ADDRESSES FOR THE RURAL HOMELESS:
ENDING HOMELESSNESS BY BUILDING PEACE AND HUMAN SECURITY

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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Table of Contents

Introduction ...3

Methods ...5

Chapter 1: Situating Rural Homelessness in the Context of Human Security and Peacebuilding ...9
    Human Security, Peace and Peacebuilding ...10
    Globalization and the Rise of Homelessness ...15
    The Policy Shift in Canada and British Columbia: A Failing Grade in Keeping Promises ...20
    Attempts at Peacebuilding: Policies and Practice in Central Kootenay ...28

Chapter 2: Locating Homelessness in Nelson and Area's Rural Context ...32
    "Homeless in Paradise" ...33
    Reasons for Rural Homelessness in Nelson and Area ...40
    Living Homeless ...47
    Marginalization ...52

Chapter 3: Building Peace and Human Security: Best Practices for Ending Homelessness ...55
    At the Roots: A Policy Paradigm Shift ...56
    Housing First... ...59
    ... Plus Supports ...63
    Filling empty pockets: financial supports ...68
    Increasing Community Capacity and Resiliency ...70
    The Facts of Policy: Budgets and Funding ...76
    Rural Local Governments doing what they can: looking to the market ...77
    Putting the Money Where the Mouth Is: Showing Commitment with Funding ...79

Conclusion ...82

Bibliography ...83

Homelessness is living without a safe, stable and adequate home, and often without enough food and appropriate clothing. Clearly, living without the basic needs in life is inherently insecure. The most common image of a homeless person is an adult male, alcoholic, unwashed, occasionally talking to the clouds, who spends his nights in an urban alley sheltered by a cardboard box. While this stereotype may have roots in the original homeless populations –often transient labourers or post-war veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress— homelessness now encompasses a broader demographic (Hulchanski, 2005; Koch & Hunt, 2004). Indeed, almost any large city in the developed world has a homeless population of men, women, youth, and children who are so impoverished that they are forced to sleep and live outside, stay in emergency shelters, camp illegally, take residence in motels and hotels, *couch surf*, or *squat.*[1] Moreover, what was once considered an urban problem is now moving into rural areas.

As the homeless population expands demographically and geographically from urban to rural areas, the stereotype mentioned above has little meaning in identifying and solving the homeless problem. As a result of the visible incongruence between myth and reality, homelessness research has been expanding, seeking to increase knowledge about the extent of this insecure situation and possible solutions.[2] Of particular interest is the growing literature on rural homelessness which contradicts assumptions that limits homelessness to urban areas. However, research on rural homelessness remains relatively minimal compared to that on urban area. With a focus on breaking down the urban-centric notion of homelessness, most contemporary research seeks simply to understand rural homeless realities, making them visible, rather than taking the research to the next level of identifying solutions. Yet mechanisms for ending homelessness are needed in rural areas as much as they are needed in urban areas, for homelessness is a problem regardless of the geography.

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[1] Using terminology common for people who are homeless, "couch surfing" refers to staying with friends and family as a temporary guest rather than a tenant, while "squatting" is illegally residing in abandoned buildings or public lands.

[2] As the knowledge of homelessness increases, its definition also broadens from the minimalist perspective of a person without any literal roof over his head on any given night to people without secure, stable permanent shelter – as alluded to in the first paragraph. Moreover, many people are at risk of homelessness because they pay such a high portion of their income on housing that threatens their ability to also meet other costs of living, on average this portion is above 30% according to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The problems with the minimalist definition will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

Most importantly, who benefits from solving the problem of homelessness? An immediate and plain response is the people who are homeless; they have the most to gain and most to lose by their insecure situation. While this is certainly true, Jorje Nef's (1999) arguments in his book *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability: The Global Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment* suggest a broader view of beneficiaries to ending homelessness. We as an entire society would benefit. We all require a solution to homeless because, as Nef (1999) contends, we are interconnected and mutually vulnerable. Indeed, we are only as strong as our weakest link (Nef, 1999). Thus any solution must not only go beyond the stereotypical homeless person, but must also look to the broader societal context to provide a holistic and sustainable end to homelessness in both urban and rural areas.

This paper is a contribution to the growing literature on rural homelessness in developed countries. While reviewing rural homeless realities, it does so with the goal of identifying solutions. I will argue that solutions are multi-faceted and require input from all levels of government, community groups, and citizens alike, as the problem lies in a complex set of relationships to which these parties belong. Using the City of Nelson and surrounding areas of the Central Kootenay Regional District as a case study, the research combines an extensive literature review of practitioners' reports and academic research with an analysis of statistical data and my own ethnographic research on the perspectives of rural homeless individuals. I begin Chapter One by using a human security and peacebuilding framework for understanding and contextualizing rural homelessness in relevant policy frameworks. Chapter Two moves on to highlight reasons for homelessness and depict the realities of living homeless in the City of Nelson, British Columbia and surrounding rural areas. Chapter Three concludes with a presentation and analysis of solutions that involve a policy and practice framework rooted in human security and peacebuilding. Throughout the paper, it will be evident that the responsibility for homelessness and its solutions is shared by governments, communities, and both housed and unhoused citizens.

Methods

Nelson and the surrounding areas in the Central Kootenay Regional District of British Columbia, Canada, provided an ideal case study for this research. This area not only includes significant rural geography,[3] but community groups have also generated baseline information in their more-than-decade-long struggle with increasing homelessness. Additionally, the community has developed a response network for rural homelessness. Specifically, Nelson (the largest municipality in the rural region with a population consistently just under 10,000) and the outlying areas have been addressing homelessness since non-profit social services, government, businesses, and individuals formed the Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) in 2001. As the sponsoring organization for this research, NCOH is committed to managing and ending homeless in the region. In other words, it provides a collaborative venue for the broad community to research, advocate and coordinate the necessary supports needed for homeless people to transition to stable, safe, appropriate, affordable housing and to lead productive lives. Further, Nelson is located in the same country and province as three major urban centers that have large homeless populations, thus making possible a rural-urban comparison under the same public policy frameworks. In short, this research is situated in a community knowledgeable about its homelessness population and poised to implement solutions under the same policy structures as its urban neighbours.[4]

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[3] Nelson is 340km through mountainous terrain from Kelowna (population 106,707), considered a mid-size city, and roughly an eight-hour drive from the major urban centres of Vancouver to the west and Calgary to the East.

I employed three types of methods in conducting this research: 1) a literature review, 2) a quantitative analysis, and 3) an ethnographic study. First, the literature review, as mentioned above, consisted of both academic articles and reports from non-profit associations, community groups and government agencies. Because the scholarly research on homelessness in developed countries remains primarily focused on urban experiences, and to lesser extent on solutions (particularly in rural locations), documentation from practitioners in Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) provided a valuable source of information on best practices[5] to end homelessness. Additionally, research institutions such as the Wellesley Institute in Toronto and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have conducted extensive analysis of social policies that impact homelessness.

Second, to identify some key realities of homelessness in a rural community, such as the demographics of the homeless community, service needs and health concerns, several social services and the Regional Innovation Chair at Selkirk College shared their statistical data and survey responses for a quantitative analysis. This data set allowed for an analysis of trends within the homeless and the at-risk-of-homelessness population, while also contributing to estimates of the total number of individuals who are chronically homeless.

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[4] Not all rural communities share this level of knowledge and action regarding their homeless neighbours. More research is needed to understand why some rural communities are willing to respond to homelessness and why others are less inclined to do so.

[5] The term "best practice" refers to practices that have proven to be notably more effective than previous practices for supporting homeless people. However, the term may also imply that there is no longer need for evaluation or improvement because the practices are the best. It is thus imperative to make note that "best practice" in this report is a term that describes the most effective approaches for support at present. Further, since best practices are derived from evaluation of practices, they, too, need continuous evaluation to identify their relevance as time progresses.

Third, the analysis offered in this paper would be incomplete without the input of people who have experienced homelessness. They provide direct evaluation of policy and practice. Because people who experience homelessness know their situation best, what they need to survive without the money to purchase basic needs, and what exactly has helped them better their situations, they are integral informants to any research that includes solutions for homelessness. Consequently, I sought input from individuals who are presently, have been or are at-risk of homelessness via focus group discussions. In November 2008, I conducted 2 focus groups, one personal interview, and accepted one written response to the focus group discussion questions. The final focus group met in December 2008. Each participant also completed a brief survey that asked about their age, gender, current housing situation, income sources, and percentage of income devoted to housing costs.

Posters advertised focus groups to the general homeless population, and outreach workers at the local emergency shelter, Stepping Stones for Success (SSFS), and the local soup kitchen, Our Daily Bread (ODB), facilitated participation from informants. Because homeless people tend to be legitimately apprehensive about research and people whom they do not know, I held information sessions with people interested in the research. From these sessions, I identified a total of thirty-five people, most of whom were mentally stable and able to comprehend the project and give their consent to a group discussion. Of these thirty-five people directly solicited for the focus group discussions, fifteen people participated in the above mentioned focus groups of three to seven people, one interview and one written response.[6] For those who refrained from participating, their reasons were conflicting schedules, forgetting the location and/or time of discussion, and apprehension about being involved with any structured process.

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[6] The written response was requested by one male youth who was not able to attend the group discussion, and felt uncomfortable with a group format. He was nonetheless insistent on participating because he wanted to share his experiences in hopes that they may help others in the future through this research.

Most participants were eager to be involved, while others arrived reluctantly but with curiosity; the most reluctant were participants in their fifties. The three focus groups were each designed to respect participants' comfort levels and social cleavages that persist among homeless populations. Thus, I conducted one group exclusively for youth under 30 years old,[7] one exclusively for female survivors of domestic violence and one for a mix of men and women of any age. While the youth discussion group attracted several participants, requiring me to limit participation to seven people, the most elusive participants were men over 30 years and female survivors of domestic violence. Indeed, the first group I intended to be mixed age and gender, but it only involved women because the male participants had forgotten or had to leave for an appointment. After two attempts to coordinate a focus group with men over 30, a third attempt was successful. Working on the immediate nature of the homeless timeframe, I approached the previously confirmed participants with whom I had a positive relationship at Our Daily Bread, and together we solicited others for a discussion that afternoon. While this was a plausible solution to increase participation from older men, it was not a viable method to increase participation from female survivors of violence, who are not identifiable other than by a general request for participation in focus group discussions. While the women's outreach worker solicited participants for both attempts at this focus group, only one woman participated, making the group discussion an interview. Consequently, further research would be required to garner the housing needs of female survivors of domestic violence in Nelson and area.

In appreciation for their participation, informants were able to access a hot meal during the discussion and survival items. Although participant honourariums are a common practice in research with homeless individuals, homeless individuals and service providers suggested that survival kits and a hot meal would be more useful in soliciting participation. They noted that cash in hand can lead to substance misuse and increased health problems. On the other hand, survival essentials (e.g., soap, toilet paper, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, laundry detergent) would help improve quality of life. Reimbursement of childcare and transportation costs was also available to participants; however, none of the participants required transportation or childcare. To further appreciate participants and protect their privacy, pseudonyms have replaced actual names with some exceptions. Three participants specifically requested that their actual names be used in the research report; they felt particularly proud of their participation in the project and wanted to be openly recognized for their involvement. Thus Leah A., Leah B. and Rob are the actual names of these three participants.

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[7] The definition of youth differs depending on program, government, community group, etc. To remain consistent with NCOH's definition based on funding categories from the Government of Canada, youth refers to individuals aged 15-30 years.

Chapter 1: Situating Rural Homelessness in the Context of Human Security and Peacebuilding

"I felt like I was waiting for my own execution."
--Beth, 19 years old

Homelessness accurately conjures up images of living without the basic necessities of life, struggling for food and shelter, poor mental and physical health, addictions, and being the repeated victim of violence –certainly not a safe and peaceful life. Further, there is an explicit lack of human dignity in homelessness; a person is often left begging for income, relying on charity for basic needs, and open to a high level of intrusion into their personal life whether by living day-to-day on the streets and in the public eye, or by authorities' demands for extensive personal information to ensure that the poor are worthy of help and not defrauding charitable systems. As a society, we often see homelessness as part of the urban landscape. However, this situation has also taken root in rural communities. Although in different geographical and cultural environments that shape much of the homeless experience, homeless people in rural areas must interact with the same governing structures, rules and regulations as their urban counterparts, resulting in similar (but not the same) experiences of daily struggle for survival (Cloke, Milbourne & Widdowfield, 2002; Focus Group Interviews, November 4, 7, December 1, 2008; Koch & Hunt, 2004; Robertson, Harris, Fritz, Noftsigner & Fischer, 2007; Visionlink, 2002). This lack of basic safety, access to basic necessities and human dignity are all ingredients for a recipe of insecurity that hinders rural areas from realizing the common belief that they are a "problem-free, hidden world of peace" (Cloke et al., 2002, p.55).

Human Security, Peace and Peacebuilding

In Nef's (1999) treatise on human security, he focuses on international development and relationships, but he also acknowledges that human security is not limited to this level of macro-understanding. He writes that "attaining sustained –and sustainable— homeostasis [human security] in any society will depend on a significant and continuous reduction of risk and insecurity at all levels," whether "global, regional, national or local" (Nef, 1999, p.23, 24). Thus human security for all is invariably linked to human security for one. Wherever they are in the world, one person's security becomes vulnerable when another person (or country, or community, or culture) is unable to safely meet their basic needs with dignity –for example, a disadvantaged person may choose to perpetuate violent actions in her attempt to acquire what she needs to survive.

With this simple concept that we are all interconnected and mutually vulnerable, Nef contends that human security contradicts military, weapons and defence mechanism[8] orientations of security because this view merely contains the symptoms of insecurity with force effectively retaining vulnerability and therefore insecurity. Alternatively, a robust definition of human security "emphasizes the prevention of causes of insecurity," and thus brings us to the way in which people generally connect and interact that can be precursors to security or the lack of it (Nef, 1999, p.23). In this way of connecting one person to global systems, Nef's concept of human security may seem grandiose and at such a macro-level of understanding that human security is impossible to achieve. However, it is imperative to note that no one project is meant to achieve all things, including global human security. Rather, Nef asserts that by increasing human security and reducing risk of insecurity at one level, we impact other levels. With this interconnection in mind, the challenge of reducing homelessness and poverty in a developed country can facilitate a paradigm shift that values such an endeavour globally.

Following this train of thought that every person is interconnected in one way or another and correspondingly mutually vulnerable, the status of human security is linked to concepts of peace. Commonly, peace is understood as the opposite to militarized war in a geographic location. By limiting the concept of peace to a relationship with war, this definition suggests that any place without war is one that exists peacefully. This begins to touch on the above-mentioned concept of human security, in that each person is free from the terrors of war. However, as discussed above, human security further involves human dignity and access to basic needs. Although war certainly denies many people the latter two tenets of human security along with the first regarding freedom from war, it is not the only situation in which people experience violence and are denied human dignity and access to basic needs. This being the case, peace is clearly not just the absence of war. An understanding of peace and human security takes us beyond war to the various ways in which societies manifest violence.

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[8] At a local level this type of security may look like increased police presence in low-income neighbourhoods, increased gated neighbourhoods and gun-ownership among the middle and upper classes, criminalization of begging and panhandling.

