Supports for Homeless People in Kamloops: Research & Resources

ewayKamloops.ca

United Way
Thompson Nicola Cariboo

Kamloops
Elizabeth Fry
Society

CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION
KAMLOOPS BRANCH

ASK
Wellness Centre

Kamloops
Canada's Tournament Capital

CITY OF KAMLOOPS
COMMUNITY
SAFETY

HAP
KamloopsHAP.ca

Supports for Homeless People in Kamloops:
Research & Resources

Contents

1

1   Overview

Message to the Reader

This report traces the development of the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan's attempt to provide a baseline understanding of support services available for homeless and at-risk people in the community of Kamloops, British Columbia. For the homeless and at-risk, adequate support services are just as important as housing itself. Ensuring that people remain housed depends on providing the right supports, and providing the right supports for the community requires an understanding of what is available, how support services are accessed, and in which areas services may be improved. This project aims to provide this understanding.

The project approaches support services from two complementary perspectives: that of the service providers themselves and that of those who use these services. This report documents these perspectives, explains how they were gathered, and attempts to draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding the improvement of support services in Kamloops. This information is available online through a dynamic resource, ewaykamloops.ca. It is our hope that this project will assist those who provide support services, those who access support services, as well as the community as a whole. Beyond that, we sincerely hope that other communities may learn from our process to enhance their own systems of support for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Why Did We Do This Research?

The project has its genesis in a desire to end homelessness in our community. In 2009, this desire was expressed through the development of the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan (HAP). The HAP laid out six major goals organized around three central themes: housing, support services, and financial independence. Goal 3 of the plan is "*to connect people with the help they need*." One of the major strategies developed to achieve that goal is "*adopting a network approach to support services".*

This project is a key part of this network approach. With this information, support service workers and help-seekers will have better access to up-to-date information; front-line community-based agencies and other organizations offering support services will have a better understanding of the range of supports available; and the entire community will be better able to identify and address gaps in service.

One of the core principles behind the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan, and of similar plans across North America, is "evidence-based practice." It is not enough (though not without value) to work on anecdotal evidence. We must take a scientific approach to ending homelessness, measuring the impact

of our interventions and altering our path when necessary. Ultimately, this means we may have a greater chance of accomplishing our goal of ending homelessness in Kamloops by 2015.

What is ewaykamloops.ca?
Ewaykamloops.ca is how the public will interface with the data we have collected. Behind this online tool is a large database of agencies and programs which provide support to those who may be homeless or at-risk of homelessness. The range of support services covers affordable housing, addictions, food, health services, clothing, child minding, and everything in between. By surveying agency directors and program coordinators, we have compiled a great wealth of information about the services available.
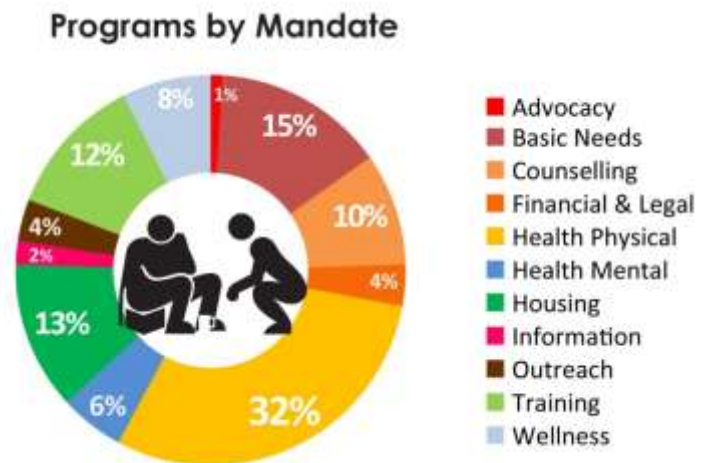
Ewaykamloops.ca is a living, dynamic piece of work. It is living in the sense that it exists online and will be constantly updated. Unlike a printed inventory, it doesn't go out of date. As the community changes, so does the inventory. Agencies and program coordinators can update information easily with a simple login, and the HAP can change most aspects of the site readily according to feedback from the community. Ewaykamloops.ca is accessible to the entire community, but it is designed specifically with homeless people and the agencies that serve them in mind. Anyone who needs support can find it, and support workers will be better able to serve their clients by referring them to other services.

Key Findings
The aim of the project was to gather both qualitative and quantitative information from two sources: people who seek support and those who provide it. In our survey of 31 support users, we asked how they looked for help, what kinds of help they sought, and whether they were successful in their search. Through these surveys, we discovered the following:
- Active help-seeking is not always rewarded, and certain supports – including housing, and addictions treatment – are lacking
- People at-risk in Kamloops often self-identify as having health issues, mental health issues and addictions
- People who self-identify as having addictions issues are not always getting treatment
- Many of the people with complex health issues are relatively young with the average age of the population being only 40 years.

Some of the key findings about the programs include a noted prevalence of health related programs, along with the relatively limited number of mental health programs. We also found that the majority of programs are offered during regular business hours Monday-Friday. The majority of programs are located on the North Shore and Downtown, while the fewest programs are offered in Valleyview and Brocklehurst.

Programs by Mandate

Color	Category
	Advocacy
	Basic Needs
	Counselling
	Financial & Legal
	Health Physical
	Health Mental
	Housing
	Information
	Outreach
	Training
	Wellness

8% · 1% · 15% · 12% · 10% · 4% · 2% · 4% · 13% · 6% · 32%

2   Background

The inventory project – and its end product, ewaykamloops.ca - is an attempt to connect people with the help they need, connect helpers with each other, and provide information to the community that will help them understand how services are accessed and the range of services available. This broad research effort involved two and a half years of collaborative work around several key actions:

- Collecting and analyzing data about the programs and services offered in Kamloops, through paper-based surveys, online surveys, and interviews
- Conducting research on help-seeking and people's access of and interaction with support services
- Developing an online platform where the inventory can live and breathe

Initial project development began in the fall of 2010, but the roots of the project date back two years earlier.

The Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan
In November, 2008, the Changing the Face of Poverty group resolved to strike a committee that would guide the development of a plan to end homelessness in Kamloops. For one year they worked on a framework for the process. In the fall of 2009, over three dozen community representatives came together several times over the course of a month in three subcommittees to discuss and plan the community's approach to ending homelessness.

The three subcommittees of the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan represented three strategic priorities:

- Housing
- Support Services
- Financial Independence

For any individual or family experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness, these three factors have a complex interaction. Maintaining suitable housing may depend on the availability and access of essential supports, as well as financial independence. Yet without the right support and financial independence, it may be hard to access housing in the first place. This presents a conundrum only if one deems it necessary to isolate the factors and provide a complete solution by selecting one focus. The

Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan takes an integrated approach to homelessness, and its strategies are designed to enhance every one of the three priority areas in Kamloops.

In the realm of support services, the HAP is clear on what needs to be done. Goal 3 is:

To connect people with the help they need

Two strategies relate to this goal: **improving outreach, and**

adopting a network approach to support services.

