tomato paste). Your children are very hungry, you have no money, and you cannot return to your suite for a week. You have no money. What do you do?

**HOMELESSNESS IN 100 MILE  
Focus Group**

**Wednesday, January 17, 2007  
9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**A G E N D A**

Welcome & Opening Remarks  
Introduction to the Homelessness Project  
Homelessness – What’s it all about?  
Small Group Work  
Homelessness Game

**L U N C H**

Food Action Network  
Small Group Work (continued)  
Summary of Group Discussions  
Door Prize Draws

**COMING SOON: COMMUNITY FORUM & WORKSHOP**  
**Early in March – Details will be announced shortly**

**SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

Pastor Pat Stich – Evangelical Free Church  
Trish & Lorraine – Food Action Network  
And to all of you for coming to share  
your knowledge, experiences & ideas!

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Each group to discuss one question, bearing in mind the broader definition of homelessness, and the various stages – Marginal, Recent and Chronic.

Each group leader will be responsible to facilitate the discussion, and have someone make notes on flipchart paper. Participants will rotate to the next group after about 20 minutes.

- 1. What is the extent of the homelessness issue in the 100 Mile House area?**
- 2. What are the risk factors that contribute to our residents being homeless or at risk of homelessness? (Consider social factors, unique characteristics of our area, rural life in general).**
- 3. What are the barriers that our residents face in finding and keeping safe, affordable, long-term housing?**
- 4. What are some solutions, both short-term and long-term, to the homelessness issue in our area?**

**COMMUNITY FORUM ON HOMELESSNESS**  
**Thursday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**

**A G E N D A**

- 9:00**                    **Opening Song/Prayer– Canim Lake First Nation  
Welcome & Introductions (Judith)**
- 9:30**                    **“At Risk Challenge” (Heather)**
- 10:00**                  **“Byron’s Story”**
- 10:15**                  **Break**
- 10:30**                  **Homelessness Project Survey Results (Judith)**
- 11:00**                  **“Diana’s Story”**
- 11:15**                  **Brainstorming Solutions (Heather)**
- 11:45**                  **“Belinda’s Story”**
- Noon**                    **L U N C H**
- 12:30**                  **Homelessness Game (Heather)**
- 12:45**                  **“Jenn’s Story”**
- 1:00**                    **Presentation – Pastor Dennis Smith – Bethel Chapel**
- 1:15**                    **Panel Discussion (Judith to moderate)**  
**Panelists:**
- **Maggie Patterson-Dickey - CMHA**
  - **Susann Collins – Homelessness Outreach Worker**
  - **Bill Pratt – Landlord**
  - **Mary Thomas – White Feather Health Centre**
- 2:15**                    **Brainstorming Solutions (Heather)**
- 2:45**                    **Evaluations/Door Prizes (Helen)**
- 3:00**                    **Final Remarks & Closing (Judith)**

**HOMELESSNESS PROJECT**  
**Community Forum – March 8, 2007**

*Evaluation Form*

**1. How useful did you find the Community Forum today?**

1      2      3      4      5  
Not                          Very  
Useful                          Useful

**2. What did you like most about the Forum?**

**3. In what ways could it have been improved?**

**4. To what degree has it increased your awareness of the Homelessness issue?**

1      2      3      4      5  
No                          High  
Increase                          Increase

**5. What was one thing you learned about Homelessness in the 100 Mile area?**

**6. Would you like to be involved future activities to address the homelessness issue?  
In what way?**

**7. Other comments:**

---

**Please fill in the contact information below if you would like to receive information on future homelessness initiatives:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Affiliation (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

## TRUE OR FALSE?

Many people make false assumptions about who is homeless and why. Test your knowledge of homelessness by rating these statements as true or false:

1. The homeless are people who live on the streets with no shelter.
2. It's easy to tell who is homeless by looking at them.
3. Homeless people are mostly single men.
4. Only adults are homeless.
5. Youth are homeless only because they are resistant to parental authority.
6. A high percentage of the homeless are substance abusers or the mentally ill.
7. Homeless people don't work.
8. Homeless people are uneducated and unemployable.
9. Income Assistance doesn't provide enough money to cover the basic costs of living.
10. A person working fulltime and earning minimum wage will gross about \$1300/month, which is adequate to live on.
11. When decent housing is provided for people, their lives tend to stabilize.