In *Peace by Peaceful Means*, Johan Galtung (1996) argues that denying human dignity and access to basic needs to any person may be unintentional as is not generally the case with war or other direct forms of violence. Nonetheless, unintentional violence is still violence and therefore a necessary consideration when defining peace. The denial of human dignity and basic needs occurs at a structural/indirect level and reproduces itself via cultural/legitimizing forms. Specifically, Galtung (1996) argues that the "two major forms of outer[9] structural violence are well known from politics and economics: *repression* and *exploitation*," while the function of cultural violence is to "legitimize direct and structural violence" (p.2). Paulo Freire (1970) posited a similar concept twenty-six years prior to Galtung. His thesis is that violence encompasses all forms of oppression, and that societies structurally build and reproduce oppression. Through the dehumanization of both oppressed and oppressor (a process also referred to as "Othering" as Simone de Beauvoir described in 1952 in *The Second Sex*), people create structures that separate one from the other along hierarchies of gender, race, culture, religion, age, ability and/or class. Lacking recognition for mutual humanity, these hierarchies allow one group to dominate another. The result is vast social inequalities between people (Freire 1970). The subsequent inequalities subject the oppressed to acts that can leave their basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, and security of the person inaccessible –as is the case for the homeless. And as it is for the homelessness, denial of basic needs is structural, or unintended, oppression, but nonetheless violent.

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[9] Galtung recognizes that the process of violence and its maintenance has both an external and internal aspect to an individual. "Outer" here is clearly referring to the external aspect.

Moreover, cultures provide a legitimizing function(s) –such as religion, ideology, language and art, science, laws, and education— to reproduce this structural oppression that portions out access to basic needs (Galtung, 1996). When the legitimization of structural violence persists on a daily basis, it delves into the human psyche. Those in positions of power justify their dominant positions, frequently taking the form of "self-defence" against those whom they have dehumanized; they label the oppressed as dangerous and needing to be suppressed (Chomsky, 2005).[10] In turn, the oppressed internalize this power imbalance, further legitimizing it while also inhibiting themselves from realizing and overcoming their situation (Freire, 1970). In looking at Galtung and Freire together, violence is oppression and occurs within societies' structures while also being reproduced through cultural, or legitimizing, mechanisms.

Peace, therefore, is the absence of direct, structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1996).[11] This violence lies in the myriad forms of oppression that human beings develop and sustain. The exact character of violence has a cyclical nature, whereby social structures dominate people and create a sense of internal oppression, which is further reinforced by, and reinforces, the external oppressive social structures. As the oppressor's "consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination" (Freire, 1970, p. 40), the act of domination inherently creates an environment of fear, terror, instability, and insecurity, and thus an environment of violence not only in social structures, but also internal identities. A robust definition of peace is one that correlates peace to the absence of all forms of inherently violent oppression.

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[10] An example is criminalizing "aggressive" panhandling by homeless people rather than finding them appropriate housing and care for their physical and mental health.

[11] In looking for a definition of peace, it is easier to define it negatively (by what it is not). Attempting to provide a positive definition is difficult because oppression is so prevalent in the modern day and throughout history. Since we do not know peace, but intimately know oppression, it is not surprising that concepts of peace typically relate it the opposite of what we know: oppression.

Yet, Galtung (1996) asserts that the definition of peace as the absence of violence/oppression is too static. Much like the analysis of violence and oppression, an analysis of peace must identify how it can develop and reproduce itself so that peace and human security are the norms. Specifically, a peaceful society will need to be able to reproduce itself when encountered with conflicts and aggressive forces so that it remains as the normalized social behaviour. To this end, Galtung (1996) posits that "peace is what we have when creative conflict transformation takes place non-violently" (p.265). In other words, peace is an ongoing practice that requires people to not merely resolve conflict, but *transform* it into a peaceful state "without recourse to violence" (Galtung, 1996, p.265). Peacebuilding where people continuously practice and develop peaceful structures and cultures is integral to a full understanding of peace.

The realities of homelessness are indicative of oppression via class and income status, and often coincide with oppression based on culture, race, gender, ability, sexuality, and age. And yet, homelessness is not necessarily intended by wealthier classes of people who often reflect the powerful side of social cleavages. Rather, homelessness is structural and retained by cultural means. A society organized around the distribution of money is one that also celebrates financial wealth as the sign of personal achievement and integrity, and lessens the value of people unable to meet these idealized personal targets. Here lies the foundation of dehumanization and reproduction of oppression. Being dehumanized by mainstream society, people who are so poor that they are homeless find themselves marginalized and victimized by both external and internal oppressions. Homeless people, particularly women, are often the victims of violent physical acts associated with their poverty status, which denies them the basic needs of food, shelter, appropriate clothing and safety (Chudnovsky, 2008; Cloke et al., 2002; Czapska, Webb, & Taefi, 2008; Eberle, Kraus, Pomeroy & Hulchanski, 2001; Karabanow, 2008; Klein & Pulkingham, 2008; Layton, 2000; Neal, 2004; Rollinson & Pardeck, 2006; Victoria Cool Aid Society, 2007).

To be sure, they live without human security and peace, as observed by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR) declaration that the right to housing is tantamount to the "right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity" (Czapska et al., 2008, p. 8). Furthermore, if homeless individuals and families live in a state of violence and human insecurity, then so does the rest of society, because the basic premise of human security emphasizes that we are all interconnected and mutually vulnerable (Nef, 1999). In the sections below, I will discuss how modern-day structures and cultures allow for the violence that is homelessness.

Globalization and the Rise of Homelessness

The rise of homelessness in developed countries over the last two decades coincides with a major policy shift among governments. This shift has seen a reduction in the provision of social services while simultaneously witnessing a rise in economic regulation for free trade and global capital movement. Termed globalization, common interpretations of this policy framework describe it as merely an increased integration of national economies. However, as Ghai (1997) notes, "the concept also refers to the rapid spread, worldwide, of some dominant social, cultural and political norms and practices" (p. 1). That said, globalization is a major policy framework that defines more than economic structures, but also the way in which certain dominant sectors of society (e.g., government and large industry) organize themselves and their relationships to the broader society, reflecting Freire's (1970) observation that the dominant groups in society have the ability to transform all that surrounds them. As we will see in this section, the policies of globalization and their ideological roots in neoliberalism and neoconservatism have influenced social policies associated with increased poverty and homelessness.

During the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher led the way for a new economic structure and social policy when she plainly articulated: “There is no alternative” (Brodie, 1995 p.50). The only choice available to states was to reduce their social spending to reduce deficit and debts while also reducing regulations on capital movement and domestic industry protections as a means to promote economic growth (Brodie, 1995; Griffin Cohen, 1997). In theory, this new way of governance to which all must adhere would increase states’ prosperity as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with benefits trickling down from the multi-lateral financial actors --namely, corporations--[12] to the average person. From here the average person can rely on the private market to best serve his or her needs. Canada, like most other Western liberal democracies during this time period, began to make the change from the post-WWII Keynesian welfare state of public social programs, domesticated industrial development and mass-based democracy to one of free trade and reduction in government social spending (Brodie, 1995; Griffin Cohen, 1997; Layton, 2000). Free trade treaties such as the Free Trade Agreement in 1988 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992 are two well-known examples of this policy shift. Yet because the new policy framework went beyond the economic sector of industry and capital, including changes to social policies that govern people’s access to a certain standard of living, the Government of Canada also made sweeping changes to its social policies. As the next two decades unveiled, those changes would grow deeper and expand to provincial governments as well.

Because the argument is that these changes were unavoidable and necessary, they seem to stem from a neutral position, but that is not so. Politico-economic policies in Western liberal democracies are rooted in debate and various positions that reflect the ideologies of various political actors, making neutrality rare; different people are partisan to different ideas on how to best manage society. Indeed, Brodie (1995) aptly points out that "this market-driven approach to changes in the economy is neither inevitable nor neutral" (p.50). Rather, it is rooted in ideological viewpoints that prescribe the ideal function of state, economy, and human behaviour, and it is the result of politicians' governing choices. The policy choices mentioned above stem from an amalgamation of the neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies (Mungall, 2001). To this partnership, the former brings a strong economic policy of laissez-faire capitalism, an ideal that the private market can and will meet all needs, and assumptions that all people are the same with the same abilities to compete for a good life. Meanwhile, the latter contributes a Euro-Christian social moral code that defines human relationships based on hierarchies of gender, race, ability, sexuality, religion, culture and income; those who do not adhere to the traditional social norms are liable to state interventions and monitoring to correct the lack of conformity.

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[12] Ghai (1997) notes that transnational corporations “have played a central role” in globalization, as they have internationalized production, transferred technology and skills, invested capital worldwide, and advertised their products through global advertising. However, Ghai ignores the role corporations have played as lobbyists or that globalization is a policy decision.

Although it may seem that these two ideologies are incompatible in their assumptions about human sameness or difference, they in fact work well together. They both insist on less state interventions for those who *rise* to the top of society than for those who *linger* at the lower ends, while also believing that private markets, churches and families are better providers for peoples' welfare than the state (Mungall, 2001). Additionally, both ideologies agree that anyone who does not prosper in society is deficient because he or she is unwilling to compete and/or conform to his or her prescribed role in society (Mungall, 2001). But most important, neoliberalism systematically implements neoconservatism because the former ignores the social hierarchies that already exist in societies; in so doing, it perpetuates these hierarchies that are favoured by neoconservatives.

For example, consider a single mother who lives in unaffordable housing[13] and cares for her three-year-old child. The neoconservative would suggest that a single mother should not exist, as mothers ideally are married in a heterosexual relationship where they are full-time childcare providers and their husbands have employment outside the home. By treating everyone the same, the neoliberal would ignore that the single mother has childcare needs different than two-parent households, and that she will require different working conditions than her single childless male co-worker. "She is clearly poor because she has made bad choices," they may say; "she has no right to expect the state to support her parenting needs." Both ideologies would see a similar solution when she chooses between paying rent and feeding her child: she either finds a suitable way of increasing her financial status or the state, through its social services departments, removes the child and places it in a household with sufficient income that requires little state support, which is typically a two-parent heterosexual home based on historical norms. The end result is that the mother stops "neglecting" her child and that she is not a "drain" on society.[14] Because these two ideologies stipulate and legitimate the same outcomes in this example, along with the several more mentioned below, they work in concert to inform the policy trend that has been characteristic of nearly three decades. In sum, neoliberalism and neoconservatism are the ideological perspectives driving the policies by which governments implement globalization. Neither neutral nor inevitable, globalization's policy implementation in Canada and other developed countries has been the result of choices made by governments espousing specific ideologies.

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[13] According to the 2006 Census, 45.3% of Canadian single mothers spend more than 30% of their income on housing. 30.2% of single fathers are in the same situation (Statistics Canada, 2008). Yet single mothers are particularly relevant to this study, as the Nelson area has a disproportionately high number of single mothers, 19% of all households, compared to the BC average of 12%. Single fathers only account for 3% of Nelson and BC households. In Nelson, single mothers have an average after-tax income of $24,781 --38% of what two-parent families earn and 61.5% of single father household incomes. With such an income and responsibility gap in raising children, it is not surprising to find that several people who are homeless are or come from poor households headed by a single mother (Berger & Tremblay, 1999; Cohen, 2005; Czapska et al., (2008); Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008; Morrell-Bellai, Goering & Boydell, 2000; Robertson et al., 2007).

[14] Czapska et al. (2008) note that "neglect" is the most common reason Canadian provincial governments remove children from the custody of their single mothers living in poverty. Neglect is a broad term that includes inability to provide for children's needs. For example, if a single mother cannot afford food or childcare, and repeatedly leaves them without adult supervision while she attends work, the state may consider her actions neglect and remove them from her care.

Over the last twenty-five years, homelessness has been on the rise in developed countries. "Before the 1980s," Hulchanski (2005) writes, "Canada's 'homeless people' tended to be a small, fairly homogenous group of irregularly employed, transient men ... [who] lived in flophouses and rooming houses" (p. 4). Koch & Hunt (2004) add that this population of "homeless men" post-WWII typically lived in urban areas, with few rural people being homeless for extended periods of time. Yet, since the 1980s and the shift to neoliberal and neoconservative economic and social policies, homelessness has not only increased, but the demographics of this population have diversified to include women, youth, immigrants, low-waged workers, the mentally ill, and rural residents. Many policy researchers from the US, UK and Canada have argued that the policy changes and explosion of homelessness are not coincidental; rather, homelessness is a direct consequence of states' welfare reforms and abandonment of their role in providing sufficient and appropriate affordable housing to meet demand (Berger & Tremblay, 1999; Chudnovsky, 2008; Czapska et al., 2008; Hulchanski, 2005; Klein & Pulkingham, 2008; Layton, 2000; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Neal, 2004; Robertson et al., 2007; Rollinson & Pardeck, 2006; Shapcott, 2008b). Indeed, as identified in this study's focus group discussions, states' policy choices impact the ability of both urban and rural residents to deal with job loss, evictions, health problems, disabilities, childcare or any number of personal factors that contribute to poverty. When those policies choose to ignore people's inability to pay the private market prices for the basics of food and shelter, the result is an increasing number of people who have no choice other than homelessness.

The Policy Shift in Canada and British Columbia: A Failing Grade in Keeping Promises

In 1976, Canada ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Under Article 11, Canada therefore recognizes:

> the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions (United Nations, 1966).

Although Canada recognizes these rights through its international commitment, it has done little to universally implement such rights domestically. Indeed, by 1999, after decades of praise, the UN Human Rights Committee condemned Canada (federal and provincial governments combined) for its failure to protect these rights, particularly noting the rise in homelessness and deaths associated with it (Hulchanski, 1999). According to leading housing scholar David Hulchanski, Canada deserves such criticism because it "stands out as one of the few Western nations that rely almost completely on the market mechanism to supply, allocate and maintain its housing stock" (2005, p. 1). With 95% of the population relying on the private market for housing, Canada over-estimates the ability of the market to meet the needs of people living in poverty. Simply put, the market is ill-equipped to ensure housing for those without financial means because it is structured for the benefit of those with enough money to pay for stable housing. Recent attempts to develop a national housing strategy that includes social housing[15] and moves beyond this over-reliance on the market have faltered. The federal, provincial and territorial governments have not prioritised moving it forward since 2005, leaving Canada the only developed country without a national housing strategy (de Wolff, 2008; Shapcott, 2008b). Without action to increase social housing's share of the national housing system, Canada fails to achieve its international commitment to provide every person with adequate housing.

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[15] Social housing refers to publically delivered and supported housing for low-income households.

The focus on market housing has resulted in both federal and provincial Canadian governments developing substantial public policy to support homeownership through subsidies and tax incentives (Hulchanski, 2005; Layton, 2000). Statistics Canada's (2008) analysis of the 2006 Census concludes that homeownership has increased, particularly among condominium owners, while renters are decreasing. However, this does not automatically translate into greater prosperity and ability of Canadians to own homes –and by extension proof that Canada is meeting its obligation for internationally recognized human rights. Indeed, the report also notes that homeowners are increasingly paying more than 30%[16] of their income on housing costs and that more renters (40.3%) than owners (17.8%) continue to pay unaffordable rates. The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Sciences and Technology Subcommittee on Cities (Senate Subcommittee on Cities)(2008) found that 80% of households earning $20,000 per year or less are paying more than 50% of their income on rent.

More low-income people paying unaffordable housing rates is linked to a declining rental stock in favour of multi-unit owner-occupied housing developments. A significant contributor to the depleting rental stock is multi-residential land zoning laws that have not differentiated between rental and ownership multi-residential dwellings, thus allowing market forces to dominate such zoning with condominium developments (Hulchanski, 2005; Wake, 2008). Hence, we should not be surprised to see greater condominium owners in the Statistics Canada report, nor that they are paying more than 30% of their income on mortgage payments for their homes. Yet, with less rental market supply, rental prices increase because the rental sector, as Hulchanski (2005) points out, has consistent demand and thus the foundation of Canada's housing system, not homeownership. The 2006 housing analysis of census data reveals that most adults start their housing journey renting because they have no means to own their home (Statistics Canada, 2008). With rentals being the foundation of the housing system, those who cannot purchase a condominium must depend on the declining rental stock, whose prices are increasing. Importantly, wages have not matched the increases in housing costs. This culminates in a situation where more people are living at unaffordable levels and at risk of homelessness (Shapcott, 2008a; Statistics Canada, 2008).