When the community representatives first gathered to discuss the creation of a plan for Kamloops, one of the first items on the agenda was potential challenges or concerns with the process. One concern in particular stood out: how would the plan be operationalized? That is, who would do the hard work laid out in the plan's six goals and strategies? Many good plans collect dust on office shelves, while the status quo remains unchallenged. This concern was addressed subsequent to plan development through the hiring of a Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan Coordinator, a position that would initiate, coordinate, and guide the hard work of the plan.

When a Homelessness Action Plan coordinator was hired, one of the first major pieces of work to be initiated was the Inventory Project. The project was designed to advance the goal and strategies identified above. With a network approach to support services, we can ensure that those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness can maintain their housing, their jobs, and their stability.

Purpose of the Research

While the Inventory Project began as a broad attempt to improve the network approach, this research gradually found greater focus and eventually adopted the following purposes:

- to provide up-to-date information about support services to agencies who help people at-risk
- to provide the homeless and at-risk of homelessness with up-to-date information about support services
- to provide insight into help-seeking and how people interact with support services
- to provide the general public and community in general with an understanding of the range of services available
- to enhance our understanding of the strengths, challenges and gaps in services that exists in Kamloops

Exactly how can the project fulfill these purposes? The online face of the inventory – ewaykamloops.ca – is a searchable database that allows anyone access information on the range of support service agencies and programs available in Kamloops. The website includes:

- agency information
- program information
- a powerful search feature that enables users to find specific program information easily

- printable agency and program display pages, listing address, contact information, relevant start and end dates, staff, target client groups, program schedules, program details, eligibility requirements, and fees (if applicable)
- links to other useful online resources, and agency websites
- information sheets which explain how to find help for common but difficult problems such as pet care, legal issues, and transportation
- a mechanism for support service providers to update program information

Just as the Homelessness Action Plan was carried forward and made relevant through the hiring of a coordinator, this research is being put forward and made relevant through an online public interface and the distribution of this report.

Purpose of this Report

While ewaykamloops.ca is the end product of the project, it does not tell the entire story of support services in Kamloops. This story, and its context, is told within this report. The key purposes of this report are to document the process of project development and provide information about:

- homelessness nationally, provincially, and locally
- the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan
- support services and accessibility of services
- research with program participants around the experience and perspective of help-seekers in Kamloops
- research findings on support services in Kamloops
- conclusions stemming from the research

We wish to add this report to the existing body of research around homelessness and provision of support services. Further, this report may help our community present the baseline findings that will inform future evidence-based decision-making.

3   Homelessness

What Exactly is Homelessness?
Homelessness refers to the condition of living without stable, affordable, appropriate housing. These three descriptors are important parts of the basic definition. Stable housing means that it can be safely maintained permanently or for as long as needed; housing may be unstable because of the risk of eviction or violence, a lack of necessary support, or unclear residency or tenancy terms. Affordable housing means that it is within a person or family's financial means to maintain the housing on an ongoing basis. Appropriate housing means that it is safe, well-maintained, suitable in size and space, and accessible.

What qualifies as stable, affordable, appropriate housing for one person may not qualify as stable, affordable, and appropriate for another person. A wage-earning Aboriginal single mother of two with a history of mental illness and who has suffered domestic abuse, for instance, would require a very different housing situation than a 20-year old unemployed male with a substance use problem who has just been released from a correctional facility or a 75-year-old single woman who has lived in poverty her entire life and now requires live-in care.

In fact, homelessness covers a range of different living situations which we may break into several categories, as defined by The Canadian Homeless Research Network. These categories are as follows:

Category	Description
Unsheltered	Living in places not intended for habitation, such as parks, vacant buildings, vehicles, tents, and alleys
Emergency Sheltered	Living in facilities that serve the short-term needs of the homeless, women and families suffering violence, and people escaping disaster or destruction
Provisionally Accommodated	Living in temporary accommodation such as interim housing, motels and hotels, with friends or extended family, or institutions (e.g. mental health facilities, penal facilities, residential treatment, and group homes)
At-risk of Homelessness	Living with the risk of homelessness because of unstable employment, threat of eviction, lack of support services, domestic strife, threat of violence or abuse, or otherwise untenable living situations

While unsheltered individuals typically serve as the public face of homelessness, they by no means represent the majority of homeless individuals. In Kamloops, for instance, the minimum combined number of people in the sheltered and emergency sheltered categories (according to the 2012 Homeless Count), is approximately 1/14 of those in the provisionally accommodated category. Homelessness is a dynamic condition. Individuals and families may not rest for very long in any one category of homelessness.

It can be useful to refer to different experiences of homelessness:

One-time homelessness: some people experience homelessness once and temporarily, often because of a major life crisis such as job loss, house fire, or family breakdown.

Episodic homelessness: some people alternate between periods of stable housing and homelessness; this includes those who cycle in and out of treatment programs and correctional facilities.

Chronic homelessness: by definition, a person who has spent more than 60 nights "unsheltered" or "emergency sheltered" is experiencing chronic homelessness; this condition is often accompanied by poor health, both physical and mental.

Causes of Homelessness
It is impossible to identify a single overriding cause of homelessness; rather, we must discuss multiple causes as contributing factors, with the understanding that each individual's circumstances are unique. Homelessness is also complicated by the sad fact that the factors which contribute to a person's homelessness may conspire to *keep* him or her without a home. Mental illness, for example, may create difficulties in maintaining employment in housing, and the loss of employment and housing may exacerbate the mental illness. A hypothetical (though not uncommon) case such as this serves to underline the importance of support services, and not only once a person has fallen into true homelessness but while the person is at-risk of homelessness or even before that point.

Poverty – Poverty and homelessness are closely linked. Those on income assistance or disability benefits, those earning low wages relative to their household costs, and those with no source of income at all are at great risk of homelessness.

Lack of Housing – Many people find it difficult simply to find appropriate and affordable housing in the region they work or wish to live; communities need housing options along the entire *housing continuum* (see below) to accommodate individuals and families in different circumstances.

Addictions and Mental Health Issues – The prevalence of addictions and mental health issues in the homeless population is well-documented and widely acknowledged.

Violence, Abuse, and Family Breakdown – Violence and abuse of all forms – physical, sexual, emotional, psychological – as well as family breakdown – due to violence and abuse or other factors – may lead to homelessness, particularly for children, youth, and women.

Cultural and Social Barriers – Aboriginal populations (as well as other visible minorities, particularly recent immigrants and refugees) face challenges of discrimination, lack of support, financial insecurity, language barriers and historical injustice which may account for their disproportionate homeless numbers.

Social Stigma and Intolerance – Stigma and intolerance can affect not only those in the above categories, but also those in the LGBT community, the children of parents who are dealing with barriers, and the elderly. Social stigma and intolerance toward homeless people may also hurt their chances of finding and maintaining housing.

Lack of Support – For many people, finding and maintaining housing is difficult without the proper support. Whether it is for mental health issues, substance use, domestic violence, or language skills, support may be essential both in minimizing the risk of homelessness and in bringing someone out of homelessness.

Regardless of the specific causes of a given individual's situation, homelessness is not an individual problem. In some cases, it is a social problem that reflects a systematic failure of a community to provide the proper conditions for its inhabitants to thrive. And a systematic failure requires a systematic solution.

