

Lived Experience Advisory Council Members



Lived Experience Advisory Council at National Conference to End Homelessness in Montréal, QC, November 2015. L to R: Janice Arsenault, guest Rob Robinson, Debbie McGraw, Emily Paradis (front), Kym Hines, Suzi Gursoy, Terrie Meehan (front), Holly Jarrett, Phoenix Winter. Missing: Leigh Bursey, Al Wiebe.

Janice Arsenault, Toronto ON

bio not yet available

Leigh Bursey, Brockville ON

bio not yet available

Suzi Gursoy, Waterloo ON

I was homeless for several years in the past. I have been housed for the last 7 years and now focus on giving back to my community. I am very actively involved in efforts to help to end homelessness in Waterloo Region and beyond. I am the co-chair of the STEP Home Participant Advisory Group (PAG) that helps people experiencing homelessness to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. I am also a member of the CAEH Lived Experience Advisory Council. My goal is to continue to advocate for the meaningful inclusion of people experiencing homelessness in all levels of decision-making. We are all human beings and we all deserve a home.

Kym Hines, Victoria BC

Committee To End Homelessness Victoria long time member, Anti Poverty Action Group: Transform Homelessness Advocacy Watch; THAW Victoria Youtube. Harm Reduction Advocate since inception, Rehab/detox experienced and supporter of Safe Consumption Sites.

Kym (aka hothead, icebreaker, mac the hat) is a happily co-parenting transgendered man born woman. He was raised in poverty with three siblings by a loving single mom on welfare and lived on the streets of Calgary and was homeless for 6 years. "At 15 I ran away from our family home in Beiseker, Alberta and took a train to my birth home in Winnipeg. That was the beginning of my lifelong journey to find home, heal self and "family" since mine was so broken by systemic generational poverty. I am a radical anarcho-feminist." Hothead encourages us all to keep an eye out for and reach out to each other, especially those most marginalised. He encourages us to bear witness to interactions of power, especially between police and our most vulnerable criminalised citizens. Our power or privilege, must be shared and equitable. I am an Acadian settler/Metis currently a visitor under duress in Lkwungen Territory.

Holly Jarrett, Wakefield QC

Kaummajuk Holly Jarrett is the founder and creator of the largest social media social injustice campaign called #AmINext – AIN, through which she promotes equality and inclusion on every social and economic issue affecting Indigenous Women in Canada in Support of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and holds the largest independent stakeholdership of a non-organizational nature within the inquiry.

Holly holds the largest Canadian Petition on [Change.org](https://www.change.org). It has over 350,000 individual signatures, reaching into 100 different countries.

www.change.org/AmINext

Holly's career in advocacy began when she spearheaded the first Inuit Headstart in the south as a member of the Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Steering Committee in 1998. Holly holds a diploma in Adult and Youth Corrections and Community Studies. Since 2000 she has been a counsellor to women escaping violence, youth in conflict and as an Addictions Counsellor.

Holly is a member of the Inuit Community in Ottawa as well as nationally and is in constant outreach in support of anti-poverty initiatives as well as anti-homelessness advocacy.

Holly has first hand lived experience with homelessness having been in transitional homelessness more than a few times in her 43 years. She has spent time in homeless shelters as well as abused women's shelters three times in her adult life as a single Indigenous mother of 4 children, and was raised partially in northern Labrador where she experienced the hardships of housing related to indigenous marginalization.

Holly speaks out against injustice for all marginalized women in Canada, but first

and foremost for her lost and stolen sisters.

Holly is a member of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Coalition on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women. She is also an active member with and activist for Amnesty International.

Holly is an avid public speaker and promotes Indigenous Leadership through speaking events and never hesitates to lift others to a place where their voices can be heard.

Debbie McGraw, Saskatoon, SK

Debbie McGraw (Formally known as Frost) has worked tirelessly on eliminating poverty in Saskatchewan, as well as in Canada. She has worked with the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry in Regina on a number of Poor People's Conference (in the western region of Canada). These conferences helped to get people living in poverty involved in addressing the poverty they were experiencing.

Debbie has been active around issues that affect women for many years. Some of this involvement was acting in leadership roles with services organizations that provided programs for children and youth. This sense of responsibility to her community is a strength that Debbie has carried throughout her life. She has often said that community is more than the block you live on, and that what affects her within her block also has a ripple effect across her city and province.