## TRUE OR FALSE?

Many people make false assumptions about who is homeless and why. Test your knowledge of homelessness by rating these statements as true or false:

1. The homeless are people who live on the streets with no shelter. *Eighty percent of the homeless in Canada don't live on the street. It's true that some homeless people have no physical shelter, but the broader definition of homelessness includes those who live in spaces that are temporary, don't meet basic health and safety standards such as run-down buildings, overcrowded or other undesirable conditions.*
2. It's easy to tell who is homeless by looking at them. *It's hard to identify who is homeless because they often work during the day or go to school. At night they may sleep in hostels, church basements, welfare motels, cars or abandoned buildings. They may move from friend to friend, or relative to relative, "couch-surfing" while looking for affordable housing.*
3. Homeless people are mostly single men. *The homeless population has changed from being "derelict" older men to predominantly young men. However, other population groups are becoming more prevalent. As women generally earn less than men, they are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless. Women may accept housing from a man, even in dangerous situations, rather than freeze on the streets.*
4. Only adults are homeless. *Families with children are the fastest growing group of homeless. Some U.S. studies have shown that children make up as much as 39% of the homeless. About one in seven users of shelters across Canada is a child. Many older homeless children are alone. Other homeless children have been put in the care of child welfare agencies because their parents can't afford to care for them.*
5. Youth are homeless only because they are resistant to parental authority. *Many homeless youth are victims of family violence, physical or emotional abuse, alcoholism or childhood sexual abuse. Others come from impoverished families. Some simply need some breathing space and time to resolve a family, school or peer conflict.*
6. A high percentage of the homeless are substance abusers or the mentally ill. *Studies have shown that about 25% of the homeless are mentally ill. Many are unable to access mental health services and are too*

*ill to stay in a shelter. Some homeless people abuse substances - research suggests as many as 1 in 4. Many of these are also among the 25% who are mentally ill.*

- 7. Homeless people don't work.** *Studies have shown that as many as 45% of the homeless may be employed on a fulltime or part-time basis. The loss of one paycheck, illness or the loss of a job can put many low-income people at a high risk of becoming homeless.*
- 8. Homeless people are uneducated and unemployable.** *Many homeless people have completed high school; some have attended college and even graduate school.*
- 9. Income Assistance doesn't provide enough money to cover the basic costs of living.** *Statistics Canada publishes "Before-Tax Low-Income Cut-Offs", otherwise known as poverty lines. People living below the poverty line are considered to be living in "straitened circumstances", meaning "subject to distress, deprivation or deficiency". The 2005 poverty lines for small urban areas such as 100 Mile House are \$16,300 for a single person, \$30,238 for a family of 4, and \$43,063 for a family of seven. Basic income assistance rates for the same groups are \$6120 for a single person, \$14,856 for a family of 4 and \$20,563 for a family of 7. (This does not include supplements.)*
- 10. A person working fulltime and earning minimum wage will gross about \$1300/month, which is adequate to live on.** *A person who works fulltime making \$8 an hour is at risk for homelessness. Take-home-pay may be a couple of hundred dollars less. The person may have a family they are supporting. The cost of housing in the area in which they live is also a huge factor. Many low-income people must choose between providing food and paying rent. Low-paying jobs often do not include benefits such as sick pay.*
- 11. When decent housing is provided for people, their lives tend to stabilize.** *Having safe, secure housing and a sense of belonging and connection to the community is vital. However, the homeless or those at risk also need access to appropriate support services to address the issues that lead to homelessness in the first place.*

## THREE STAGES OF HOMELESSNESS

**John Belcher, Alwilda Scholler-Jaquish & Mike Drummond**

The following is excerpted from an article found online from a Health & Social Work journal. It shows the results of a study which examined 40 homeless people in Baltimore. The study revealed what the researchers call “*economic and social dislocation*” and showed that as the length of the episode of homelessness increased, the person’s health care needs became more complex.

The study refers to people living at or below the poverty level as “income marginals” – those who are frequently unemployed, must struggle to make mortgage payments, to pay their rent or to keep their aging vehicle on the road. Often this was due to the loss of jobs in a certain sector such as manufacturing. Another factor was the fact that people with a less than a high school education are finding it increasingly difficult to find or keep a job. In addition to a decline in wages, income assistance eligibility and benefits have been cutback leaving many without homes or food.