Types of Affordable Housing
Not all affordable housing looks the same. In fact, the housing which homeless people or people who are at-risk of homelessness, typically inhabit are a number of types:

While it may be tempting to believe that people should progress along the continuum from left to right, enjoying greater stability and independence as they proceed, this is not always possible or desirable. Home ownership may be a realistic goal for many people, but for others it is not. Some people – those living with severe mental illnesses or the elderly, for example – may require supportive housing throughout their lives. For others with limited income and little chance of increasing their income to the level required for home ownership, private market rental may be a lifelong reality.

That said, if homelessness is the condition of living without stable, affordable, appropriate housing, then solving homelessness means assisting people in achieving at least the subsidized housing stage. Anything less than this would qualify as temporary or unstable. And for a community to provide the opportunity for people to proceed as far as they can or wish on the continuum, it must ensure adequate provision of housing at every stage along that continuum. Thus, it is not enough simply to increase the availability of low-end single-family dwellings. Such a housing option will remain inaccessible to all but those with the financial means for home ownership. We must pay equal attention to increasing the stock of market rental (of all cost ranges), subsidized housing, and temporary supportive housing.

Homelessness in Canada
Estimates of the number of homeless people in Canada range from 150,000 to 300,000. Clear and accurate statistics are unavailable because different communities use different counting procedures and methodologies and because some communities do not conduct homeless counts at all. This lack of reliable estimates has drawn criticism from more than one United Nations committee.

Other indicators demonstrate the extent of poverty and the risk of homelessness. In 2006, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation identified 12.7% of the national population as living in "core housing need;" this condition is defined as having housing that does not meet standards in adequacy, affordability, or suitability and having to spend at least 30% of total before-tax income to afford the median rent for alternative housing that meets all three standards. Statistics Canada information from 2008 shows 9.4% of Canadians in families with an income below the after-tax low-income cut-off (LICO). Moreover, a 2009 study by the Canadian Payroll Association revealed that 59% of employed Canadians would "have trouble making ends meet" if faced with a mere one-week delay in receiving a paycheque. These figures underline the fact that the front door to homelessness is open.

The human and social cost of homelessness in Canada is undeniable, and its impact is no longer restricted to large urban centres. Homelessness is increasingly moving to smaller communities and suburbs. The financial cost has been estimated at $6 billion per year for a core homeless population of 150,000. These costs include emergency shelter, health care, criminal justice, and social services. This means that we are currently spending $40,000 per year at minimum to care for each homeless individual in Canada.

The federal government's approach to homelessness has been through initiatives that began with the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) in 1999. This initiative provided $753 million toward helping communities plan their own strategies and toward meeting the needs of the unsheltered and provisionally sheltered, both with housing and services. Following this, The NHI was renewed for a total of four years, with approximately. In 2007, the National Homelessness Initiative was replaced with the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). In its first eight years, the HPS directed $658 million to community projects related to homelessness, and in 2013 the government promised to extend funding for an additional five years.

The Canadian federal government has also invested in affordable housing through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation under the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI). From 2001 to 2011, this initiative put 1.2 billion dollars toward 52,000 new affordable housing units. Amendments to the AHI agreements with provinces and territories helped a further 1.5 billion dollars flow to affordable housing projects under Canada's Economic Action Plan from 2009 to 2011. Like the HPS, the AHI has been renewed for another 5 years in the 2013 federal budget.

Homelessness in British Columbia

British Columbia faces major poverty and homelessness issues. In 2010, BC had the worst provincial poverty rate in Canada, with 15.5% of the population living below the before-tax low-income cut-off, and the second highest child poverty rate, with 14.3% by the same measure *(First Call, BC Child & Youth Advocacy Coalition www.firstcallbc.org).*

Exact homeless figures come from homeless counts conducted in communities across the province. The most recent count in Vancouver estimated a minimum of 1,296 sheltered and 306 unsheltered individuals. Other recent counts report 279 homeless in Kelowna, 115 in Nanaimo, and 361 in Prince George. Such counts, which typically entail enumerating the homeless population in shelters, parks, and streets, provide minimum numbers of homeless people, since it is impossible to know whether the entire homeless population is being reached. These counts also do not account for "hidden" homelessness, or those people who are provisionally accommodated. This hidden population is notoriously difficult to count, though a 2011 study by the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia did attempt to assess the number in five BC communities. This research provided an estimate of 38,061 hidden homeless people in BC over the year 2010.

Homelessness in Kamloops

Kamloops is a city of 85,000 people located in the British Columbia interior. Kamloops serves as a hub community for people throughout the Thompson, Nicola, and Cariboo regions. The city has a major hospital, a university, an urban First Nations reserve, and a regional correctional facility. As a small but important urban centre, Kamloops experiences a fair share of homelessness and support service agencies have long been working to assist the homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

The first homeless count in Kamloops was conducted by The Kamloops Community Committee on Homelessness and reported by TRUE consulting. From 2006 to 2011, a yearly homeless count was organized by ASK Wellness and their outreach workers, who are very familiar with the homeless population in Kamloops. The Homeless Count of 2012, a partnership between ASK Wellness and the Homelessness Action Plan, was the first to adopt standardized provincial guidelines and procedures for counting homelessness.

The 2012 Homeless Count revealed a minimum number of 45 people sleeping rough and 54 people sleeping in shelters, for a total of 99 individuals in the categories of "unsheltered" and "emergency sheltered." The 2011 study by the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia estimated

that as many as 1,167 people had experienced "hidden" homelessness (provisionally sheltered) at some point in the year 2010.

Besides the numerous support service agencies that actively work to support the homeless and at-risk of homelessness, Kamloops has a number of groups that are collaborating to address homelessness directly. These include the Kamloops Working Group on Homelessness (KWGH) and Changing the Face of Poverty (CFP). In 2012, the City of Kamloops became the community advisory board which overseas distribution of funds provided by the Canadian Federal Government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy through the KWGH. These groups collaborate closely with the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan and its coordinator.

The Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan (HAP)
In 2008, the Changing the Face of Poverty Group initiated a plan to create a five-year plan to end homelessness in Kamloops. Meetings of community representatives and community forums were conducted in the fall of 2009 and early part of 2010. The result was a formalized plan to end homelessness by 2015 and the hiring of a coordinator to guide the work of the plan.

The HAP lays out six goals and eight strategies for the community of Kamloops:

1   Assess the local housing situation, enhance the stock of acceptable housing, and respond to
        changes in the housing market…
        … by establishing a Local Housing Board.

2   Provide greater housing stability and reduce evictions…
        … by promoting housing support agreements, and
        … by establishing a Resident Support Program.

3   Connect people with the help they need…
        … by improving outreach, and
        … by adopting a network approach to support services.

4   Build the basic skills that people need to maintain housing and independence…
        … by improving access to life skills coaching.

5   Improve fairness, accessibility, and responsiveness…
        … by pushing for changes to laws, regulations, procedures, and protocols.

6   Help people find and maintain employment…
        … by improving workplace supports.

Successes of the Homelessness Action Plan

Since the finalization of the HAP and hiring of the coordinator in 2010, much work has been done in Kamloops around the issue of homelessness. Firstly, community awareness has been raised through events during the annual Homelessness Action Week, through regular media releases regarding homelessness, and through presentations throughout the community. This community awareness component is supported online through the HAP website and blog, a Facebook page, and Twitter updates, which are regularly gaining more followers.