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[16] Hulchanski (2005) argues that the CMHC standard of housing affordability as 30% of one's income is arbitrary because no studies firmly document the 30% standard as the actual point where households are overburdened by housing costs in relation to other costs. Indeed, the Nelson Official Community Plan (2008) chooses 32%, and during the post-war era several housing programs identified 25% as the appropriate income to shelter ratio. Nonetheless, 30% does provide a workable guide for subsidized housing programs and as such as been adopted by most policy-makers in developed countries as the crucial point of affordability for housing. Because the research has not indicated that this standard is the focal point for challenging homelessness, I retain it as an appropriate indicator of affordability.

Along with analysing the conclusions in Statistics Canada reports on the 2006 census, it is important to consider what Statistics Canada does not study: housing information from homeless individuals, people living in rooming houses, nursing homes, other collective residences, jails, First Nation reserves, and farms. By not factoring in this data, the 2008 Statistics Canada report *assumes* that the increase in homeownership is a direct result from renters moving into ownership, and merely demonstrates a parallel increase in homeowners and renters who are paying unaffordable rates for housing. The report fails to include demographic information that may show homelessness is also a significant contributing factor to fewer renter households than in previous years. To be sure, investigating the degree to which renters have become homeless would be an appropriate addition for a holistic analysis of Canada's housing trends, considering that 40% of renters and 80% of low-income renters are at risk of homelessness by paying unaffordable housing costs, and that municipally-obtained homelessness statistics have been increasing for two decades (Baker & Findlay, 2007; Calgary Committee to End Homelessness [CCEH], 2008; Layton, 2000; Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Sciences and Technology Subcommittee on Cities [Subcommittee on Cities], 2008; Victoria Cool Aid Society, 2007). In failing to ask the question of what proportion of former renters are homeless compared to what proportion are owners, Statistics Canada's report does not fully explain why renters are decreasing in their proportion of households.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that a housing policy that focuses primarily on homeownership has failed to address housing affordability in general, much more each Canadians' right to stable, adequate housing.

Considering that Canadian governments rely so heavily on market forces to provide Canadians' housing needs, it is not surprising to learn that the same governments have been withdrawing their role in affordable housing as they shift to a neoliberal-neoconservative policy framework. During the mid-1980s, the federal government in Canada began to reduce its expenditures on social housing, particularly after the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987 (Layton, 2000). Incrementally, the federal government began to cut its housing budget transfers to the provinces, which in turn reduced their budgets for providing affordable housing (Hulchanski, 2005; Layton, 2000). Yet, as history shows, the need for new social housing units that provided stable and appropriate shelter did not decrease, thus reduced need is not the catalyst for reduced housing budgets. Along with the increase in homelessness during this same time frame, renters paying unaffordable amounts (30% or more) on housing were, on average, paying 47% of their income on rent by 1996, leaving them at high risk of homelessness (Layton, 2000; Shapcott, 2008b). Between 1991 and 2001, core housing need –need for affordable, appropriate and stable housing— grew by 17% (Shapcott, 2008b). As discussed above, the budget cutbacks resulted from governments insisting that they must cut social programs to reign in zealous spending and state dependencies (Brodie, 1995). By the mid-1990s under the new program for transferring health and social related funds from the federal to the provincial governments, the Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST), the federal government had made two major changes that further negatively impacted the amount of affordable housing stock in urban and rural areas. First, by amalgamating all social and health spending under one umbrella, with no standards attached, and no formal inter-governmental ministerial meetings to discuss standards, the federal government abandoned conventional practice of targeting funds for specific provincial programs to ensure national standards (Griffin Cohen, 1997; Shapcott, 2008b). Second, the funding allotted to the CHST was much less than the previous practice of targeting funds to specific needs via the Canada Assistance Plan (Brodie, 1995; Griffin Cohen, 1997). Consequently, provinces had less financial support, no avenues for collaboration and no requirement to spend any dollars on housing, leaving them with reduced funding options for social housing.

Because the demand for social housing did not decrease, and in fact increased especially with the deinstitutionalization of people with mental illnesses and disabilities, communities began to feel the pressure of a growing homeless population. By 1998, the Big City Mayors of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) declared "homelessness a national disaster" and demanded action from the federal government. The response, in practice, has been limited. In *Wellesley Institute's National Housing Report Card*, Shapcott (2008b) notes that federal, territorial and provincial governments make several commitments to improve funding for housing, yet few have adhered to those commitments, often falling behind in their budgetary promises. Specifically, the federal, territorial and provincial governments made a joint commitment in 2001 that required the federal government to then commit an additional $1 billion to its housing budget, while provinces and territories would match that sum collectively, thus increasing Canada's total permanent housing budget (as opposed to one-time payments) by $2 billion. However, in the seven years since that agreement, the federal government has only added 25% of the original commitment while eight of the thirteen provinces and territories have also failed to meet their funding targets.

Despite recent increases initiated by the new program Housing Matters BC, British Columbia, the province in which this study is located, pays the lowest sum on housing per capita out of all provinces and territories, $41 (Housing Matters, 2007; Shapcott, 2008b). Although emergency shelter beds are not permanent, stable and affordable housing, the Province of BC considers new funding for increased beds part of their total contribution to new housing units, as well as the initial stage of the continuum to exit homelessness (Chudnovsky, 2008; Housing Matters BC, 2007). In 2007, then, part of the $41 per capita mentioned above went to increasing emergency shelter beds to 1300 throughout the province, building new units and retaining existing low-income housing stock such as single room occupancy hotels (Chudnovsky, 2008; Housing Matters, 2007). These 1300 beds are far from meeting the demand for emergency shelter alone, as just Kelowna and Victoria's, two smaller cities outside the metropolitan region of greater Vancouver, homeless counts totalled 1521 (Baker & Findlay, 2007; Victoria Cool Aid Society, 2007). The homeless emergency shelter in Nelson, served 206 individuals in 2007 (Mungall, 2008b). Indeed, BC's response to ensuring a sufficient stock of affordable housing is limited, much like its federal counterpart. This lack of funding from the governments of both BC and Canada is part of the larger issue alluded to above -- namely, that Canada also lacks a national housing strategy as a result of relying so heavily on market forces to provide housing. Not surprisingly, governments' responses have not met their own goals that would reduce the state's dependency on the market to house its poorest citizens.

Along with reduced spending on affordable low-income housing, funding and availability for several other social programs have been cut back. Each of these cuts can negatively impact someone living in poverty so that they find themselves homeless. For example, reduced supports for people with mental illness, lack of access to healthcare in rural areas, or lack of quality affordable childcare, as is the case in BC, can all result in added expenses or lack of care that pushes someone already at-risk of homelessness into homelessness.

However, the policy shifts most detrimental to increasing homelessness have been welfare "reforms." Many of the reforms implemented in the US, UK and Canada during the last two decades have reduced support, redefined eligibility, and increased intrusion into recipients' lives. Under the guise of diminishing the poor's dependency on the state and 'supporting' them to independent employment and self-sufficiency, states have restructured social assistance programs with an eye to help the deserving poor while making sure the undeserving poor do not defraud the taxpayers. In spite of the professed neutrality in these claims, such policies are rooted in neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies rather than evidence of rampant fraud or best practices in provision of social assistance (Brodie, 1995). First, various Canadian studies during late 1980s and early 1990s found that welfare fraud[17] can be estimated at a low of 1% to a high of 4%, and occurs at a much lesser rate than income tax fraud or Ontario corporations cheating on their Medicare taxes (Sarik, January 21, 1994). Second, most welfare restructuring –whether in Canada, the US, or the UK— has resulted in greater difficulties to meet the costs of living or to find stable, permanent employment rather than to improve access to employment (Atkey & Siggner, 2008; Berger & Tremblay, 1999; Focus Group Interviews, November 4, 7, December 1, 2008; Rollinson & Pardeck, 2006; Singleton, Holden, Rose & Stover, 2002). They have also made the process of applying more onerous and discriminatory of youth than in previous years (Focus Group Interview November 7, 2008). In BC, for instance, fewer welfare recipients left welfare due to employment after the government implemented reforms in 2002 than they did prior to the major reforms of that year (Atkey & Siggner, 2008). Rather than meaningfully preventing homelessness and acting as a safety net for people in the lowest income brackets, Atkey and Siggner (2008) succinctly assert in their study *Still Left Behind* "income assistance remains a legislated form of poverty" (p.11).

To substantiate or disprove community-based social service providers' claims that welfare reforms have directly contributed to homelessness rather than helped improve quality of life as the Government of BC claims, Seth Klein and Jane Pulkingham (2008) of the Canadian Centre for

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[17] It is important to note that these studies used the legal definitions of fraud, whereby a recipient is wilfully deceiving the state, rather than mistakes made by recipients or support workers who operate under regularly changing rules (Sarik, January 21, 1994). Other reports that expand the definition of fraud beyond its legal meaning may find other results.

Policy Alternatives (CCPA) conducted a two-year study of BC social assistance recipients in the "Expected To Work" category. Delving into the details of the 2002 reforms is beyond the scope of this paper, but the end result identified by Klein and Pulkingham (2008) was that the majority of those the Ministry originally classified as "Expected to Work" –meaning that the Government of BC expected those individuals to find employment— were not employable and, with the help of non-profit advocates, were eventually transferred to other social assistance programs for people with disabilities. Those who did find work found only low-waged, part-time jobs that paid little more than welfare, and they found those jobs without the help they were promised by the Government. Meanwhile, those who were cut off welfare because of the new two-year limit became homeless or engaged in illegal activity such as theft and sex work to retain housing. For those who remained on social assistance, whether welfare or disability, life remained a daily struggle with a high reliance on food banks, difficulty dealing with health problems, and continuous concern about personal safety. Considering that Atkey and Siggner (2008) found that welfare rates fell short of meeting very basic costs of living by 52% to 58% depending on family size, Klein and Pulkingham's findings are not that surprising. Yet, the Government of BC is unable to corroborate or contradict these studies because it has yet to implement a monitoring and evaluation program that would review the outcomes of its social assistance reforms (Klein & Pulkingham, 2008). The research verifies the anecdotal claims that the new welfare reforms, rooted in ideological foundations rather than evidence-based practice, have contributed to homelessness in BC.

The rise in homelessness is an extension of the social restructuring that has reduced BC's and Canada's ability to uphold international commitments to provide people with an adequate standard of living. Rather than challenge Canada's over-reliance on the market system to deliver the important social good of housing, federal and provincial government polices have exacerbated it by failing to adhere to their own commitments for an increase in affordable housing funding and resulting units. Along with the insufficient number of units to meet the demand for low-income affordable, adequate and stable housing, those reliant on social assistance subsist on rates that are far below the cost of living. Indeed, when governments rely on a definition that states that no more than 30% of income should be dedicated to housing, it seems incongruous for a government to portion out 61.4% of social assistance income for shelter costs. It is a further practical disparity when governments rely so heavily on the market to provide social assistance recipients housing when they get a shelter allowance that falls between 40% and 60% short of rental market rates. These discrepancies, the government would say, are consequences of the states' financial constraints to support social programs. Yet this claim, too, is a contradiction, as research regularly shows that the cost of providing each person with affordable, adequate, appropriate, stable housing would be less costly to the state (not including citizens' actual costs that may include taxes, charity contributions, purchases for increased security, etc.) than homelessness (Eberle et al., 2001; Chudnovsky, 2008; Klein and Pulkinghan, 2008; Kudlowitz & Pinder, 2006; Layton, 2000; Rollinson & Pardeck , 2006). In BC, the government could save 33% of costs associated with homeless if it instead housed each person by contributing to social housing for those unable to rely on market housing (Eberle et al., 2001). Because these policies have helped to increase homelessness rather than increase quality of living for citizens, the globalization policy framework rooted in neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies has prohibited Canada from fulfilling its promise to facilitate economic, social and cultural rights.

Attempts at Peacebuilding: Policies and Practice in Central Kootenay

Even though governments have failed to inject sufficient resources into the two most critical areas that have impacted homelessness, they have responded with some focused programming to improve community responses to homelessness, such as the National Homelessness

Initiative/Homelessness Partnership Strategy (NHI/HPS) and the BC Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions (PTFHMIA). These programs have contributed to communities' peacebuilding capacity so that people who find themselves homeless are better able to rebuild security and stability. Yet, it is important to note that for all the successes, homelessness has continued to multiply in both urban and rural areas. In the Central Kootenay area that surrounds Nelson BC, homelessness is becoming more visible and seemingly more abundant despite the increase of social services. Some people suggest that the rise in homelessness merely reflects services attracting homeless populations from other areas, but as we shall see in Chapter 2, the evidence concludes otherwise. That said, communities can only do so much in light of overarching ideological policy frameworks that contribute to, rather than challenge, homelessness –even when they have the support of governments espousing those same policy frameworks. Nonetheless, the actions communities take are integral to solving homelessness. Those actions reflect the geography, cultures and demographics of the communities themselves. Rural communities, then, have particular considerations when peacebuilding with homeless populations so that the community has greater human security.

The NHI/HPS began in 2001 as one of the responses to the FCM Big City Mayors' declaration, mentioned above, that homelessness was a national disaster. Looking to work directly with communities, the federal government program targeted sixty-one communities for funding support and guidance from program staff (Layton, 2000; Mungall, 2007). While most selected communities were urban, Nelson, BC was among the group. All communities formed their respective committees that included representation from non-profit societies and churches delivering services to homeless people, business, the general public, local governments, and provincial and federal government services. Since 2001, members of these Committees on Homelessness have collaborated to identify solutions to support homeless people, then have requested funding from the

NHI/HPS to implement projects (Mungall, 2007). For Nelson, this program has supported increased food security through the development of a hot lunch program, Our Daily Bread, and the establishment of the Nelson Food Cupboard food distribution services. Nelson has also been able to open its first emergency shelter for homeless men and women, Stepping Stones for Success,[18] start a Winter Emergency Bed program, open free laundry and shower facilities at the Salvation Army, and offer housing support services to youth and adults (Patry, 2007). These new services have bolstered Nelson's community response to the needs of homeless individuals and families, thus adding to the array of services such as addictions and mental health, employment, life skills, training, food, shelters, and the 201 units of social housing (Patry, 2007). Through the community's collaboration and funding provided by the NHI/HPS, Nelson (like its urban counterparts) has been able to improve its capacity to respond to the needs of people living in poverty so that they may prevent homelessness or find help to transition out of homelessness.

Yet it is important to also note that NHI/HPS funding has not resulted in any new affordable housing units to correspond with the rising demand in any community. With vacancy rates dropping, dramatic increases in the housing market and rising costs of living between 2003 and 2008, housing affordability has plummeted, with nearly half of all renters in Nelson paying unaffordable levels for housing (Penfold, 2008). While the community has been able to improve its capacity to address homelessness, it is finding that it cannot control the market and thus has little ability to meet demand for low-income affordable housing. Indeed, as one housing outreach worker asked, "how can I help get people off the streets when there is no housing for them to go to?" (S. Lock, personal interview, July 2008). With this in mind, the peacebuilding efforts of the NHI/HPS lack a crucial link for a holistic achievement in building peace and human security with people who are homeless, and that is a sufficient stock of affordable housing to give low income individuals and families alternatives to homelessness.

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[18] Prior to Stepping Stones for Success, Nelson only had one transitional emergency shelter for women survivors of domestic violence. The Aimee Beaulieu Transition Home continues to operate.