### THREE STAGES OF HOMELESSNESS

#### **Stage 1 – Marginal Homelessness:**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Feelings/Emotions</b>
Living at or below the poverty line	Frightened and alone
Connection to a home may be tenuous and maybe episodic	Not sure where to turn for help
Neither recognized or counted as homeless	
Frequently use many of the services offered to the homeless, such as soup kitchens, food banks or free clothing	
One setback can destroy their tenuous network of supports	
Majority of women in the study were in this category: May be victims of abuse, greater access to transition housing, more likely able to stay with friends or relatives, greater access to welfare than men	

**Stage 2 – Recent Homeless:**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Feelings/Emotions</b>
Have become homeless recently, usually within nine months or less	Depression
Still identify with the mainstream of their community rather than with other homeless individuals	Shame
Still have the hope that they will somehow regain a lost job or situation	Low self-esteem
Interactions with family and friends become more negative	
Living arrangements often become jeopardized by the overcrowded conditions and lack of resources that come from doubling up	
Only access health care on an episodic or emergency basis	
Substance abuse frequently seen	
May stay in shelters on an irregular basis	“I’m not really homeless....I just don’t have a home right now.”

**Stage 3 – Chronic Homeless:**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Feelings/Emotions</b>
Homeless for longer periods of time – usually more than a year and sometimes for many years	Extreme stress
Accept their life experiences on the street as normal	Severe depression
More easily identifiable as homeless	Anxiety
Extremely suspicious of members of mainstream society	Paranoia
May drift back and forth between stages 2 & 3 as they struggle to keep the streets from becoming their permanent home	Lose ability to plan and implement strategies to avoid Stage 3
May have spent time in jail because of frequent encounters with the law for minor violations such as disturbing the peace	
Substance abuse may change to chronic physical dependence	
Resistant to services – “What’s the use?”	
Economic circumstances of life are greatly reduced	

**Like people with chronic mental illness, homeless people lose command over skills because of increasing isolation.**

**PART IX PROJECT EVALUATION**

**GOAL:** To develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to help homeless Canadians move out of the cycle of homelessness.

**OBJECTIVE:** To build a long-term sustainable, comprehensive community-based, and community-oriented approach to homelessness and at-risk of homelessness in the community of 100 Mile House and surrounding area, through the development of a community strategy.

STRATEGIES & ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES		
			Short-Term	Intermediate	Long-Term
Recruit and Hire a Part-time Project Coordinator	Project Coordinator was hired.	October 2006	Increased probability of project's success.		Increased services and resources to address housing & homelessness issues.
Collect and evaluate information and data by conducting surveys and canvassing service agencies.	Surveys were circulated, completed and returned to Coordinator.	November 2006 to January 2007.	Information on local homelessness issues was obtained. Gaps in service delivery and resources were identified.	Data will be available for use in direct service and capital housing project proposals.	Increased services to help homeless people and those at risk. Increased housing in 100 Mile House and surrounding area.
Consult and educate in partnership with the community through two focus groups and a community forum.	Two focus groups were held. A Community Forum was held. Community members and service providers gave input on the local issues and possible solutions.	January 17 <sup>th</sup> March 20 <sup>th</sup> March 8 <sup>th</sup> .	Awareness of homelessness issues increased. Community members became more understanding and compassionate towards homeless people.	Community members support local homelessness projects.	Increased support and participation by community members in housing and homelessness initiatives.
Create and implement sustainable strategies, identifying possible funding resources and establishing a communication and reference network.	A Homelessness Advisory Committee was created and held several meetings. At a Focus Group they assisted with developing the Recommendations and Action Plan.	Monthly in December, January and February.  March 20 <sup>th</sup>	The Committee provided feedback and assistance to the Coordinator during the Project and writing the final report.	The Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis. The Committee will write a proposal for funding to hire a Coordinator to continue with the project.	Service providers and community members collaborate to respond to homelessness issues.

STRATEGIES & ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES		
			Short-Term	Intermediate	Long-Term
Conduct a community assessment and final report which will include an evaluation.	Final report was written and printed. The report was submitted to the funder and circulated in the community.	March 2007	Project was completed satisfactorily and the information shared with the community.	Support for short-term projects to address immediate concerns.	Increased support and participation by community members for housing and homelessness issues.
Establish a model for similar communities to assist with issues of homelessness and at-risk, which will be documented in the final report.	Final report included information on the process used for this project and copies of data to assist other communities, e.g. blank surveys, handouts, activities and evaluation methods. Reports are available to other interested communities by email, hard copies or on the CFEC website.	March & April 2007	Final report was made public for anyone who is interested in reading and using the information.		Increased services and resources in other communities and regions to address housing/homelessness issues.

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**PART XI APPENDICES**