Secondly, a growing spirit of collaboration has helped forge new partnerships and strengthen existing networks. A new understanding of homelessness and related issues in Kamloops has been developing through the Changing the Face of Poverty Group, the Kamloops Working Group on Homelessness, and student involvement in HAP projects. The HAP Coordinator has worked with BC Housing and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, with the Youth Services and Housing Steering Committee to establish needs, and with the Mobilizing Local Capacity to End Youth Homelessness group to assist in youth-led activities around homelessness. Thompson Rivers University students and faculty have been integral to many HAP projects.

Thirdly, the HAP has enabled better evidence-based practice through research. A formal partnership among the HAP, Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way, and Thompson Rivers University under the Community-University Research Alliance initiative has set the stage for community-based research that will gather further evidence required to map trends and prove need. The HAP has also taken on roles assisting with the annual Kamloops Homeless Count and the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C.'s studies of hidden homelessness and family homelessness.

Beyond community awareness, strengthened networks, and research, the Homelessness Action Plan can list several major projects and accomplishments. These accomplishments directly serve one or more of the plan's six major goals and demonstrate the integrated approach to tackling issues of housing, support services, and financial independence.

HAP Leadership Council – A committee of 13 members representing four levels of government and a variety of community sectors, the HAP Leadership Council works to resolve systematic barriers encountered by the homeless and at-risk of homelessness. The group focuses on policy change and is currently lobbying for private sector involvement in the creation of affordable rental housing. The group's successes include an increase in earning exemptions for people on income assistance, which allows them to work a certain amount of time while collecting benefits.

Kamloops Housing Board – The Kamloops Housing Board is the fulfillment of the first major strategy of Goal 1 of the HAP. This board is essential to the development of long-term affordable housing solutions in Kamloops. The Board oversaw the Kamloops Affordable Housing Needs Assessment through 2012. The Board also serves to inform municipal policy, assist community-based organizations and business, guide the work of the HAP, and provide information to the general community. The Kamloops Housing

Board will continue to advise the City on housing issues beyond the five-year term of the Homelessness Action Plan.

Kamloops Rent Bank – In partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Kamloops Rent Bank begins to answer the need for financial independence stated in the HAP. The Rent Bank provides small, low-interest loans to people in stable rental housing to assist in emergency financial situations or to pay for utilities in arrears. This model was developed based on other rent banks in B.C. and Ontario.

Kamloops Integrated Community Collaboration *(KICC)* – The HAP is proud to have assisted the Interior Health Authority, Community Living British Columbia, ASK Wellness and other concerned community groups in the creation of KICC. This group is based on the Kelowna group Partners in Community Collaboration (PICC), and is led by the Interior Health Authority Street Nurses. The group brings together front-line outreach workers on a weekly basis. Its aim is to enhance inter-agency collaboration and to combine efforts in the best interests of those most in need.

Kamloops Living Wage Index – The Living Wage Index is the result of a study of the hourly rate at which a household in Kamloops can meet its basic needs. Developed in partnership with the Money Matters subgroup of Changing the Face of Poverty, this Index helps address financial issues identified in the Homelessness Action Plan. The 2012 Living Wage for a 2 earner household is $17.95/hr each. This means that each person has to earn $17.95/hr full time, in order to be able to afford the basics of life such as housing and day care.

Life Skills Development Project – Responding to the widely acknowledged importance of life skills in the maintenance of housing, the Life Skills Development Project is a comprehensive study of life skills programs in Kamloops and a plan to coordinate existing programs. The Life Skills Development Project gathers front-line workers together to create lasting solutions that will improve people's ability to maintain housing.

The work of the HAP continues, and the partners look forward to implementing many more initiatives that will help fulfill the plan's goals. For a list of partners and funders of the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan, please see Appendix B.

4 Support Services

The Support Services Inventory contains information on the agencies and programs in Kamloops which provide support services to the homeless and at-risk of homelessness. What exactly do we mean by support services? Support services are the programs and services that provide the help that people need in order to maintain housing, stability, health, and safety in their lives. For one of the methods of searching the database, the inventory is divided into the three basic categories: housing, supports, and finance.

Housing

- emergency shelter
- transitional housing
- subsidized housing
- housing support

Supports

- Addictions
- Advocacy
- Blood Borne Disease
- Child Minding
- Clothing & Household Goods
- Education Training & Employment
- Counselling
- Dental
- Doctor/Nurse
- Drop In
- Food & Nutrition
- Harm Reduction
- Identification
- Information & Referrals
- Language
- Legal
- Mental Health
- Mentoring
- Outreach
- Parenting/Pregnancy & Infant Care
- Recreation
- Showers/Laundry/Hair
- Transportation
- Volunteer Opportunities

Finance

- bank accounts
- debt counselling
- financial management
- funding for housing
- funding for training & education
- funding for special needs

The lists above reveal the breadth of support services that a healthy community makes available to its citizens which can help the homeless or at-risk of homelessness in maintain housing. A homeless individual or family may require on one or many of these support services, depending on their circumstances. Some individuals and families may need supports on an ongoing basis, while others may need support during periods of transition or crisis.

When studying support services, we should draw a distinction between formalized "programs" that we have included, and "services," which can be provided on an ad-hoc basis. Community agencies often provide a multitude of services in addition to their formal programming that they receive regular funding for. Some of these services are offered out of necessity, such as offering muffins in the morning before a work program. Other services are offered because of a new opportunity such as a concerned citizen bringing a gift of vegetables from their garden. In these cases, while the agency is offering food, the food itself is not considered a formal program because we are not sure if there will be muffins or garden vegetables on an ongoing basis.   For the purposes of this study, we focus on the programs that have been formally funded as ongoing and regularly scheduled activities tied directly to the mission of the agency.

It is also important to underline how dynamic the landscape of support services is. Programs have life cycles. New ones are born every day, while others are closed down due to lack of resources or fulfillment of mandate. As parts of a dynamic system, a community's support services may be enumerated as part of a point-in-time study (much as homeless counts identify a minimum number of homeless individuals on a specific day); however, a static inventory of support services will rapidly become out-of-date. This project has established a mechanism for overcoming this challenge, as described in the Development of the Support Services Inventory section of this report.

The Importance of Support Services
The Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan has aligned with other homelessness initiatives in Canada, the U.S. and Europe in adopting a Housing First approach to homelessness. This approach emphasizes the importance of providing adequate shelter as a first step to stability and wellness, rather than granting housing once people can demonstrate a certain degree of stability. Yet a housing-first approach by no means implies a housing-*only* approach.

Helping people achieve stability, maintain their housing, recover from homelessness, and thrive in our community means providing them with support. A failure to do so will result in the failure of housing solutions and a corresponding increase in homelessness and attendant issues. Understanding that we must provide a full range of supportive programs and services, the support inventory can help identify gaps in services, which agencies and governments can then attempt to fill. But we must also acknowledge our successes and direct resources to the maintenance of existing supports.