At the provincial level in British Columbia, the Government began to respond to homelessness in 2004 with the PTFHMIA and the Provincial Homelessness Initiative (PHI). At first, PTFHMIA neglected rural areas, focusing solely on the eight major urban cities of the province, but by 2006 they began to seek input from rural areas through community consultations (Wave Consulting, 2006). At these community consultations, local governments and social services were separated, with only the local government forum receiving specific attention in the final report,[19] making it difficult to ascertain the degree to which rural input impacted the subsequent policies (Wave Consulting, 2006). Nonetheless, funding targeting Nelson for housing outreach support and increased hours for the emergency shelter Stepping Stones for Success (SSFS)[20] followed these consultations. With its portion of the Government of Canada's $1.4 billion one-time payment to affordable housing, BC is also working with the Canadian Mental Health Association to plan new units for seniors with mental illness and addictions, thus contributing to Nelson's peacebuilding efforts with the homeless population.

As is the case with the federal government response to homelessness, the BC government's response has also fallen short of critical levels to make a serious improvement in homeless people's human security. While successfully contributing to the retention of a portion of the existing affordable housing stock in urban centres, namely Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the provincial response has yielded too few new units to significantly provide permanent, stable, adequate, appropriate, affordable addresses for people who are presently homeless (Housing Matters, 2007).

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[19] Wave Consulting's (2006) report provides no rationale for separating local governments and community-based social service providers. Indeed, it seems that including both in a discussion would have yielded greater results for collaboration between local governments and community services, as well as more accurate information. For example, the local government meeting for the Kootenay Region provided inaccurate information about the homeless population that could have been corrected by service providers.

[20] The only emergency homeless shelter in the Kootenay region is SSFS.

Retention of affordable housing stock is important in preventing homelessness, but it does not end homelessness for the thousands currently living on urban streets nor the hundreds living in rural forests. Further, as mentioned above the number of shelter beds resulting from the PTFHMIA and PHI do not provide nearly enough emergency shelter beds throughout the province to meet need. By contributing only a token response, the provincial peacebuilding efforts are destined to deny human security and peace, leaving communities less vibrant and healthy. As a result, the weakest link of homelessness remains.

Chapter 2: Locating Homelessness in Nelson and Area's Rural Context

"Today is all that counts for a lot of us. Worry about tomorrow when tomorrow comes."
--Rob, 53

Homelessness in rural areas is similar to the urban experience, in that one lives in poverty and insecurity. However, the geographical, population, cultural, and resource differences between urban and rural places impact homeless realities, making the rural experience similar but still distinctive from urban areas. These differences are imperative considerations in building human security and peace with rural homeless populations. Indeed, as Karabanow (2008) states in his report on solutions to helping urban street youth exit homelessness, an understanding of the reasons for and experiences of homelessness must guide the solutions. In the previous chapter, I discussed the policy context that has exacerbated human insecurity for people living in poverty so that they find themselves homeless, as well as some of the peacebuilding efforts to resolve this situation. In this chapter, the focus shifts to the story of rural homelessness in Nelson and area of the Central Kootenay Regional District. The story first paints the picture of the homeless population in the region, then traces reasons for individuals and families' homelessness. It moves on to typical daily life experiences, and, finally, discusses the common marginalization of people living in poverty. To end homelessness, the act of peacebuilding must address this story, and in particular the attitudinal marginalization[21] of people living in poverty, as attitudes are the cultural reproductive mechanism by which human insecurity sustains itself.

"Homeless in Paradise"

There are many assumptions about homeless people. For example, in the Winter of 2009, the *Nelson Daily News* printed an op/ed piece that insisted that homeless people are "often able-bodied young males with their full wits" (Milke, 2009, p.6). Contrary to this assumption, the evidence shows that the homeless population is quite diverse in Nelson as well as in other urban and rural areas. While many do fit the above description, many others deal with extreme poverty and childhood trauma. Others have mental illnesses and/or addictions, while some are single women with or without children. Some homeless people are elderly, and some are youth. Some have non-visible disabilities while others live life in a wheelchair. Some people have paid employment or attend school and training, yet manage to do so without stable shelter. In Nelson, the homeless population reflects this diversity, demonstrating that no one stereotype will accurately tell the story of rural residents who are homeless.

Unlike urban centres, where there are often annual or semi-annual enumeration activities to estimate the number of people living homeless on any given night, rural areas rarely have such statistics to estimate the general size of their homeless population. Rural communities cannot undertake such "counts" because community groups and volunteers cannot employ the necessary tactics to survey rural homeless residents. Specifically, urban centres estimate the size of homeless populations by walking around neighbourhoods and counting people sleeping in doorways, allies, under bridges and so on. But in rural areas where most homeless people couch surf or live in the vast wooded areas or countryside surrounding a rural community, it poses safety concerns, time constraints, high costs, and contraventions of basic rights to privacy (Koch & Hunt, 2004; Singleton et al., 2002; Toomey & First, 1993). Toomey & First (1993) assert that any numerical result from a rural count would be such a gross under-estimate that it would have no value. Therefore, any estimates about rural homeless populations typically come solely from social service use. However, this method, too, under-estimates the number and demographic make-up of rural homeless populations because it ignores the hidden homeless –the people who do not seek nor use support services but lack shelter (Cohen, 2005; Toomey & First, 1993). Given the barriers to identifying detailed information about rural homeless individuals, the below analysis of the Nelson and area homeless population is only an estimate.[22]

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[21] Focus group participants (Focus Group Interviews, November 4, 7, December 1, 2008) felt that social attitudes toward people living in poverty negatively stereotype them and marginalize them from mainstream society. This process of feeling and being marginalized is well-documented in reports on the "Not In My Backyard (NIMBY)" phenomena, indicating that homeless people's feelings are warranted and reflect the classist process where marginalization occurs with attitudes as much as it does via institutions.

Because Nelson has never conducted a homeless count to enumerate the homeless population, it is difficult to say how many people are homeless on any given night. Moreover, a single annual count would fail to note the significant changes in the homeless population that seasonally occur between summer and colder months. For instance, the Our Daily Bread (ODB) guest surveys found that the number of homeless guests greatly increased in the summer compared to colder months, and that the majority of the homeless guests in the summer were single males under 30 years old, but by October the majority of their homeless guests were men over 30 years old (Mungall, 2008b).This seasonal change in the homeless population reflects the fact that the population is not static and that it fluctuates with seasonal housing options and migration trends.

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[22] This estimate is based on multi-year data from a limited number of social services supporting homeless individuals and families, as well as survey and qualitative information from the fifteen participants in this study.

Long-term permanent residents living in poverty find that the summer months provide a further option for "housing." Like some of this study's participants, they move out of or are evicted from temporary housing or sub-standard housing,[23] then chose to camp and save money during the summer months. With no formal shelter, they consider themselves homeless when responding to surveys (Focus Group Interviews, November 7, December 1, 2008). With limited financial capacity, but vast tracts of wilderness surrounding support networks and services, living outdoors in the woods under a tarp or tent is not only feasible but more lucrative compared to sub-standard housing or emergency shelters. Indeed, while the summer months see more campers in undesignated areas outside Nelson City Limits, the colder months have often put more demand on the emergency shelter, Stepping Stones for Success (SSFS) as evidenced by the need for an off-site Winter Emergency Bed program at the Salvation Army. Like rural communities in the UK and the US, Nelson's homeless population becomes more visible in the summer as people opt to camp throughout the surrounding area after wintering in shelters, on couches, in temporary housing, or in sub-standard housing (Cloke et al., 2002).

Furthermore, Nelson and area experience considerable seasonal in and outward migration of homeless people. Although data from social service providers like the Nelson Food Cupboard (NFC), ODB and SSFS show that transients and migrants are a small minority of the homeless population, it is important to acknowledge this demographic because it highlights key information about the area's homeless and their needs. According to this study's focus group discussions (November 4, 7, 2008; December 1, 2008), participants noted that Nelson has a better continuum of services than other communities in the rural area, as well as a more tolerant public attitude toward alternative, whether chosen or consequential, lifestyles. As discussed below,

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[23] Willingly choosing outdoor living because it is more desirable than substandard housing and difficult landlords needs to be understood within the context of poverty limiting people's housing choices. Often when stuck between a rock and a hard place, one might choose the rock.

Nelson's amenities attract people of all incomes, including the poor. During the summer months, Macdonald (2003) and Visionlink (2002) found that the increase in transient homeless individuals was notably from youth living in poverty who seek seasonal work on BC farms. Because many of the summer transient population remain poor in between temporary farm work, more guests rely on Nelson's hot lunch program, thus increasing the summer survey responses from male youths and homeless guests in general. Changes in service use by season indicate that the Nelson and area homeless population is not static; rather, it is dynamic and reflects the seasonal needs of people unable to afford proper long-term stable shelter.

While seasonal work schedules underlie much of the homeless migration patterns, others migrate out of the area in search for specific services. Most common are the specialized health services centralized in Kelowna, a four-hour drive from Nelson. In their Fall 2007 survey and enumeration of homeless residents, Kelowna's Poverty and Homelessness Action Team of Central Okanagan (PHAT-CO) found that people who have been homeless in Kelowna for less than a year often arrived to the City to access treatment for addictions and mental health. Newcomers to urban life, many of Kelowna's homeless are from rural areas. This corroborates anecdotal evidence from Nelson and area service providers that many of the local homeless population often leave for Kelowna, Vancouver and Victoria in search of healthcare, employment or housing. Thus, the seasonal changes play an important role in defining the Nelson and area homeless population's migration patterns, but further research is needed to concretely determine the extent to which service availability plays a role in migration.

Regardless of seasons, there are certain characteristics of Nelson and area's homeless population that are consistent. Some groups are disproportionately represented among the homeless. Specifically, male youth ages 15 to 30 years are the most over-represented homeless sub-population in the Central Kootenay, representing roughly 38% of homeless people who access ODB, 37% of the SSFS clients and 48% of the region's estimated chronically homeless (discussed below); however, they are only 8% of the region's general population (Mungall, 2008b). Another group typically over-represented in homeless populations is people of Aboriginal (First Nation, Métis or Inuit) descent. In Nelson and area, they are 3% of the general population, but roughly 10% of SSFS clients and 20% of the chronically homeless population identify as Aboriginal. Another group who, maybe unsurprisingly, is over-represented in the rural homeless population are people with diagnosed mental illness. Here again, we see that SSFS has a disproportionally higher number of clients with diagnosed mental illness than in the general population; 40% of SSFS clients have a diagnosed mental illness compared to an estimated 21% of the general Canadian population who experience a mental illness at some point in their lives (Arboleda-Florez, 2005; Mungall, 2008b). Importantly, however, this analysis is unable to account for people who report an undiagnosed mental illness. Half of the Nelson Food Cupboard 2005 survey respondents reported mental health concerns, and Koch and Hunt (2004) report that "a large proportion of the [homeless] client population ... have either undiagnosed mental illness or the illness has been diagnosed but the client is not taking his/her medications;" hence, further research may indicate that the proportion of homeless people with a mental illness is greater than those presently diagnosed (p.29). Thus, it is possible that the over-representation of the mentally ill among the homeless population is greater than current estimates, debunking Milke's (January 12, 2009) assertion that most of the homeless have their "wits."

While some populations are over-represented, there are other groups who are significantly under-represented in Nelson and area. Seniors (ages 65 and over) are of particular note, as they represent only 2% of SSFS clients and 14% of ODB guests, but are 18% of the general population. This discrepancy may reflect that seniors have access to some form of guaranteed income with Old Age Security and the Canada Pension Plan. Perhaps, as Sarah (Focus Group

Interview, November 4, 2008) expressed in the focus group interview, older people tend to "get tired" of living outdoors and seek permanent housing. In addition, the lack of seniors in the homeless population may reflect the high level of human insecurity associated with homelessness, in that it can lead to premature death. Along with seniors, women in general are also underrepresented, making up only 17% to 24% of the homeless population but 50% of the general populations. Single mothers, at 19% of the Nelson and area population, are also under-represented in the known homeless population who access ODB and SSFS, as so few homeless female parents report to having custody of their children. While it is beyond the scope of this study to fully explain the underrepresentation of women, seniors and single mothers, the fact that all are under-represented in the core community services for homeless individuals remains significant.

Yet, we should not automatically conclude that if a group of people is underrepresented in the known homeless population, that they in fact compose that percentage of the homeless population. Rather, it shows a limitation in the data. Indeed, underrepresented groups may not access the services from which information is obtained; they may prefer or require other services not necessarily linked to homelessness and subsequently go unnoticed in the data-collection. For example, Ellen (personal interview, November 27, 2008) preferred to access services, such as Nelson Community Services and the Family Place, that target single mothers, while Susan (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008) needed transition homes when fleeing domestic violence. Other mothers accessing services may decline to report their children for fear of losing custody of them as indicated by urban studies of homeless women (Czapska et al., 2008; Neal, 2004). Women in these scenarios are not reported in data collected from the core services for homeless people –in this study, the Salvation Army, Nelson Food Cupboard, ODB and SSFS.

With this caveat in mind, underrepresentation may signify that there is a hidden homeless population in Nelson and area, meaning that a proportion of the population is unidentifiable by common methods for demographic analysis. In this case, the hidden homeless may be women with children. Considering Neal's (2004) findings that the shelter and support system for homeless people is predominantly structured to work with homeless independent men or women fleeing violence, the supports are rarely conducive to a poor single mothers' needs. At risk of homelessness because she pays more than 60% of income on rent, Ellen would not be recognized as homeless if she found herself and her new baby out of a home unless she went to the emergency shelter –a place that she did not list as an option if she lost her housing. Ellen considered staying with friends and family should she become homeless, and would not use the social supports that would readily identify her lack of stable, safe, adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing. If single mothers and other demographic groups do not access community supports that focus on supporting homeless people, they are often not calculated into the homeless population, thus perpetuating the cycle of their hidden homelessness.[24]

Of any homeless population, there are people who are homeless for a short time then never again, while others seasonally cycle from homeless to housed. Then there are those who are chronically homeless, meaning that they are persistently homeless for one year or more. In looking at the SSFS statistics between 2005 (just after opening in 2004) and 2007, it is clear that Nelson and area has a chronic homeless population of individuals who rely on SSFS multiple times per year for more than one year. The result from tracking clients with multiple stays per year from 2005 to 2007 is an estimated 40 people who are chronically homeless in Nelson and area (Mungall, 2008b). As mentioned above, males under 30 are over-represented in this group at

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[24] While beyond the scope of this paper, further research may delve into the housing needs of clients at other services that do not readily identify as serving a homeless population, such as the Family Place, childcare services or the Nelson and District Women's Centre.

48% of the chronically homeless, while women are extremely under-represented (with only one woman reappearing in the multi-year client lists). Like the broader homeless population, people with mental illnesses and people identifying as Aboriginal are vastly over-represented, with 55% having a diagnosed mental illness and 20% identifying as Aboriginal. These statistics are not unusual for homeless populations, as people with mental illness and of Aboriginal descent are almost always a greater proportion of the homeless demographic. This confirms that Nelson and area, like many other North American communities, is unable to meet the housing and support needs of its mentally ill and Aboriginal residents.

Reasons for Rural Homelessness in Nelson and Area

For every person who is homeless, there are reasons that reflect an inter-mingling of personal and structural factors. Often the structural factors shape how an individual or family can deal with the personal factors, and thus have greater weight in the reasons that lead to homelessness. As discussed in Chapter 1, structural reasons include the ways in which governments regulate social support systems that are meant to act as a safety net in extenuating circumstances. This study's fifteen participants' lived experiences demonstrate that the types and amount of social supports will dictate how a person can best handle life's downturns, such as the development of a mental illness, childhood trauma and abuse, marriage breakdown, domestic violence, jobloss, severe addiction, or economic eviction.