As the past President, of the National Anti-Poverty Organization, she has played a strong and active role in bringing forward issues of poverty that are being neglected. Debbie is well respected for her forthright and honest approach to issues, and matters that negatively affect people. She has no problem of saying what needs to be said.

Through the efforts of Debbie, and in partnership with others, she has been able to influence social policy so that pregnant women are not forced on to the Transitional Employment Program (this program does not cover any special needs and is therefore hazardous to pregnant women). In coalition with others Debbie called for and has witnessed increases in basic allowances, housing allowances for people on social assistance.

Debbie worked as an independent advocate for many years, sharing her knowledge in doing trainings and workshops across the country, this work included the development of an Advocacy Training Package. Debbie has also organized human rights events having speakers that can tie human rights in with homelessness, child apprehensions, and women in trouble with the law, social services and other such issues. Debbie has also been involved in several research projects about women, social services and poverty.

Debbie presently works at Salvation Army Mumford House: Homeless Shelter for Women and Children, she has been there three years now and has helped women who are dealing with issues such as being homeless, apprehensions, drugs, domestic

abuse, youth and some who suffer with mental illness problems. Debbie spent many years as a single mom raising her 5 children who have proudly given her 17 grandchildren.

Debbie's strength for this work comes from her lived experiences. There is no better motivator than frustration and anger. Debbie has learned how to take her experience, frustrations, anger, and knowledge and turn them into powerful tools for social change.

Terrie Meehan, Ottawa ON

Terrie is a member of many activist initiatives, including: the Inclusion Working Group of Canadian Homelessness Research Network (www.homelesshub.ca); the Board of The Alliance to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca) in Ottawa And Co-chair of our Communications Committee; Ottawa Women's Committee of Alterna (legacy committee formed when Alterna took over OWCU). Member of CODA (<http://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/Media/Content/files/Initiatives/CODA/CODA-fact%20sheet-English.pdf>) and The OCDSB Accessibility Working Group.

I am also currently on a long waiting list for accessible housing

“In all I do I strive for inclusion. As a person with a visible disability I have learned to see societal barriers as a challenge to be surmounted so that hopefully people who come after me have less of an uphill battle when seeking their basic human rights.”

Emily Paradis, Toronto ON

Emily has been an activist, researcher, advocate, and front-line service provider on issues of poverty, housing and homelessness for 25 years. She is currently a researcher based at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto. Her scholarly work focuses on homelessness among women and families, human rights dimensions of homelessness and housing, and participatory research and action with marginalized communities. Having never directly experienced homelessness, Emily has always relied on the knowledge of experts with lived experience to guide her in her research, activism and advocacy. She also draws on her experience in feminist, queer, anti-poverty, anti-racism and Indigenous solidarity movements. In 2006 Emily worked with FORWARD, a self-advocacy group of women facing homelessness, to develop and deliver a report to the United Nations on women's homelessness in Canada. She is a collaborator on the National Film Board of Canada's [HIGHRISE](#) project, a member of the [Right to Housing Coalition](#), and a collaborator with the [Canadian Observatory on Homelessness](#).

Al Wiebe, Winnipeg MB

Al shares his personal story of how he went from a 6 figure earner to living on the street due to a time of crisis. Through the help of a number of United Way Winnipeg supported programs he was able to get help to get back on solid footing.

Al's amazing, brave, and inspiring story shatters all misconceptions many have surrounding homelessness and mental health.

Al has since become a voice for inclusion, participation and improved support for people with lived experience.; Al works as a peer "Case Manager ' for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) CMHA Community Housing with Supports. He is also the chair of the Lived Experience Circle, an advisory group originally established for the At Home / Chez Soi study, that now provides advice to housing first programs, research projects and policy makers on homelessness. Al is also co-chair of the LEAC and a founding member and dedicates many hours to present at conferences, workshops, and events about the importance of meaningfully involving people with lived experience in their programming, planning and research. Al is currently involved in working with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in a project to change the culture of emergency rooms towards the homeless in Winnipeg.

Al sits and Co- Chairs on several WRHA advisory boards.

Al has also the recipient of the 2015 CMHA's Hero of "Mental Health" Inspiring Individual" Award.

Phoenix Winter, Vancouver BC

Phoenix Winter has been homeless and has been gifted with mental health issues. She is a member of the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), which advocates for the low-income community of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. She is proud to be the mother of her son, and thanks all of those that are like family in the DTES.