The Delivery of Support Services
Support Services are delivered by a variety of non-profit agencies, community services, for-profit community service agencies, and faith-based organizations. They may be offered in combination – for

example, transitional housing with addiction treatment programming or a drop-in program that provides food and access to a public health nurse and counselling – or as standalone services.

Two challenges frequently identified in discussions with support service workers are 1) the gap or transition between programs or services, 2) the sudden and distressing withdrawal of support in time-limited programs. For example, an individual with problematic substance use may successfully complete a seven-day detox program, but then have to wait to enter a residential treatment facility. Or a youth may transition into adulthood and suddenly be ineligible for many of the services that he or she came to rely on in the first 18 years of life. Or a skills and training program may finish and leave participants with little in the way of next steps toward actually finding and maintaining employment. These challenges result partially from the fragmented approach to homelessness in Canada and the provinces. Funding is directed to community-based agencies for essential programs and services, but it largely remains the work of individual communities to deal with their own homelessness issues.

The twin challenges outlined above and the community-based approach to dealing with homelessness enforce the importance of coordination in support services. Agencies and support workers must talk to each other, share information when appropriate, and have the ability to wisely and easily refer clients to programs outside their own organizations. This need for coordination is spelled out clearly in the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan, one aim of which is to "Connect people with the help they need by adopting a network approach to support services."

This network approach is exactly what this project aims to accomplish. With research on over 45 agencies and 200 programs in a searchable online interface, the inventory can go a long way toward enhancing the network of support providers. Unfortunately, many agencies and service providers face a triple strain: funding is being cut, costs are rising, and demand is increasing. The result is that some support services are being reduced or eliminated even though they remain necessary, which has a ground level impact on the homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

Utilization of Support Services
To be effective, support services must be accessible to the populations they intend to serve. Accessibility is influenced by a variety of factors, including:

- hours of program operation
- program start and end dates
- availability and wait lists
- eligibility requirements
- location and facilities
- personal connection & trust

Help-seekers may become aware of, and gain access to support services in several different ways. First, help-seekers may find information themselves about available supports; then visit the agency in person

or contact the agency or program coordinator by email or phone. Second, support service workers may refer help-seekers to other agencies and programs. Third, support service agencies may locate help-seekers through outreach workers and initiatives; help-seekers may then choose to utilize the agency or program. The support inventory and its online interface – ewaykamloops.ca – is designed to facilitate the first two methods of access by providing a searchable database of agency and program information.

Knowledge and awareness of available supports certainly influences the likelihood of an individual accessing them, particularly for youth, who are generally less aware of available supports than adults. However, a variety of factors may influence *whether* help-seekers actually utilize support services and *how well* they access those services.

One major factor is reluctance on the part of those who may need support. This reluctance may stem from several sources, including mistrust of formal sources of support, a desire to assert a sense of self-sufficiency, fear of judgment or stigma, and a feeling that support providers do not genuinely understand the plight of the help-seeker (Barker & Collins, 378; Kort-Butler et al., 2012; Slesnick & Sznajder-Murray, 2008). Reluctance may also stem from frustration with the bureaucracy of support service agencies (Levitt, et al, 2011) and lack of timeliness (Mamocha & Nickasch, 2007). Regardless of its source, reluctance remains a major obstacle to help-seeking, and trust is the first step towards success.

Another important factor is the difficulty homeless people may have in identifying their own needs and matching them to the available support services (May, 2011). It also appears that utilization of support services may change with prolonged experience with homelessness. A study by O'Toole et al. discovered that individuals with less than 12 months of homelessness were more likely to seek informal support from family, friends, and clergy. This observation confirms other research which suggests that people with more experience with support services are better at finding the help they need than those with little experience with support services (May, 2011). Thus, chronically homeless individuals may be more adept at help-seeking than those who experience one-time or episodic homelessness.

The particular types of challenges or barriers an individual faces may also influence the utilization of support services. A history of mental illness or substance use often correlates with a higher level of awareness and greater utilization of supports (Kort-Butler et al., 2011). An individual may also be struggling with competition among different needs, in which case immediate needs such as food, clothing, and shelter often trump non-emergency concerns for health care, financial independence, and training, for example.

Finally, homeless people may face logistical challenges to the access of support services. Without a permanent address or a telephone number, it may be difficult to register for certain services and set up appointments. Moreover, a lack of affordable or timely transportation may make keeping appointments difficult.

Considering the challenges outlined above, we must accept that the availability of information alone cannot guarantee the wise use of support services by homeless people. The Support Services Inventory should assist help-seekers and help-givers, but there are a host of other problems that must be addressed.

The Importance of Relationship Building

The research on access and utilization of support services reinforces the importance of relationship-building in the delivery of support services. We may enumerate programs and services, provide the public and help-seekers in particular with information about these programs and services, and attempt to connect people with the help they need, but the actual provision or acceptance of help depends on human relationships.

People seek and accept help not simply because it exists, but because of a trusting relationship with the support provider. Many people in need of support establish a relationship with a particular agency or person within an agency. It is often this human relationship, and not the program or service *per se*, that enables support or serves as the gateway to other services. It is particularly important to take this fact into consideration when discussing the idea of duplication of services. Some duplication of services in a community is appropriate and necessary. Two agencies may deliver the same kind of support to two different populations with whom they have established trusting and supportive relationships. It is not always reasonable or realistic, or efficient for that matter, to ask help-seekers to establish new trusting relationships each time they wish or need to access a different type of support.

5   Research with Participants

Solid evidence-based decision-making must take into account the perspective of program participants and help-seekers themselves. This is why the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan struck a partnership with the Faculty of Social Work at Thompson Rivers University and Professor Michael Crawford. The purpose of the partnership was to undertake both quantitative and qualitative research on the help-seeking behaviour of homeless people in Kamloops and their perceptions of the services they have accessed. 26 students helped with the process of interviewing 31 homeless and at-risk participants.

This research yields rich information regarding help-seekers characteristics and perspectives. Not only does this form an integral part of our project, but other communities wishing to undertake similar assessments of support services may also benefit from the research, as it may form a valuable contribution to the literature on homelessness and support services.

Help-Seeking Behaviour & Consumer Evaluation of Support Services in Kamloops
The purpose of this study is to briefly report on research undertaken with 31 homeless or near-homeless men and women in Kamloops, BC. The paper provides a brief description of the participants, examines their help-seeking behaviour, and provides insight into the consumer's perspective of support services available and received.

The partnership undertook to complete a study with three main goals -

- To locate and describe a sample of people who receive services at social service agencies in Kamloops and identify as homeless or at risk of being homeless
- To describe help-seeking behaviour and the process individuals go through attempting to locate resources and services
- To engage this sample as consumers in the evaluation of support services

The findings of this study may be useful to service providers as they seek ways to improve service delivery and to those who advocate for people who are homeless or near-homeless. Funding, made available through the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan and the Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way, provided for recruitment and training materials, remuneration for study participants, meeting supplies, and for hiring a part-time researcher.

Methodology
The research team consulted with HAP partnering agencies, and constructed a questionnaire which was used to collect data from participants in semi-structured open-end interviews. Several iterations of the

research instrument were discussed with service providers (some of whom were former service users) and feedback was used to edit, improve, and sharpen the focus of the study.