For example, when Leah A.'s fiancé died violently, she was emotionally traumatized and unable to access housing affordable for her income (Leah A., Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008). On a personal level, family trauma, economic eviction and extreme stress led to her inability to retain housing in the present housing system. However, had there been affordable housing with appropriate supports for her needs, she would likely have been able to prevent homelessness. Warren, age 21, was also unable to find housing in the market-based housing system. He arrived in Nelson to work at a lower-waged job, but he could not find an affordable home so chose to camp in undesignated areas ("Warren," Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008). Noting that his choice to remain in the community and live homeless while working and looking for housing was obviously personal, Warren also pointed out that structural factors helped to sustain his homelessness. Police officers upholding the laws that require them to remove people camping in undesignated areas repeatedly destroyed his camp, ruining his few belongings needed for work. Now unable to retain his job, Warren was also unable to search for work with the few remaining items left him, and thus found himself more destitute than when he first arrived in the area.

Violent domestic situations or conflict with parents were also common personal situations that resulted in people leaving home. As Skott-Myhre et al. (2008) found with youth in Fort Erie, Ontario, several youth participants in this study had experienced parental neglect, abuse, childhood poverty, and/or conflict with parents (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008). On a personal level, these experiences made home unsafe and intolerable, and led to youth wanting to leave. At a structural level, the lack of supports and housing in rural areas made homelessness the better option than staying with family or in foster care (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008). Adult women may also find themselves homeless because of domestic violence, as they too face the need to leave home in communities with limited supports to facilitate safe transitions from violence (Cloke et al., 2002; Czapska et al., 2008; Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008; Neal, 2004). When home is a frightening place, the lack of it represents greater safety, even if no other housing and support options exist.

Other personal factors may compound the difficulty of dealing with domestic violence or may exacerbate poverty to the point of homelessness. For one woman participant, her addictions and mental illness further contributed to poverty; because she was unable to access social supports to deal with both physical and mental health, she too lost her housing (Leah B., Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008). Addictions, poverty and childhood trauma –whether enacted by parents or by the state as was the case for Allan who was interned at a residential school away from his Doukhobor[25] family – also contributed to personal instability for men over 30 years old. The lack of supports further exacerbated men's stigma about seeking help, even justifying their feelings of weakness should they reach out for help. The result was that the older men in this study eventually found themselves homeless as well. Whether as the initial precursors to homelessness or the sustainers, personal and structural forces combine to lay the groundwork for any one person's homelessness.

Not only does the above discussion highlight the interaction of personal and structural factors for homelessness, but it also points out the importance of the particular realities of rural areas that can contribute to people's homelessness. Indeed, rural areas have distinctive structural factors that further enable homelessness along side the broader structural issue of public policy (Cloke et al., 2002; Cohen, 2005; Robertson et al., 2007; Rollinson & Pardeck, 2006). Rural distinctions include economic shifts that affect both labour and housing markets, less community services than urban centres, limited access to government programs and services, isolation, and restricted transportation. All of these factors reflect rural realities that must be considered in any analysis that includes ending homelessness in rural areas.

Like many American and British communities, Nelson and area has seen recent economic changes that impact the local economy and markets. The story of rural communities in many developed countries is also that of Nelson and the broader region. The last two decades have seen a loss in rural areas' resource-based industries that typically provided higher-waged employment than the new economic base of tourism and services (Cloke et al., 2002; Cohen, 2005; Columbia Basin Trust [CBT], 2007; Koch & Hunt, 2004; Murphy, 2007; Singleton et al., 2002). Moreover, as tourism increases, more people from urban centres become attracted to rural communities for their natural amenities and idyllic perceptions of peaceful and slow-paced lifestyles (CBT, 2007). These migrants, termed amenity migrants, come from all income brackets, but those from the highest brackets are able, by default of wealth, to put greater monetary demand on the private land and housing market, thus driving up the ownership and rental values beyond the affordability of those at lower income levels (Chudnovsky, 2008; CBT, 2007; Murphy, 2007; Penfold, September 13, 2008). For example, in Nelson and area, the housing prices doubled between 2003 and 2007, but the number of renters decreased during that same time period. This trend typically indicates that the wealthy are buying homes that were historically rentals, and depleting the rental stock by choosing not to rent those properties (Penfold, September 13, 2008). With reduced vacancy rates, higher rental prices result.

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[25] Doukhobors are a cultural and religious group originating from Russia. They were persecuted in Russia for their pacifism, and migrated to Canada in the early 1900s. Not long after arriving in Canada they re-located to the rural areas in the West Kootenay region near Nelson. Communal living was integral to the Doukhobor way of life. For this and many other reasons, they experienced years of conflict with the Canadian state, including forced internship of children at residential schools in the 1950s. Like Aboriginal children at residential schools, Doukhobor children experienced violence and abuse that contributed to the disintegration of Doukhobors' traditional communal lifestyle.

However, the active housing market has not coincided with a favourable labour market for unskilled workers and professionals entering the labour force –in Nelson, minimum wage jobs stagnated at $8 per hour, and employment centres reported that several clients remained under-employed (Patry, 2007). Warren pointed out that in urban areas, one can find living-waged jobs for unskilled workers, but that it was more difficult to do so in Nelson and area because of existing labour networks and limitations of the market ("Warren," Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008). According to the Nelson and District Housing Society, as more tenants lose full-time jobs in favour of part-time lower waged employment, the total amount BC Housing pays for its 70% rent subsidy also increased (Patry, 2007). Tenants who at one time resided in subsidized housing on a temporary basis (1-5 years) are now living there longer, creating a further backlog in the growing wait lists (Patry, 2007). The simultaneous loss of higher-waged jobs and increases in housing values without any new social housing units creates a perfect milieu of housing insecurity for lower-income workers, students, fixed-income seniors, and others who are reliant on social assistance for income. Those no longer able to afford housing face greater risk for homelessness as housing costs move beyond the affordability rate of 30% of their income; they face economic eviction where they must leave homes and communities because they cannot find available affordable, adequate and appropriate housing; or they become homeless.

In rural areas of Pennsylvania, Cohen (2005) found that the economic shifts that decrease housing affordability for lower-income earners are a significant contribution to homelessness, moreso than addictions and mental illness. Although some participants in this study noted addictions and mental health issues as contributing factors to their homeless, most discussed lack of affordable housing and supports as the reason they became and remained homeless. Growing up in poverty with limited parental guidance and supports, youth participants reported that mental illness and addictions were less common than economic factors –i.e., neither they nor their family members have the financial means to provide housing— in their reasons for homelessness. Sarah (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008) witnessed one rural community increase in housing costs along with homelessness, and stated that the same was occurring in Nelson and area. Moreover, the proportion of homeless individuals employed in Nelson and area is roughly 20% of the homeless population staying at SSFS. This suggests that people in Nelson and area, like Pennsylvania, become homeless primarily because of economic factors.

Even for individuals who cite mental illness and/or addictions as the precursors to becoming homeless, it is important to note that these conditions do not automatically lead someone into homelessness. Rather, mental illness and/or addictions merely make it more difficult for individuals to participate in an economic environment that systematically favours healthy individuals. People with a mental illness and/or addiction or a physical illness like Hepatitis C[26] are less able to find and retain employment that generates sufficient income for private market housing because they cannot adhere to the typical demands of employment (Klein & Pulkingham, 2008; Rob, Focus Group Interview, December 1, 2008). In a neoliberal and neoconservative social policy climate that closes hospitals for the mentally ill without ensuring a corresponding amount of affordable supportive housing, governments expect families to fill the gap between housing and income for relatives with mental health and addictions. Since families ought to provide supports, government responses are limited. Yet, not all families have sufficient income to support a dependent adult, nor are they equipped with training and skills to provide the best possible care to a relative with mental illness, addictions and/or physical illness. When social policies fail to acknowledge this reality, governments effectively abandon those unable to care for themselves within societal parameters established for healthy people. The ensuing poverty and lack of support for people with mental or physical illness and addictions leaves them vulnerable to homelessness.

Compounding the economic drivers that result in rural homelessness, rural areas often have limited infrastructure, fewer financial resources and restricted human capacity to respond to homelessness (Cloke et al., 2002; Cohen, 2005; Kudlowitz and Pinder, 2006; Robertson et al., 2007; Rollinson & Pardeck, 2006). Specifically, government and community services may be centred in one rural centre, such as the City of Nelson, with offices under-staffed for the demand. Indeed, participants corroborated findings from the literature review that suggest rural community services are typically fewer and far between than in urban centres, as they noted that more services exist in large cities than in Nelson and area (Ellen, personal interview, November 27, 2008; Focus Group Interviews November 4, 7, December 1, 2008). For example, the only soup kitchen in the Central Kootenay region, ODB, maximizes its funding to serve lunch five days per week. Yet in urban centres, several soup kitchens offer three meals per day seven days per week; different services offer one hot meal per day throughout the week, but as a whole three meals per day are accessible. Services like Our Place in Victoria offer day-long drop-in hours seven days each week where homeless people can keep warm and stay off the streets out of the public gaze.[27] Meanwhile, Nelson and area's drop-in hours are considerably fewer with many services targeted to specific populations, such as the two afternoons per week for women at the Nelson and District Women's Centre, the five days per week at the Mental Health Clubhouse, and five evenings per week for youth at the Nelson and District Youth Centre. Only the Salvation Army provides drop-in hours for the general population, yet these hours remain considerably more limited than one finds in urban centres, with two afternoons of drop-in available per week. With limited service availability compared to its urban counterparts in BC, Nelson and area is only partially able to meet the day to day needs of its homeless population.

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[26] Hepatitis C, like HIV/AIDS, is common among people who are homeless and intravenous drug users.

Transportation may also be a critical barrier for people accessing these limited services. Individuals living in rural areas outside the Nelson hub may not have a vehicle, money for fuel, or access to public transportation, forcing them to rely on hitch-hiking to attend appointments and access social services (Murphy, 2007). Indeed, to attend the focus group, Leah A. spent three hours hitchhiking the thirty-minute drive from the Village of Salmo to Nelson. The structural reality of fewer services concentrated in centres to which there are limited forms of safe, affordable transportation means that rural areas are often less equipped to handle an increasing homeless population, thus further contributing to difficulties for individuals and families to find the necessary supports to prevent and/or end homelessness.

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[27] Participants in the Focus Group Interview on December 1, 2008, noted that having to spend days out on the streets reduced their privacy because they had no other choice but to constantly live in the public eye.

Homelessness results from a mixture of individual circumstances and external structures that exacerbate poverty. While for every person who is homeless there is a reason, it is imperative to recognize that the reasons are not merely personal. Indeed, the external structural reasons define the support systems available to people with chronic illness, job loss, economic eviction, domestic violence, and childhood trauma. If those support systems are ill-equipped to handle people's needs in crisis, they can contribute to greater crises, including a housing crisis. Should the support systems still be unable to address individuals and families housing needs, homelessness may result. For rural areas, they are finding that residents unable to access supports in times of economic shifts are becoming the homeless population.

Living Homeless

Living without stable, affordable shelter is a daily struggle for survival. Homelessness exposes individuals to the elements, provides little safety from predators such as thieves, abusers, assailants, or wild animals, and significantly decreases food security and hygiene. The skills needed to survive this lifestyle are considerably different than those needed for routine employment and stable housing. Learning how and when to access services is key to surviving each day. Homeless people develop safety mechanisms to better protect themselves when living outdoors or in shelters. They must learn where they can sleep safely without being disturbed by police or attackers, whether in urban and rural areas. Finding places that give out soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste must be followed by finding a place to get clean. If one has a mental illness, it makes the day more difficult and erratic, and may involve numerous appointments but limited assistance in getting to them. The day may also involve finding medication, whether prescription or something more addictive but less expensive. Panhandling was a new low for Leah B. (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2007), but became part of her daily revenue source, as it is for many homeless people. Rather than panhandling for income, others turn to crime. Like participants in Klein and Pulkingham's (2008) research, Adam, Rob, Mike, and Jason (written response, November 11, 2008; Focus Group Interview November 7, December 1, 2008). relied on criminal activity to make money for food, to pay rent or to support their addiction Indeed, living homeless is not an easy life, nor is it one that anyone wilfully chooses above a safe, stable, adequate, appropriate, and affordable home.

Integral to surviving homeless is finding a family of friends who act as a close support network, passing on knowledge and training. Participants in the first focus group on November 4, 2008 expressed the importance of "training" someone new to homelessness so that they learn the necessary survival skills. Meanwhile, it was clear that the seven participants in the youth focus group (November 7, 2008) knew each other as a family, caring about each person's activities and wellbeing during the day. As a result, when one of them, Eddie, secured a tenancy, he allowed his friends to join him at "Purple House." The group reported that roughly twelve people lived in the house regularly, while there were nights when up to thirty people slept in the two bedroom house. Some residents bore more responsibilities and stress at the house, trying to keep it clean and reduce partying, while others with limited housed life skills would "crash" on the floors or couches without contributing to basic house management. Although this group had shelter for the night, none of them had stable, affordable, appropriate housing. With the over-crowding and regular partying, Eddie and his friends were not surprised when they received an eviction notice a week prior to the focus group. After two months of sharing an over-crowded house, all twelve regular residents and the many others who stayed at "Purple House" intermittently would return to living outdoors, couch surfing and staying in shelters. From Eddie's (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008) point of view, he felt that it was better to have a house for himself and his family of friends for two months, then to neglect his friends' housing needs over the same time period so that he could personally retain long-term housing.

In an urban setting, the residents of "Purple House" might now be found living in doorways, alleys, and emergency shelters, under bridges, and atop park benches. However, in rural settings, this group of youth, like other homeless residents, would likely find tenancy under trees in the outlying forests, or in makeshift camps outside of town boundaries; some would sleep in an alley, a car or on a friend's couch, while others would access an emergency shelter if one existed (Cloke et al., 2002; Cohen, 2005; Robertson et al., 2007; Skott-Myhre, Raby & Nikolaou, 2008). Others still would seek out supports in urban centres, as did Eddie and Beth. In Nelson and area, homeless residents use the above options to meet their shelter needs. Previous research, prior to SSFS opening their doors, found that homeless people in the Kootenay region typically found residence with friends (i.e., couch-surfed), in abandoned cars or cabins, returned to abusive relationships, camped in the forests, or moved to urban areas such as Victoria or Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (Koch & Hunt, 2004; Macdonald, 2003; Visionlink, 2002). While the previous research implied that homeless individuals used one of the above options, this study's participants predominantly reported using a combination of temporary shelter choices. In other words, with the added option of an emergency shelter, Nelson and area homeless individuals use a combination of shelter options when homeless.

Whether living in an over-crowded house, or sub-standard housing on the street, people living in poverty often have considerable health problems. These problems may contribute to, be a result of or exacerbate poverty and reliance on poor housing and homelessness. Having Hepatitis C made it difficult for both Rob and Leah A. to retain work and thus earn incomes to improve their living conditions. Sarah has several health problems associated with multiple years of homelessness, while Alan chose to live outside in the summer to prevent health problems associated with sub-standard housing. Participants' experiences are not uncommon, considering recent research by Lightman, Mitchel and Wilson (2008) that found people in the lowest income quintile have the greatest health problems in all areas except self-reported stress levels. Mental illness, chronic physical illnesses, anxiety and terminal illnesses are all greater among people in the lowest income quintile than those in the four top income brackets (Lightman et al., 2008). Because 70% of health determinants are social (e.g., income, education level, housing, type of job), people living in poverty typically do not have access to the necessities of life that improve health on a daily basis. Those who are homeless have even less, leaving Eberle et al.'s (2001) findings that homelessness leads to increased healthcare costs not surprising. Specifically, formerly homeless individuals often have multiple health problems associated with long-term homelessness that put greater demand on the healthcare system; those who remain homeless often neglect healthcare needs until they require emergent care, which can be notably more expensive than preventative health measures. The longer they stay unhoused, the worse the problems get.