The questionnaire asked participants about age, sex, marital status, income, employment, and education. Participants were also asked about physical and mental health, and substance use concerns. Members of the research team asked participants about help-seeking behaviour and transcribed the recorded interview which was later used for qualitative data analysis. Finally, participants were asked to identify services they sought, whether they located them, and if their needs were met. Interviews were held in a community agency setting which does not provide services to this population and where participant privacy and comfort was assured. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

A decision was made early on in the study to include a research training component. This resulted in a considerable expansion of the research team to include 28 TRU Bachelor of Social Work students who were completing a research methods course during the Winter 2012 semester when the data was gathered. This training and research opportunity for students led to the summer 2012 signing of a community-based research partnership agreement between TRU, the United Way, and HAP.

Students in Social Work 3010, Introduction to Social Work Research, were invited to join the research team as interviewers. The students exchanged one of the required assignments for this course with the opportunity to participate in the research and the requirement to write a short paper about their learning. Students received a minimum of two hours training in addition to their standard classroom lectures in preparation for interviewing study participants.

The study was vetted and approved through the Thompson Rivers University Human Subjects Research Ethics Board in late 2011.

Participant recruitment notices were posted at agencies that provide services to people who are homeless. Agencies included shelters and facilities that provide clothing and meals. The notices asked people, who considered themselves to be homeless or near-homeless and were 18 years of age or older, to volunteer to be interviewed for up to 90 minutes. Participants received a $30 gift card which they could exchange for products at a large grocery store. Additionally, participants were offered food and beverages before and after the interview.

The recruitment strategy proved successful and more participants volunteered than the research team members were able to include in the study due to time and financial constraints. The research team interviewed 31 consecutive self-referred individuals. Interviews were 30 to 90 minutes in length.

Describing the Population
There were slightly more male (51.6%) than female participants. The mean age of the group was 40.6 years. Ten (32.3%) participants identified as Aboriginal. More than two-thirds (73%) of the participants

were single and more than half completed high school, had some college or university, or completed a bachelor's degree (24.1%, 31%, & 10.3% respectively).

Transient

Study participants were transient and 80% of them had lived in their current residence for less than one year. More than 1/3 had been evicted from their last residence. More than two-thirds (70%) of participants provided a previous address that was outside of Kamloops and half last lived in the BC lower mainland.

Some of the participants reported moving around in search of work and some were surprised to find that work was scarce regardless of location.

> *I wanted to move to Kamloops cause the job opportunities are better here than in [rural area] right, and that was my main reason for coming here. And then I found out that there wasn't a whole lot of help for people [here].*
>
> *Female 14*

Dependent on Income Assistance

Almost all of the participants depended on Income Assistance programs. About half (51.7%) relied on the basic and temporary income assistance and 41.4% relied on benefits from the Persons With Disabilities or the Persons With Persistent Multiple Barriers programs.

Participants with disabilities found it particularly difficult to locate even part-time employment. Income assistance regulations allow people with disabilities to earn some income without having it clawed back however few seem to secure employment.

> *I would like to see us get more resources, I would like to see, um, you know, like programs, for people on disability, yeah, I'm allowed to make 500 bucks, but, um, there's not a lot of employers that want to take me because, you know I'm on, I have a disability, so they think that I am probably not going to be as available and also too, I don't, um, with my mental illness I can't work a full time job.*
>
> Female 10

Physical and Mental Health Concerns Prevent Many From Normal Daily Activities

Many participants reported a health concern (52%) and more than a quarter (26%) of participants were taking prescription medication for a health condition. Half (52%) said that their poor health interferes with daily activity.

Participants generally reported being able to access health care in urgent situations however some reported difficulty accessing routine medical services.

> *Yah, um aside from emergencies, like immediate help, health problems, and appointments for things like dental assistants, um, eyes, family doctor, it's really hard to get into. It's not impossible, but it's [the] most difficult thing.*
>
> Male 13

Almost two-thirds (61%) of the participants reported a mental health concern and more than one-third of participants reported taking prescription medication for a mental health condition. Mental health concerns interfered with normal daily activities for 58% of participants.

Almost three-quarters (74%) of the participants said they considered themselves to be a person with a disability.

The number of participants who saw themselves as having a disability was almost double the number of those in receipt of income assistance for people with disabilities. Many participants reported difficulty in establishing their eligibility for this level of income assistance and their appreciation for the assistance they receive from support service agency staff.

> *I find sometimes, like when you call the Ministry, and um, you need some financial help, um, you know it's like they're just trained and trying to tell you 'no' as opposed to trying to be helpful … to your problem*
>
> Female 10

> *I think [non-profit community agency is] probably the best people to help me out right now umm because they're able to send me…they're able to hook me up with a doctor, they're able to help me to get my paperwork started to get on disability. And yeah, they've probably been the best help for me in the last couple months.*
>
> Male 11

Untreated Substance Use
More than half (55%) of the participants said that they were addicted to alcohol, prescription or illicit drugs, or other substances. Most frequently cited substances were alcohol (53%) and cocaine (35%). More than one-third (35%) indicated that their addiction and substance use interfered with normal daily activities. Despite high rates of self-reported addiction, less than one-fifth (19%) of the participants were currently in treatment or counselling and less than half (45%) have ever been in treatment.

Strong Family Connections
Participants reported numerous and significant family relationships. Principal or main relationships listed included spouse (11%), parent (36%), child (25%), and sibling (25%). Most of the participants (81%) have had contact with a significant family member within the last month prior to their participation in the study. Few (18%) currently lived with their significant family member however almost half (43%) had lived with this person within the past 12 months.

Two-thirds (68%) of participants reported receiving significant emotional support from family members however fewer families were able to provide financial (32%) or material (39%) support. Reaching out to family members for support was recognized as beneficial and, as this participant notes, highly recommended.

> *"Try uhh putting aside your differences. If you have family and you don't like them put that aside and try staying with them... So the best advice I can give is just put aside your differences with your family. If you haven't contacted your family, uhh, contact them!*

> *They are there for moral support, they are there to help you, and if they are not, just talk to them, and tell them your situation because they are there to help.*
>
> <div align="right">Male 15</div>

Impoverished Social Networks

Participants reported having few friends. Only 39% said they had two or fewer people they would consider friends. As a measure of friendship as personal resource, less than half (44%) of the participants reported knowing more than two people they could borrow $5 from. Only 13% knew someone they could borrow $100 from. Only 36% of participants reported knowing someone they could tell a personal problem to.

The nature of relationships for many in this sample was unreliable as pointed out by one of the participants.

> *Most of the people I know are drug addicts and they sell drugs and they're not much help. They are not dependable. I'm not very dependable myself.*
>
> <div align="right">Male 1</div>

Participants Do Locate Help

Participants were asked about seeking, locating, and receiving help in 27 areas of support services. As might have been expected, given the study's recruitment strategy of locating participants at social service agencies, participants reported considerable success at locating needed resources. Participants found services that met their needs in the areas of health services (83%), counselling (75%), and food, shelter and clothing (66%). Fewer (31%) were able to locate satisfactory services and resources dealing with income or financial need.

Seeking help is a process that requires considerable effort and some organization as this participant observed.

> *I wouldn't say it's easy to locate. It all takes … ah … thoughts and processes and talking to the right people to figure out which resources are available to you and which ones are not available to you.*
>
> <div align="right">Male 2</div>

Even when a participant was organized and located an appropriate service, help is not always available.

> *Uh, I went to [a community agency] and told them that because of an abusive situation I had nowhere to live, and I'm not allowed to move into my place until the first [day of the month], umm, my cheque is $630 a month and I owe $675. I was wondering if they would be able to pay the additional amount that I was short for my rent. And they said no because I am putting myself in the situation of get … but … uh renting a place I could not afford. So they would not be able to help me because then it would be an ongoing thing that they would have to keep helping me with, and they think that I should find a place cheaper even though there was no place cheaper, so I didn't get help.*
>
> <div align="right">Female 15</div>

Participants were quite complimentary of the non-profit social service sector in Kamloops and when they found a helpful staff person they were very appreciative.

No actually, I think that is maybe why I stayed in Kamloops. One of the reasons why I stayed here was that there were some services here. Um, I remember I was down and out my first couple days here I saw a couple people that smiled at me, and I was like wow, I come out through provinces and , ya know, some towns you see nothing in, bunch of evil people. You know I just saw that and I think that's what made me stop

<div align="right">Male 9</div>

I think [a non-profit community agency] is like really amazing actually and they do a lot and they can help you in any direction you need once you just basically just get a person there and you can get your situation out they have like branches and outreaches and different things that basically you don't really need to go anywhere else or I haven't anywhere anyways since asking them.

I would see [him] first because he was part of the housing coordinators or whatever and he always steered me in the right direction or you know [he] at least got that smile back on your face so that you could try and get something done right.

<div align="right">Female 11</div>

Some Service Delivery Models Can Block Service Utilization
Most of the income and health services utilized by participants were located within government service where some more traditional types of program delivery models seem to frustrate some participant attempts to access resources.

[The government ministry] are the worst. I mean, they just make everything so much more difficult. And with them, it's like they don't show caring or sympathy or anything. They are like, there's like. Their faces [are] stonewalled and their hearts are, you know, hard. So, if you are in kind of, in any kind of trouble, they are the last people to ask for help.

<div align="right">*Female 7*</div>

Locating services can be very difficult and negotiating service or obtaining resources from single service agencies is frustrating.

They're all over the town, I know that, but um, you have to figure out, you have to find the pamphlet first and then go to it. [I] think that they should just have one big building and everyone comes to the same one, and they put out their spread, and everything with what they can do and have everybody at that building. So it's hard getting to all the different places. Yeah, because some people don't have bus money, they don't have [the] right means to get there and it's hard

<div align="right">Female 13</div>

Professionals familiar with the organization and delivery of support services to homeless populations struggle to make sometimes scarce resources and services available, consumers sometimes see things in a more straightforward and simple way.

I think social services should change because they are the government and they are supposed to help you from going on the street. But I mean I guess in order to gain money from the government you have to give the government money. You can't really change

<div align="right">**25**</div>

the legislature without talking to a GM or not a GM – without talking to the higher-ups. I am pretty sure. I mean it took them nearly twenty or thirty years just to discuss the Indian Act let alone some stupid legislature about welfare that would probably take them you know five minutes to just look over.

<div align="right">Male 15</div>

Implications for Service Delivery

Study participants were relatively successful at locating many types of resources however some had trouble matching their specific needs to services and some had trouble locating the required service. Much of what was said by participants in this regard was that people seeking help were confused by the range of support services and failed to understand which service would best suit their needs.

Participants were asked to recommend one change to the way services are delivered that would make a difference to people such as themselves. Their responses address a wide range of concerns.

Participants were keenly aware that the financial resources available to them were inadequate. At the time of the study, the basic monthly income assistance rate for individuals considered employable was $235 plus a maximum shelter allowance of $375.

Up your welfare. Up, up the program. We all need a little bit more money and it's hard living on a social [assistance].

<div align="right">Male 12</div>

Having a bigger welfare cheque. So we don't have to resort to other activities. And if they do not deduct dollar for dollar.

<div align="right">Male 4</div>

… lower the standard of, ah, rent and put a ceiling or a cap on what you can charge. So you charge five fifty [$550] for a one bedroom and that is more than enough plus utilities OK that's more than enough That's taking a good size chunk out of a person's [income assistance cheque] and we have a lot of people in this town that are on income assistance.

<div align="right">Male 8</div>

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, vacancy rate for apartments in Kamloops at the time of the study was approximately 4%, and the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment was almost $700 - more than double the income assistance maximum shelter allowance. Many participants struggled to find suitable and affordable housing.

[More] affordable housing. Yeh. A positive environment. A stabilized environment.

<div align="right">Male 3</div>

More affordable housing, and I'd like to see the [non-profit community agency] provide more like meat, you know it's all just bread and vegetables, half the time they're rotten, you know there's nowhere to get meat or anything.

<div align="right">Female 2</div>

Identifying yourself as a person in need and being able to accurately identify the need is an essential first step to seeking assistance. Many of the participants found themselves confused when seeking help, not knowing where to start their search. Participants made practical recommendations to facilitate help-seeking.

> *Well, can I say that maybe they should put more flyers out to point out help?*
>
> Female 13

> *I think uh, when you call a number, and maybe that service has changed, I think when things like that happen they should update their services more, or look for one to replace it quickly, you know? Cause there's such a, you know, poverty, there's a lot of poverty, so we need to make sure we're on top of that.*
>
> Female 10

> *I think um… if they would create um… like a toll free number. I think a toll free number or even a three digit, say like um… 222 or something like that, um… as a signal, that you know there's as, you know, relay what kind of sources there is,*
>
> Female 7

> *I think a co-ordinated service, with all the housing options … available*
>
> Female 1

Participants seemed to understand that some resources were necessarily limited and that workers, often bound by the regulations governing their work, were unhappy. In many situations, participants simply wished to be treated more fairly and respectfully.

> *I know it is horrible to say. Social Services is very busy and they do the best that they can but just make it easier to talk to somebody sometimes. I know they have bad days and they are due to it. I mean ... they have a hard job.*
>
> Male 10

> *Wear a badge, one of those yellow Happy Face badges and make them look at it everyday*
>
> Male 9

> *I would almost like to say to the people that are there to give help when it is needed, um if they were to try to be a little more understanding, but at the same time I realize probably people that don't really need help go in there and try to tell them stories about it so that they can get free money. I understand that probably happens so much that they [are] just judgmental to people or something right? Or a lot of stressful situations, but I mean, if they were a little more open-minded and understanding to people's situations and didn't just – um – cut people off right away. I guess that would probably be helpful.*

> *They're not getting that much funding … They would probably be able to help people in need a little more than – than they do right [now], cause they have a lack of funding.*
>
> Female 15

Participants identified the need for practical and less expensive resources.