Although homelessness in both urban and rural areas facilitates long-term chronic illnesses, living homeless in rural areas may prove to be safer than urban centres and thus have less health problems associated with physical trauma. Just as wealthier people chose to migrate to rural areas for the amenities of safety, nature and community, so do people living in poverty (Murphy, 2007). For homeless people, rural areas can offer a greater sense of community even though social services are less. They can also provide greater safety with smaller populations and more relaxed cultures. Rob, Allan and Mike agreed that safety and sense of community were among the reasons they choose to live in the Nelson area (Focus Group Interview, December 1, 2008). For other focus group participants who were not native to the region, they stayed in Nelson for its safety, community, and tolerant attitudes (Focus Group Interviews, November 4, 7, 2008). Although social networks or being born in the region initiated participants' arrival to the area, it was the safety and sense of community that kept participants in the area, as well as the relatively high accessibility of free food services for a rural area. Moreover, these two elements helped people to meet other goals for leaving urban centres, namely to leave negative social networks that contributed to addictions and criminal activity. Offering greater safety than in urban areas, rural communities attract both wealthy and poor alike.

However, it is important to note that not all homeless people find rural areas safe and idyllic places compared to urban centres. Although this study did not delve into the issues of exploitative situations where young women and men may trade sex for housing, or women remain in abusive domestic relationships because they are not able to find safe, affordable housing, that is not to say this does not exist in the Central Kootenay region. As Koch and Hunt (2004) found, some people remain among the ranks of the hidden homeless because of exploitation and abuse. Social stigma associated with domestic violence and exploitation may further compound violent situations and prevent people from leaving unsafe relationships in search of affordable housing. Because being homeless involves a high degree of dependency on social services while reducing privacy from the outside world, the lack of privacy opens people to judgement and stigmatization. Fear of judgement can effectively isolate individuals from seeking help, and may worsen their unsafe domestic life and/or and facilitate coping mechanisms like alcohol and drug use. While rural areas may provide an overall general sense of security and community to many homeless individuals and families as noted by focus group participants, they may also be a place where the hidden homeless find extensive violence and insecurity, and fewer services to remedy the situation.

Marginalization

To be homeless is to be on the margins of a society. Western societies typically revere the idealism of home-ownership and material prosperity; the broader social norms consider this as success because one is able to purchase stability. To illustrate, Leah B. (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2007) expressed that her difficulties in finding long-term stable housing has led her to believe that to truly be secure from homelessness is to own one's house. Although home ownership is the ideal, as discussed in Chapter 1, it is only available to those with a sufficient income level. The rest of the population must rent or be unhoused.

Those too poor to attain homeownership and struggle to make ends meet often face stigma rooted in classism. Social norms negate their living situations as unsuccessful and contrary to the ideal. Leah A. (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008) remarked that she felt social stigma defined her as a lazy because she received welfare even though she was unable to find permanent work in her field and applied to welfare as a last resort. Freire (1970) points out that this process of negation dehumanizes people unable to achieve goals set out by social norms and creates forms of oppression where those who "succeed" dominate those who do not. The process of oppression defines those unable to adhere to social norms as faulty. In this case, those who are poor are lazy because they do not work hard enough to achieve material wealth; they may be uneducated, unintelligent, or scam-artists looking to "free-load" off the system. Although rarely asking why someone appears lazy or is uneducated, oppressors do excuse some people living in poverty from contempt. Labelling them as the deserving poor, widows, orphans and victims of crime conjures pity and justifies assistance from those who do have wealth. Yet, they rarely transcend their status of poverty to financial stability, as most available supports allowed in a classist society are those that keep many among the poor dependent on charity, thus maintaining poverty rather than systematically challenging it.

This dichotomy of deserving and undeserving poor persists in modern Western societies and defines much of social systems with which homeless people must interact. The cultural acceptance of discrimination toward people living in poverty is prevalent both systematically in many social policies such as those mentioned in Chapter 1, as well as in the general public's attitudes and responses to people without the financial means to conform to society's ideals. Homeless people must contend with these reinforcing modes of oppression on a daily basis. For instance, the targeting of the poor as dishonest, despite proof that welfare fraud occurs less often than other forms of fraud committed by wealthier classes, has resulted in reforms and numerous extraneous regulations that make it onerous for clients to receive social assistance supports that barely allow them to subsist. Participants regularly noted their difficulty in filling out forms, meeting appointments without transportation, getting check stubs back to the welfare office for next month's payment, and meeting employment expectations with superficial supports at for-profit employment agencies. Beth's (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008) statement summarizes this sentiment well, "It's not like people aren't trying to help themselves. It's all these restrictions that make it literally impossible."

Compounding the difficult structures are the attitudes government office staff may have toward their poor clients. In some offices, Andrew (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008) noted, that as soon as he and his peers walk through the door, they feel negatively judged by office staff and that workers "know that they have the upper hand" over clients. Although participants commented that they found Nelson government office staff to be more compassionate and helpful than in other rural and urban communities, they noted that they still felt blamed, whether by the system or by staff, for failing to meet rules and regulations' unrealistic expectations.

Interestingly, participants differentiated between support services' helpful compassion and enabling clients to abuse the system. Participants had direct experience with the attitudes among social service providers, as well as how their peers responded to them. Thus, they highlighted a line between compassionate attitudes that empowered people to move beyond poverty and those that enabled continuous dependency on charity and the state (Focus Group Interviews, November 4, 7, 2008, December 1, 2008). Enabling attitudes, they noted, are as problematic as negative, derogatory attitudes because both hinder people from achieving a better quality of life. Indeed, they are rooted in the same perspective that poverty is a static position and that people living in poverty are unable or not wanting to a transcend it.

Another example of social stigmas against homeless people is when Warren found the police tearing down his camp in the forest. Warren (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008) was returning from his minimum wage part-time job, when one of the police officers ironically told him to "get a job." Leah B. (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008) also heard this phrase, "get a job," when she was panhandling, which further increased her self-loathing. For other participants, they felt that having to spend days outside in public view opened them up to judgements. Some passers-by confirmed participants' feelings of being judged by strangers, as they would express derogatory comments that shunned them for being poor and homeless (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 7, December 1 2008. Not only do the differences in power and social status make it difficult for clients to respond to judgements and derogatory statements, but Sarah (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008) also explained that many people are not able to self-advocate because they lack the skills and the vocabulary.

All participants were clear that they did not want to be homeless, and that their concepts of home included stability, independence, and the ability to meet their basic needs for food and clothes (Adam, written response, November 11, 2008; Ellen, personal interview, November, 27, 2008; Focus Group Interviews, November 4, 7, December 1, 2008). Despite this desire to end their homelessness, they all felt that the oppressive attitudes perpetuated by culture and inherent in the social structures repeatedly hindered their ability to achieve their goals for human security. The continuous negative reinforcement that they are a "drain on the system," or that they are 100% responsible for their poverty, or that their situation is static serves to de-motivate people from finding solutions to their problems. Moreover, the maze of social services, forms, rules and regulations that define options for people living in poverty can be debilitating when one does not have the skill or the knowledge necessary to navigate them. This further pushes people living in poverty to the margins of society. Once homeless, they are more destitute and desperate, yet without the stability offered by housing, they face even greater barriers to accessing supports that may prove judgemental and degrading. When a society fails to offer dignity to its entire population, it marginalizes those who do not conform to the social ideals and norms, thus instituting major obstacles to achieving human security and peace.

Chapter 3: Building Peace and Human Security: Best Practices for Ending Homelessness

"Everyone has the right to live indoors."
--Sarah, 52

As I argued in Chapter 1, homelessness demonstrates human insecurity both for people living without their basic needs and for the broader community. Whether in urban areas or rural, homelessness negatively impacts the health and vibrancy of communities. Yet in rural areas, the homeless experience is different because communities are geographically more isolated with considerably smaller populations than in urban centres. They often lack sufficient services to meet the needs of the poorest residents while offering other amenities such as a sense a community and a close proximity to nature. In both urban and rural settings, then, society needs to rectify homelessness for the benefit of all residents, but its process for doing so must reflect the differences in rural and urban realities.

As the Senate Subcommittee on Cities (2008) notes, solutions need to be based in *place*; namely, solutions need to stem from the recognition of multiple locational factors influencing homelessness, and they must involve all people and institutions pertinent to that location. The practice of situating solutions in *place* cannot stand alone without supportive policy. Because policy and practice reinforce each other, we cannot entirely separate one from the other when seeking solutions to homelessness and other displays of human insecurity. As reinforcing agents, the present policy and practice that create the paradigm under which we operate is clearly not working to reduce homelessness; rather, it has helped to worsen poverty and spread homelessness beyond urban areas to rural communities. As Burt and Spellman (2007) argue in *Changing Homeless and Mainstream Service Systems: Essential Approaches to Ending Homelessness*, ending homelessness can only occur if the endeavour is first rooted in a shift in thinking, standards and practices. Thus, this chapter looks at how policy can facilitate the best practices in service-provision to meet the basic necessities of life for all people in rural areas, while also looking at the ways in which policy can support rural communities to change attitudes that will include marginalized people into the peacebuilding process, effectively transforming marginalization into inclusion. By committing society as a whole to this task, ending homelessness becomes a feasible multi-pronged approach involving governments, communities and citizens.

At the Roots: A Policy Paradigm Shift

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, government policies play a large role in exacerbating homelessness or preventing it. Present policies are somewhat of an oxymoron. Their ideological framework of neoliberalism and neoconservatism has led to the increase in homelessness, yet this same ideological agenda has stepped out of its usual scripts toward poverty to define recent responses to reduce homelessness. While a start to solving homelessness, these solutions are not rooted in a policy framework whose primary objective is human security and peace; rather, they focus on a laissez-faire economy, material wealth and structuring social behaviours to a particular template –all of which have failed to result in the basic tenets that ensure human security. Not surprisingly, the *Wellesley Institute National Housing Report Card* paints the picture of worsened situations for homeless people while governments offer piecemeal gestures that fail to adequately solve the problem (Shapcott, 2008b). This approach has resulted in greater poverty and therefore a lack of peace and human security. Surely, if policies can have such a negative impact on homelessness, they can also have a positive one.

To comprehensively solve homelessness with a goal to ending it, policies that govern supports for the most marginalized, vulnerable people in society must be rooted in a human security and peace framework. As Beth (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008) stated, "the system needs to change;" the way it is currently structured facilitates people's failure rather than empowerment. A paradigm shift that sees governments enact policies and regulations from a human security and peacebuilding framework would result in social structures able to end homelessness, build peace with people living in poverty, and improve human security for the general public in both urban and rural areas. The paradigm shift is crucial because it is the foundation upon which to apply best practices in ending homelessness (Burt & Spellman, 2007; Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008). Indeed, as Singleton et al. (2002) highlight in *Continua of Care Best Practices: Comprehensive Homeless Planning in Rural America*, government policy will determine the extent to which rural homelessness exists and ends. In other words, government policies can deal with conflict in a way that does not merely resolve it, but transforms it so that peace is ongoing. To truly end homelessness, the task must be comprehensive and the final goal able to reproduce itself. Because no one policy can accomplish the task of ending homelessness, the paradigm shift must influence a framework rooted in human security and peacebuilding.

Following the concepts of interconnection and mutual vulnerability outlined by Jorge Nef (1999), a shift to a human security and peacebuilding paradigm would translate into policies that have proven to be best practices in supporting people to end homelessness and prevent it in the future, as this ultimately benefits all society. Rather than focusing on a sub-group, such as the BC Premier's Task Force that primarily targets people with mental illness and addictions in urban areas, policies meant to guide the end of homelessness would be holistic while responding to the diverse regions and populations involved with the issue. This policy framework would account for both the global issues, such as economic systems, and individual circumstances that impact poverty, but also recognize the place-based issues that define the experience of both global and personal conditions. To acknowledge rural areas is to address issues such as transportation, limited human and financial resources that affect service delivery, housing markets and local economies influenced by amenity migration, and processes of marginalization particular to the rural culture. This study has found that such comprehensive policies would then direct practice in three ways for the benefit of ending homelessness. First, it is imperative to build the tools for peace –namely, the services and supports that can immediately end homelessness and de-marginalize the poor. Yet to retain the value of those services and supports, policies must also facilitate communities' capacity to transform conflict/homelessness into peace/homes and foster resiliency in light of future economic, political and social trends. Additionally, governments need to recognize that market-based solutions can only accomplish so much, and that policies must be substantiated by sufficient funds and supports to meet the goal of ending homelessness. This multi-pronged approach links the personal and global issues within their geographic place, and ensures that policies rooted in human security and peace funnel into practices that best serve those needing support in accessing basic needs. The end result is that the entire society experiences greater security and fewer threats to a stable, ongoing peace.

Housing First...

Recently, there have been signs that a paradigm shift is taking place at the service-provider level. An increasing number of primarily urban services throughout North America have shifted their focus from managing homelessness so that emergency services can meet the demand to finding ways to end homelessness. Labelled "Housing First Plus Supports," this new approach in practice differs from the long-held approach that ending homelessness required a continuum of housing supports, first starting with emergency shelter, then transitional housing, then long-term housing. Along the continuum would be a number of support services to assist individuals' transition from one phase to another. Although the continuum of supports remains the guide for BC policy and the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions, services in BC and throughout North America have been gathering credible evidence that the continuum is not nearly as successful as the new approach of first providing stable, permanent, appropriate, and adequate affordable housing to best support homeless individuals and families end homelessness. Additionally, services recognize that affordable housing does not solve homelessness alone. People need supports to both end and prevent homelessness, and research has identified an array of services and income supports, discussed further below, that contribute to the goal of ensuring each person has a basic level of human security. While most evidence for the benefits of Housing First Plus Supports is urban-based, this model also addresses rural areas' central issues of adequate supply of affordable, stable housing and corresponding supports as imperative to ending homelessness. To be sure, Housing First Plus Supports looks at the final objective of ending homelessness and works with evidence-based solutions that begin the shift to a peacebuilding paradigm in both rural and urban areas.

Simply put, urban practice shows that Housing First works to permanently house chronically homeless people as the first step in improving their quality of life. For example, in Toronto, the Streets to Homes program housed over 1500 chronically homeless individuals within a two year period (Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Association [TSSHA], 2007). Outreach Urban Health in Kelowna is having similar successes; they have permanently housed 123 out of 130 chronically homeless clients in one year (Hughes, 2008). Portland, Oregon, was able to permanently house 70% of its chronically homeless population in the first year of that City's Housing First plan (CCEH, 2008). Neal (2004) found that for homeless women "without a safe shelter it is impossible to even begin to address" childhood trauma, addictions, mental health, and street violence. Studies in urban areas about youth also suggest that Housing First would prevent street entrenchment and physical, mental and emotional insecurities associated with homelessness (Karabanow, 2008; Skott-Myhre et al., 2008).

Not surprisingly, the Calgary Committee to End Homelessness (2008) has made Housing First their philosophical starting point in their *Ten-year Plan to End Homelessness*. Meanwhile, Victoria's Cool-Aid Society calls for a Housing First model, as 97% of the participants in their 2007 annual homeless count reported that they wanted permanent stable housing. Indeed, once housed, formerly homeless clients report superior quality of life, better access to food, improved physical and mental health (unless they have a terminal illness), the ability to reduce or eliminate addictions, and much higher self-esteem (TSSHA, 2007). Permanent housing, particularly when one is not sharing accommodations with a roommate, provides the security and stability needed to end homelessness and rebuild a healthier life (TSSHA, 2007).

Although the research for Housing First is urban-based, it is a plausible solution in rural areas for the straightforward reason that rural people, too, want stable affordable housing. Common among people living homeless in rural areas is the core desire for the basic necessities of life. During the course of this study, the desire for the homeless to end their homelessness and have permanent stable shelter was clear not only from documentation such as *Rural Homelessness* by Robertson et al. (2007) and Cloke et al.'s book *Rural Homelessness: Issues, Experiences and Policy Responses*, but also in every one of this study's group discussions and personal interviews. For example, at twenty years-old, Jason (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008) had been homeless for five years and expressed feeling worn out and wanting to settle down in a comfortable stable home. Rob's (Focus Group Interview, November 4, December 1, 2008) spirits lifted when he ended a year of homelessness by finding a stable permanent home. Susan (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008), who had been struggling with mental health and trauma from abusive relationships, said it quite plainly; "all I want is a home, and why shouldn't I have a home like anybody else."

All participants clearly wanted a stable permanent home, but that "home" was not identical. Based on their different life experiences, participants had different living ideals. After years of roommates and shared living situations, Sarah (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008), at age fifty-two, wanted to have her own space where she was not dependent on another's ability to pay rent; she felt her housing situation was more secure when she was on her own. Most of the other older participants shared Sarah's preference for independent living, with the exception of Allan. As a Doukhobor, Allan (Focus Group Interview, December 1, 2008) preferred the idea of land-sharing or a land co-operative where, similar to his ancestral way of life, multiple people shared the cost and care of land but each had their own dwelling on the property. Most of the youth also preferred a version of communal living, such as a rooming house where residents shared living and kitchen facilities but had personal bedrooms. The issues of house management came up in the conversion when Beth indicated high levels of stress associated with being overburdened by discrepant responsibilities for housekeeping at Purple House. This conversation highlighted that some kind of assistance in house management would also be ideal for youths' communal living. Even though neither all participants under 30 years preferred communal living nor all adults over 30 preferred independent living, the divide between shared and independent accommodation most often fell along generational lines. This indicates that it is important to consider the ideal living situation, whether shared or independent as well as culturally appropriate, when housing rural homeless individuals and families, as the type of home will impact the overall success of one staying housed.

Housing homeless people as a first priority not only benefits the homeless clients, but research has shown that this model also benefits communities. Reduced use of expensive emergency health services and the justice system not only saves communities' financial costs but also ensures that services are not over-taxed by caring for the results of physical violence, mental instability and poor health. This is of particular value to rural areas where healthcare and justice services are often lacking compared to urban areas. Furthermore, both de Wolff (2008) and Kudlowitz and Pinder (2006) found that many of the specialized housing facilities for formerly rural homeless individuals and families collaborate with the broader communities to reduce Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) attitudes while integrating various income levels into neighbourhoods. As housing providers (often non-profit organizations), residents and neighbours begin to meet and talk, they often agree that providing housing and stability to people living in poverty improves security for all involved. The result is more diverse and vibrant communities that enhance human security for all residents.

... Plus Supports

Housing is the cornerstone to ending homelessness, but it does not stand alone. Supports are needed to help many people living in poverty retain housing and permanently end homelessness over the long-term. First, the supports for finding stable, appropriate and affordable housing involves shifting service delivery methods to best meet clients' needs. Part of this shift includes improved service coordination and integration so that service delivery reflects the interconnectedness of the issues clients typically face.

Along with integration, the recent analyses of practices show that support services that meet clients at their physical as well as mental and emotional locations are proving to be best practices in assisting them to end homelessness. One example of service integration that "meets clients where they are at"[28] is the Homeless Connect Days started in San Francisco. These special days house several social and health services in one location, such as a school gymnasium, and provide free food and other necessities to homeless clients in one day. The premise is to draw marginalized populations who can benefit from such services but rarely access them because they are intimidated by churches and/or clinics and offices' institutional and formal settings (National Project Homeless Connect [NPHC], n.d.). Throughout the day, homeless people connect to an array of services –such as foot care, dental care, identification, haircuts— without having to travel to multiple locations. Additionally, Homeless Connect Days consistently give homeless people the opportunity to connect to housing services, where they can access support in finding housing as a first step in ending homelessness (NPHC, n.d.).

Homeless Connect Days have spread throughout urban and rural areas of the US, and most recently have been initiated by Canadian communities. Nelson hosted its first Connect Day in October 2008, serving sixty-nine people with food and providing ten different services. The feedback from the Day's participants was positive, with most declaring a desire to attend future Connect Days should they be available (Mungall, 2008a). By co-locating several services, participants were able to travel to one location and access services that are often only available by appointment or are difficult to access because of limited transportation, weekday office hours, or they are not available to the general public (e.g., medical foot care treatments that are reserved for specialized elder-care).[29] Almost all participants had the opportunity to connect with a housing outreach[30] worker as well. In so doing, they were able to take steps in stabilizing their current housing, such as getting help in negotiations with a landlord or otherwise initiating moving indoors. As a focal point for a variety of social supports for people living in poverty, Homeless Connects Days have also helped people to make that initial step in ending their homelessness by seeking housing.

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[28] This phrase is commonly used in social work practice with marginalized populations. It refers to providing assistance and supports in not only a physical environment most comfortable for clients, but also respecting clients' emotional and mental boundaries while building relationships and trust.

While Connect Days are special events, permanent co-location of services to better meet clients' needs has become a successful model of assisting clients in both finding and retaining housing. Not surprisingly, all study participants concurred that co-location was an ideal service delivery method, but it is, for the most part, missing from Nelson and area. Most non-housing services are only able to refer clients to other services that offer appropriate supports to find housing. Should clients not arrive at the referral point, services are not able to offer the supports necessary to help people find housing.

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[29] Most Nelson and area services are located within walking distance from each other. While study participants noted that this close proximity is better than in other rural and urban centres, they also pointed out that not everyone is able to walk the short distance between services, that people may not be aware of all that is available to them because services are separated, and that many distractions lurk on the streets between service providers which can prevent them from seeking positive support.

[30] The title of outreach reflects the particular mandate of this position, in that the workers reach out to clients in environments where clients are most comfortable.

Nonetheless, initial steps are being taken to co-locate some type of services in an atmosphere favourable to clients. Presently the limited resources to develop this model have resulted in informal service relationships to support outreach work. Specifically, there is a degree of co-location occurring at the Nelson hot lunch program, Our Daily Bread. Other community services providing outreach have been able to essentially co-locate a component of their services with ODB, as the social atmosphere associated with this food service provides a comfortable place to interact with clients. For example, student street nurses who reach out to patients in environments outside a clinic, have clinic hours at ODB to provide basic levels of healthcare that improve health and prevent greater health problems among marginalized populations, such as homeless people. Outreach work for mental health is also an effective way for meeting clients' need, and in Nelson the service includes visits to ODB, low-income housing, homeless camps and SSFS.

With a specialty in health, however, street nurses and mental health outreach workers are not equipped to also give housing assistance. Rather, outreach workers whose mandate specifically directs them to help individuals find and retain housing are best suited to this core function of helping people end homelessness. Each focus group expressed the value of Nelson's three housing outreach support workers –one for youth, one for all adults in the community, and one who specifically works with SSFS clients. All three outreach workers also "co-locate" periodically at ODB. These workers have helped people negotiate with landlords, find affordable housing,[31] access support services, and learn important information about the local housing market, thus making the task of moving from homeless to housed more feasible. Nelson's results from outreach services coincide with the findings of research in other jurisdictions. Like

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[31] It is important to note that the lack of affordable housing has prohibited outreach workers from housing several clients. Focus group participants nonetheless expressed a high sense of value for outreach workers.

Karabonow's (2008) discovery in his study of urban American homeless youth, Skott-Myhre et al. (2008) also found that in rural Fort Erie, Ontario, outreach was critical in supporting youth exiting street-life and homelessness. Outreach, having proven itself to be desired by homeless residents and having demonstrated its ability to effectively work with other services, reduce marginalization, and support individual and families' reintegration with the community, is a best practice in building human security with homeless populations.

While participants in this study favoured outreach models, they also mentioned that more services should be available in the same location as meal programs. They frequently identified job and housing boards as ideal services to include with ODB. They particularly commented on the benefits of accessing the multiple supports needed to overcome homelessness without having to rely on vehicle transportation or increasing the amount they must walk each day. By co-locating several services, particularly informational services, participants felt that the community would be able to better support them in finding the necessary housing to end homelessness and retain it.

Yet, participants were clear that not all services would be best delivered from one location; co-location had to be practical and relevant to clients' needs. For example, several services, such as social assistance and probation, would not be effective in physically co-locating with ODB because client overlap may be minimal, or the boundaries between basic-need services and institutional services must respect clients' privacy. Some services could co-locate with housing so that support is on-site, while other services should co-locate in an outside central location that is easily accessible for clients.

In studying rural supportive housing where services are integrated with housing, Kudlowitz and Pinder (2006) found that the best practice is to fit supports to the personalized needs of residents. For example, chronically homeless seniors with long-term addictions and/or mental illness require supportive housing that assists residents' ability to transition to housed life skills while also providing other on-site supports such as needle exchange and weekly professional healthcare (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], 2007). Housing for youth, such as Cicada Place in Nelson, would provide life skills support, counselling and employment training. Women rebuilding lives after long-term domestic violence or working in the sex trade may need on-site childcare to coincide with counselling and life skills training. Whatever the needs of the specific client group, having daily on-site supports improves the success rate of homeless people retaining their housing.

Along with community-based supports and supportive housing, it is imperative to note that these supports cannot alone both build peace and reproduce human security and peace. Other supports that reflect a wide variety of social services for children, youth, adults and the elderly only indirectly address homelessness, but they are nonetheless integral to preventing homelessness and reproducing peace in rural communities. Early childhood education, school hot lunch programs, teachers' assistants for children with special needs, and quality childcare are all linked to the development of adult characteristics needed for living-waged employment (Cloke et al., 2002; Czapska et al., 2008; Macdonald, 2003). While youth centres provide safe places for youth to congregate with supervision and guidance, senior centres provide community support networks for the elderly that can help those on a fixed income meet their needs at lower costs. A local fitness centre can make the difference in a person's life by offering them a focus on healthy living instead of depression in the face of jobloss. Such community services provide the wide range of supports that improve communities' quality of life, and thus the level of human security they offer their residents.

Filling empty pockets: financial supports

An essential ingredient in ending homelessness is an increase in BC income assistance and review of the program's policies and practices that define recipients, their eligibility, and their income levels. Indeed, the people most vulnerable to homelessness are those living with the least amount of income to sustain the costs of living. As discussed in Chapter 2, the current social assistance program in BC is failing to support and improve the lives of the most poor. Because it is the Government of British Columbia that solely administers the program, provincial agencies must be the leaders in remedying income insecurity for those requiring state assistance. The Government of British Columbia will seriously need to consider how income assistance can best increase human security and peace by evaluating its current program while also immediately implementing some initial best practices. An independent review and evaluation of the program's effectiveness, from a human security and peacebuilding framework, are essential to addressing the ways in which the current structures maintain poverty.

Notably, as Klein and Pulkingham (2008) found, the existing categorization of social assistance recipients is arbitrary and can exacerbate poverty to the point of homelessness rather than support people in meaningful ways through employment search or addressing needs related to healthcare (both physical and mental). Participants in the focus groups conducted for this study also expressed the view that the rules and regulations of social assistance were confusing and neglected their realities. For example, they wanted to see an end to the policy that leaves them without benefits for a month should they fail to submit the previous month's check-stub to the welfare office (Focus Group Interview, November 4, 2008). Also, youth participants noted that the eligibility rules inhibiting them from social assistance because they had not yet spent two full years living independently without any supports were ageist and should be discontinued (Focus Group Interview, November 7, 2008). The regulations that not only cut people off from welfare but also fail to categorize clients appropriately "must be revisited" (Klein and Pulkingham, 2008, p. 16).

Klein and Pulkingham (2008) along with Atkey and Siggner (2008) note the relationship between transitioning from social assistance and the need for stable, affordable housing, childcare, healthcare, and education. These observations were borne out in each focus group, where participants discussed the need for government to consider these relationships in its efforts to end and prevent homelessness. Thus the BC Government's review requires an analysis of regulations that directly and systematically inhibit the access of homeless people throughout the province (including rural areas like Nelson) to the educational training, stable and affordable housing, quality childcare, and the necessary healthcare that contribute to successes in leaving state income assistance. Once the review and evaluation are completed, the government must implement the findings of such an evaluation in a timely manner.

A review will offer findings for better program delivery to improve support mechanisms, yet raising social assistance and minimum wage rates is an activity that can take place immediately prior to the final conclusions of a review. In British Columbia alone, there exists sufficient evidence to indicate that raising social assistance benefit rates is warranted. Atkey and Siggner (2008) recommend that the Government of BC must at the very least increase social assistance rates so that they are transparent and reflect "some measure of the actual cost of daily living," such as the Market Based Measure,[32] rather than political will (p. 11). Klein and Pulkingham (2008) agree with an increase in social assistance, while also concurring that rates should be indexed to inflation. Focus group participants further advocated for the increase in welfare rates. Another important consideration discussed by the above-mentioned studies and focus group participants alike is that welfare recipients should be permitted a level of earnings exemption as a means to assist them in building their employability skills. In other words, if someone secures a minimum waged job at 10 hours per week while they are still receiving welfare, they should be able to retain those employment earnings without fear of losing their benefits. The existing practice of government clawing back earnings from one's welfare payments has failed to act as an incentive for people with minimal skills to seek employment, while the previous practice of allowing earnings exemptions proved better for supporting people to permanent full-time employment (Atkey and Siggner, 2008; Klein and Pulkingham, 2008). To be sure, the government can implement immediate actions to improve social assistance and minimum wages to help end homelessness.

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[32] Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) produces the Market Based Measure. This tool analyzes the costs of living in Canada's regions and produces a measure based on household type.

Increasing Community Capacity and Resiliency

Along with establishing mechanisms that directly end homelessness, it is imperative to simultaneously build the capacity of communities to continuously transform situations that allow for human insecurity into situations that foster peace and human security. As mentioned above, for homelessness to be a thing of the past, communities must be aware of the causes of homelessness and be empowered to address every person's housing need in times of crisis –such as a natural disaster, illness, domestic violence, job loss, and eviction. Indeed, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) reported in 2008 that rural communities' capacity for collaboration and ability to trigger bottom-up approaches to problem-solving is integral to their overall well-being. Supporting the UK findings is Australia's experience that decision-making and coordinating homeless services often fails when not driven at the local level (Skott-Myhre et. al, 2008). Evidently, both the US and Canada have had similar experiences and have responded with community collaboration models for dealing with homelessness. Specifically, the community coalitions described in Chapter 1 have proven themselves to be a best practice in building a community's capacity to respond to homelessness. Yet it is important to recognize that the two nations have not implemented their capacity-building programs in exactly the same way. This reflects each country's own federal structures, but also different funding capacities and priorities of the respective national governments. The end result is the identification of best practices across the board, but also areas of improvement for Canada to better support rural areas in ending homelessness.

Prior to capacity-building programs, US and Canadian communities evaluated their existing capacity levels and developed plans to not only implement service-based projects such as those mentioned above, but also to increase their communities' capacities to respond to homelessness and end it. Originally, many of these plans sought to manage homelessness, but the recent move to focus on ending homelessness reflects the beginnings of the paradigm shift discussed above (Burt & Spellman, 2007). Over the last decade, these plans have been able to take current levels of capacity and begin strategic planning to identify viable and measurable ways to end homelessness within a ten-year timeframe. This type of planning began in the US under George W. Bush's Administration, with the President's Interagency Council on Homelessness, and has been adopted by some Canadian cities, most notably the City of Calgary. Although it is premature to evaluate this planning process as a best practice, it does have notable elements that identify feasible activities while adding mechanisms to ensure accountability via monitoring and evaluation as implementation of the plan progresses (Burt & Spellman, 2007). For instance, in the Calgary 2008 plan, they identify the need for affordable housing, then set goals and targets for the number of new affordable housing units, the array of supports, and number of people who move from homeless to housed. This plan further identifies lobbying and advocacy activities to improve government funding and supports alongside targeted impacts from such activities. This latter component is indeed important to any community-based plan, as the solutions to homelessness require government involvement and financial support, and to get that support, communities must ensure that they have the capacity to advocate and lobby.

The accountability aspect of planning is of particular interest, as focus group participants valued both compassion and accountability in their lives. Extending this value to planning, the mechanism to improve compassion but also accountability within the planning process is likely to be constructive because it perpetuates capacity-building by requiring ongoing participation through both implementation and reflection while also ensuring that participants in planning actualize their project goals. However, the degree to which flexibility –another practice valued by this study's participants— factors into the plans will determine the ultimate usefulness of accountability measures and plan objectives. Only further evaluation of this relatively new planning concept in ending homelessness will be able to determine if it is indeed a best practice. Nonetheless, planning itself has been a positive process for tackling homelessness and is generally a positive mechanism in peacebuilding. This new form of planning that reflects movement toward the necessary paradigm shift has potential to contribute to both project implementation and the necessary capacity building for long-term results in ending homelessness.

Along with planning, rural communities increase their capacity by forming collaborative models that involve non-profit social services, government, citizens, the business sector, and, ideally, homeless people. Under the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), now called the Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS), Canada adopted the collaborative community model, titled Continua of Care, from the US. Being a sovereign country with different governing structures, Canada, however, did not mimic the US model. There remain differences that reflect a more comprehensive approach in the US, which is rooted in place-based solutions and better practices for building rural communities' capacity to solve homelessness.

First, both US and Canadian community coalitions have direct links to the government via a community facilitator. As a liaison between the federal government's program funding and the community, this government employee's role is to ensure financial accountability, provide advice to both government and communities, and reduce barriers for a stronger relationship between the coalition and government (Kudlowitz and Pinder, 2006; Mungall, 2007). Unlike in the US, where the facilitator is often employed by local governments with federal funding, the Canadian model is more centralized so that the community facilitator rarely resides in the community to which she is assigned. Rather, she works and resides in the major urban centre that is home to the regional head office, and travels to other communities. This structure has made it difficult for community facilitators to build relationships and grasp on-the-ground issues and needs, particularly when community facilitators' frames of reference are a major urban centre such as Vancouver but they must work with a rural community such as Nelson (Mungall, 2007). The fact that the community facilitator is not a resident of the actual community to which her support is assigned weakens the link between federal governments and communities, as she is not regularly available and able to participate in daily and weekly efforts to end homelessness. US community facilitators, on the other hand, are frequently government employees who work and reside within the communities receiving federal support to end homelessness (Kudlowitz and Pinder, 2006). As a result, they are more integral to building community capacity, and are better able to not only ensure accountability and program coherency, but are also better able to facilitate a partnership between the community coalitions and the federal government.

The second critical difference lies in the planning processes for ending homelessness. The Canadian NHI/HPS supports only sixty-one pre-selected communities for capacity building and solution-planning (not to be confused with funding for social housing or shelters). Targeted funding for capacity building has benefited only those sixty-one communities and their outlying areas, neglecting the vast majority of Canada, particularly the many rural areas that deal with a growing homeless population. Meanwhile, in the US, 84% of the population was covered by a community-based homeless planning system as early as 1999 because funds to support community capacity for ending homelessness were more broadly available than Canada's system of designating specific communities (Burt & Spellman, 2007; Singleton et al., 2002). Indeed, without the supports to initiate and facilitate the community capacity-building necessary to coordinate and implement strategies to end homelessness, much less reproduce the peacebuilding efforts, few communities are able to begin the process of fostering human security and peace with homeless populations. This is particularly so for rural communities, which typically lack awareness about homelessness in their region, sufficient financial resources to address a growing need, and/or the means to develop their capacity to deal with homelessness. Rural communities experiencing homelessness in Canada, such as Nelson's neighbours in Creston and Castlegar, would benefit from community capacity building if the funding went beyond sixty-one targeted communities or encouraged smaller communities to partner and plan regionally as is practiced in the US.

In both the US and Canada, researchers have identified a particular best practice that greatly contributes to communities' capacity for responding to homelessness: the practice is employing a Community Coordinator who is a dedicated staff person who coordinates the coalition's work with the broader community. Having the human resources to manage community capacity-building is essential in bringing various stakeholders together to raise awareness that reduces marginalization, and implement projects that will contribute to available, affordable, appropriate, and adequate housing for all community residents. Burt and Spellman (2007) note that without a community coordinator:

> even a community with a dedicated council, committee, task force, or other mechanism that in theory could assume leadership runs up against the reality that committee members have other jobs to do. With the best will in the world, they cannot take on the coordinating function (p.28).

In the US, some coordinators have been government employees, whether in the community facilitator role or a distinct position. In some instances, they were able to greatly assist the paradigm shift because their departments were supportive, but if government changed its priorities so too did the Coordinator (Burt & Spellman, 2007). Thus, long-term coordination that is primarily responsive to community, rather than government, changes may best be housed within a community coalition. Such is the case with the Nelson Committee on Homelessness. Indeed, NCOH has repeatedly identified the value of a Coordinator whose role is defined foremost by NCOH's mandate and is able to immediately respond to the community's coordination needs (Patry, 2007). As a result, NCOH's Coordinators have been able to significantly impact the level of community awareness while building capacity for social planning and project development to reduce homelessness (Patry, 2007). NCOH's successes associated with the Community Coordinator role are further evidenced by the comments from focus group interviewees, who expressed a sense of value for the role and its ability to transcend traditional social cleavages to reduce marginalization. The role of Community Coordinator, assert Burt and Spellman (2007), is a vital function for shifting systems so that ending homelessness is possible, making the role a best practice on the path to building human security and peace with homeless populations.

The Facts of Policy: Budgets and Funding

Frequently, governments' budget priorities reflect their policy and program priorities. As discussed at length in Chapter 1, the Governments of BC and Canada have undertaken major policy shifts in the last two decades that have altered how they manage funding for social programs such as housing. Because the higher levels of government have been abandoning their roles in housing and other social services although demand continued, local governments and community groups began to feel the daily pressure more acutely. Responding to this pressure, both rural and urban local governments and community groups have identified ways in which they can address the need for housing and support services. As described below, these solutions often target the private market to encourage their involvement in ensuring quality of life for residents. Despite providing a positive step in building peace and human security, these solutions are limited. The market is simply unequipped to meet the basic needs of all people; thus the private sector cannot complete the task of human security and peace in all communities. For rural areas, zoning by-laws, local economics and sparse populations limit the private market's development potential and ability to generate profit from projects that meet demand for low-income housing. Consequently, the market-based solutions communities seek are inadequate, as evidenced by the growing homeless population. To truly build human security and peace then, the upper levels of government will need to reflect their policy paradigm shift with significant reinvestment in the housing and social services that contribute to ending and preventing homelessness.

Rural Local Governments doing what they can: looking to the market

Although none of the study's focus group participants discussed market-based solutions emanating from municipal government, the literature reviewed yielded this as a worthy consideration. In Canada, local governments have limited revenue generation potential. They have the jurisdiction to raise property and business taxes and charge fees for services (e.g., vehicle parking, development permits) or utilities such as water, sewage and waste management.

Beyond this, local governments have few opportunities to generate the necessary funds for the operation of local government programs. Rural communities' revenue streams are even less than their urban counterparts. Rural communities must provide services to a smaller population over greater distances, but lack the revenue potential that comes with a large population condensed in a central location. The result is that rural communities cannot provide the level of services offered in urban centres. Like many other services, this is also true of housing. Some urban municipalities like the City of Vancouver own and operate social housing units, yet the City of Nelson has a total operating budget of only $31million, which prohibits the purchase, development and operation of non-market housing services. Consequently, rural communities have been experimenting with other ways of increasing affordable housing within their boundaries.

In identifying options available to small communities, Pringle (2001) found some possibilities where rural municipalities could influence an increase in affordable housing for lower-income earners. These options mostly reflect the way in which municipalities can work with housing developers who are particularly attracted to "destination" communities where housing affordability often reaches beyond the level of low-income residents. Specifically, municipalities like Nelson can negotiate with housing developers to include lower-cost units in multi-unit developments, increase density for economies of scale, or include other amenities such as shops, childcare or recreation facilities. Depending on the amount of development occurring, municipalities can leverage contributions from developers –essentially taxing them within the constraints of their legal powers— to add to a housing reserve fund that the municipality manages for affordable housing purposes. Along with these negotiating points with developers, municipalities can directly manipulate their fee and rate scales, as well as land use planning[33] to influence housing affordability for residents on moderate and low incomes. Finally, Pringle (2001) notes that municipalities also have the potential to advocate to upper levels of government and support locally based community group in their endeavours to ensure housing for all residents.

Although unable to define which of these practices are the most successful, Wake (2008) found that municipalities have a role in ensuring affordable housing and that these strategies just listed can positively impact the market's provision of low-income housing. Indeed, new units resulting from these strategies may directly provide housing for low-income earners, or they may increase vacancy rates for lower-cost rental units as tenants in those units purchase or move to the newly available units. Yet, as is the case with Nelson, this ability to ensure affordable housing is directly linked to the amount of development a community has, as well as the municipal staff's negotiation skills, understanding of housing issues, and knowledge of solutions for a variety of housing challenges (Murphy, 2007; Wake, 2008). If staff are lacking in these areas, the municipality may get fewer affordable units, or the "affordable" units may be far above the reach of lower-income earners, particularly those most at risk of homelessness. Rural communities, even the "destination" communities, will also find themselves in difficult negotiating positions since their potential for development is often limited by low populations. This strategy for providing affordable housing via municipally-facilitated market approaches is not consistent – and, as Wake (2008) notes, can only be evaluated on a community-by-community basis.

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[33] For example, municipalities can allow secondary suites that increase density in an area while also increasing rental units available to those unable or unwilling to purchase a home. Another example is requiring covenants on low-cost units in market developments so that the initial status of an affordable unit is not exploited with fluctuating market prices.

These strategies can only work within the confines of the market system, as they require negotiation and pricing based on the constant fluctuation of housing supply and demand. Because the market can only do so much to address the housing needs of those living in poverty, the effects market-based strategies would have in increasing affordable housing for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are purely speculative. Their inconsistency makes them difficult to measure as a best practice, and they have done little to increase the rental stock in general much more for the lowest income earners (Wake, 2008). These practices are simply unable to meet the demand for low-income housing because they are simply asking developers to make a few compromises on projects primarily meant to meet the demand of high-end markets. While rural municipalities are making attempts to increase affordable housing via the few mechanisms available to them, they are most likely impacting the housing needs of only a few people in lower-income brackets. Indeed, when considering that homelessness has not decreased in correlation to such policies, these methods are but small contributions to the overall solution of ending and preventing homelessness.

Putting the Money Where the Mouth Is: Showing Commitment With Funding

Since the market-based approach by municipalities has had limited success in meeting demand, it is important to turn back to upper levels of government to work with communities and social service providers. Indeed, municipalities have come to the policy table with some solutions that have demonstrated some positive impacts for housing affordability for moderate and lower income earners, but it is imperative that other levels of government also step forward with sufficient funds to make housing available to all people (de Wolff, 2008). In other words, the policy paradigm shift would be incomplete without the follow-through of sufficient funding to meet the demand for housing and social services.

The argument for housing, support services, income assistance and community capacity-building clearly suggests areas for targeted funding to end and prevent homelessness. However, how funding is delivered is also an important concern. First, funding must be sufficient to meet the need. Chapter 1 discussed how funding is incongruent with the growing demand for affordable housing and support services, while also noting that the social consequences of homelessness are more expensive than housing. Thus, de Wolff's (2008) recommendations for increasing supportive housing include federal and provincial funding levels corresponding to need. Also recognizing the need for increased funding, the Calgary Committee to End Homelessness (2008) lists related advocacy and lobbying strategies to provincial and federal government as essential components in its *10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*. Indeed, increased funding is the general consensus among practitioners, clients and participants in this study. Any meaningful commitment to end homelessness must include adequate funding to achieve the goal.

Second, while increasing funding to meet the target of ending homelessness is the essential first step, it needs to be paired with an understanding of best practices in funding delivery. To address the needs of rural areas, upper levels of government will need to not merely include rural areas in their funding programs, but also recognize rural realities, capacities and geographies, as these are significantly different than urban centres. The template for funding delivery cannot be singularly based on urban experiences with homelessness; rather, it must consider transportation issues in rural areas, limited human resources with small populations, scarce private financial resources from the general public, and thus social service constraints in program delivery. As participants noted, services in rural areas are often few compared to urban centres for these above reasons, and therefore need government resources in a way that addresses rural situations.

Importantly, American research by Singleton et al. (2002) and Burt and Spellman (2007) found that rural areas with greatest success were able to access funding that acknowledged the potential costs associated with rural lifestyle and resources. For example, Singleton et al. (2002) found that rural non-profit organizations often do not have staffing levels or the experience needed to apply and manage funding contracts despite their ability to deliver services. Technical assistance from funders proved to assist such organizations in their applications and management so that they can deliver quality programs to homeless clients. Another example that draws from this report concerns funding for enumeration of the homeless population. Since such a task is nearly impossible in rural areas, it may be better served in supporting social services to develop clear and consistent data-collection methods.

Another imperative consideration for funding delivery is timeframe. Along with increased funding, practitioners and researchers agree that funding must be available long-term. Solutions to homelessness are multi-year, yet funding cycles are often annual or less than five years. Both American and Canadian programs have typically been shorter than five years, with the most common funding cycle being annual. Much more in Canada, the government's commitment to the NHI/HPS has always been precarious, with service providers unsure if federal programming will continue beyond three- or two-year time limits. The uncertainty and short-term nature to a problem needing long-term solutions is inadequate for building human security and peace. As government funders in the US began to understand the long-term character of solutions to homelessness, they began to support communities in developing ten-year plans and offer long-term funding to implement such plans (National Project Homeless Connect, n.d). Consequently, social service providers are able to develop viable solutions with the assurance that they will be able to carry them out for the benefit of clients and community. Long-term, sufficient funding that recognizes the different rural and urban realities not only reflects a policy framework rooted in human security and peace, but it has the potential to apply best practices in ending homelessness and actualize this goal.

Conclusion

At the root of ending homelessness in rural areas is a policy paradigm shift that seeks to end homelessness altogether. Policies rooted in human security and peace go beyond piecemeal attempts to address conflicts and sources of insecurity for society. A better framework identifies the necessary steps in achieving peace and human security then develops responses, implements them as well as mechanisms for their reproduction. Regarding rural homelessness specifically, a human security and peace policy framework, along with corresponding funding, seeks to house people with the appropriate supports that assist them to retain stable, affordable housing. By housing people first in stable, appropriate and affordable housing, homelessness is more likely to end. Including supports such as outreach services, accessible public transportation, or on-site childcare for low-income family housing reduces the risk of homelessness for low-income people because the supports help them retain housing. Additionally, human security policies recognize the necessity of financial security, and thus would involve a social assistance program with sufficient income and supports to help people transition out of poverty. Rural communities such as Nelson and area are demonstrating increased capacity to build peace with their rural homeless populations, but need upper levels of government to join the effort in meaningful ways that reflect a human security and peace objective. Indeed, peace for rural homeless people is possible if citizens, community, and all levels of government work together toward a common goal of ending homelessness.

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