> *I think people who are on assistance or in a shelter or whatever, I think one of the best things [I'm] looking forward to seeing is a bus pass. … I was going to an employment program and they gave us a one month bus pass. And that changes your whole world*
>
> Male 13

> *… and maybe a phone card, yah. Like say some people have a cell phone, you get a top up card or just a phone card that you can use because there a couple of places here in town you could use a phone, but it's not always a convenient thing. You have to walk all across town to make a phone call because you don't have a phone at home. So like a bus pass or a phone card you should automatically get that. It would change your whole [life].*
>
> Male 13

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The study set out to accomplish three main goals. This study briefly described the life circumstances of men and women living in Kamloops in precarious housing situations. It compliments other studies such as the Kamloops Homeless Count Project by providing a fairly robust description of the population and their help-seeking behaviour. One of the unique characteristics of this study was the positioning of people experiencing homelessness as consumers and engaging them as evaluators of services, encouraging them to share their views on the level and adequacy of support services in Kamloops.

Almost two dozen social work students had the opportunity to participate in the study and to hone their interviewing and research skills. Students enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to receive training and to engage in the process of knowledge building about a vulnerable population and a significant social problem.

As with all research there are limits to what can be accomplished and limits to what can be said about the results.

Training social work students, organizing their interviews, and making sure the interviews were transcribed had to be undertaken and completed during the 14 week semester. The pace of these activities was at times hectic and meant that significant resources had to be expended in order to make sure the data collection phase of the research was completed on time. The limited time frame and availability of the social work student interviewers meant that the sample size needed to be limited also.

Thirty-one participants is a relatively large sample size for qualitative research studies of this type however our ability to extend this study's finding to the larger population of homeless or near-homeless individuals in Kamloops is limited. A larger study that seeks to systematically study the same population is necessary to provide a more detailed picture.

6   **Research Findings**

This research proceeded with the understanding that a community needs a wide range of programs to help the homeless and at-risk of homelessness achieve or maintain independence. There is a lot more to success than a hot meal, or even a home. Some people are dealing with complex mental health concerns, some with post-traumatic stress or addictions, and many face multiple issues concurrently. We must consider not only the depth and breadth of need for support services, but also the duration of need. Some supports may be needed only until a person achieves a stable housing solution, while other supports may be needed throughout an individual's life, regardless of whether they have managed to maintain stable housing.

What is Included and What is not Included?
We gathered information from three government organizations and approximately 46 community agencies. The organizations were chosen based on the fact that they regularly serve homeless or at-risk people, with programs that can be directly accessed by clients or through referral by their social worker. No other limitations were set on which organizations have been included in this study.

Limitations have been set, however, on which programs from each organization are included in the inventory. In the case of some large organizations, such as the YM-YWCA, which offer a range of programs, we have included only those that are of particular benefit to people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and will likely be directly accessed by a client or with assistance or referral from a social worker. We have also excluded policy-driven planning, regional initiatives, information-gathering and research programs, as well as several of the YM-YWCA recreation programs that could arguably be very beneficial for individuals at-risk.

We have also excluded a wide range of additional services offered by agencies outside of their regular programming. Many agencies provide support on an as-needed basis through such services as advocacy, outreach, counselling, referrals, physician access, and financial assistance. Where these are not stand-alone programs, they have been excluded. It is sometimes difficult to clearly differentiate between a program and a service, and we have relied on the agencies themselves to identify what they see as a program.

This is a living resource that we look forward to gathering feedback on and developing further. Not everyone may agree with every decision as to what to include or exclude, we need to hear about that. In the meantime, in order to produce a useful database with effective organization and to set limits on the project, we have had to make some choices. Moreover, it is important to note that inclusion is not based

on the importance of a program or service in the lives of those it serves; many unique, valuable, and life-changing services have been excluded for the reasons outline above. For the most part we have asked agencies to identify which of their programs are aimed at the homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Here are a few points that require further clarification:

Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous - These organizations provide a number of valuable group meetings in the community that can be accessed through their main contact points, one of which is at the Alano club, or through their websites at www.bcyukonaa.org and www.canaacna.org. Not all of the meetings have been listed in the inventory, nor all of the groups.

Recreation Programs – There are many more affordable recreation options available through the City of Kamloops recreation program. Accessible recreation for those with low income, fixed pension, or disabilities is provided through the ARCH program.   For more information on who qualifies and how to apply, visit http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/socialdevelopment/arch.shtml.

Homemaker Services – Homemaker services are not readily available in Kamloops, although Community Living BC may provide support. Visit them at www.communitylivingbc.ca. Some services may also be available through the Interior Health Authority.

Faith-based Groups – Faith-based groups, including churches, play a vital role in providing help to at-risk people in the community. While most of the churches are not listed as formal programs, there are a number of valuable resources to be found at Kamloops Alliance Church, Mt. Paul United Church, Kamloops United Church, and the Church of Nazarene, to name just a few.

What We Found

Our research identified 292 individual programs that offer services all along the continuum of need, from emergency services to life skills training. On average, each organization we surveyed runs six programs. However, the government-run institutions operate a large portion of the programs: 99 of the 292 programs offered in Kamloops (34%). If we do not include the four government-run organizations below, the average number of programs provided is lower, at four programs average for each of the 45 non-government organizations.

Community Living BC	12
Ministry of Children & Family Development	49
Ministry of Social Development	38
Total	**99**

For the purposes of this report, the above three government-funded organizations are treated separately from the other organizations for the following reasons: the programs provided are often offered through an existing community agency already in the inventory, the programs are often

available through a single access point such as in the case of the Ministry of Social Development, or the programs are only accessible after specific referrals such as corrections. The list below does not include all of the programs offered by the four government organisations; for more information about these programs offered by government agencies, please visit ewaykamloops.ca.

Agencies with programs serving people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless in Kamloops

Agency	Programs
ASK Wellness Centre	11
Axis Family Resources Ltd.	6
Big Brothers - Big Sisters of Kamloops	5
Boys & Girls Club of Kamloops	5
Canadian Mental Health Association, Kamloops Branch	5
Chris Rose Therapy Centre for Autism Society	3
City of Kamloops	1
Interior Community Services	13
Interior Health Authority	9
John Howard Society	2
Jubilee Urban Ministry & Partners	1
Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society	8
Kamloops Alano Society (Alcoholics Anonymous)	1
Kamloops & District Elizabeth Fry Society	7
Kamloops & District Seniors Outreach Services Society	4
Kamloops Brain Injury Association	5
Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA	18
Kamloops Family Resources Society	9
Kamloops Food Bank	5
Kamloops Immigrant Services	3
Kamloops Kiwanis House Society	1
Kamloops Pregnancy Care Center	1
Kamloops Sexual Assault Center	1
Kamloops Society for Community Living	1
Kamloops United Church	1
Kamloops Volunteer Services	3
Kamloops Women's Resource Group Society	1
Le Jeune Manor Housing Society	1
Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family & Community Services	6
Mood Disorders Association of BC, Kamloops Branch	1

Narcotics Anonymous	1
New Life Mission	10
Open Door Group	1
People In Motion	8
Phoenix Center	4
River City Seniors Society	1
Secwepemc Child & Family Services	8
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	5
The Salvation Army Kamloops Community Church	5
Thompson Nicola Family Resource Society	1
Thompson Rivers University	2
Twin Rivers Education Centre	5
United Way	1
Warren Atkinson Society	1
White Buffalo Aboriginal & Metis Health Society	3
Total Nongovernment Organization Run Programs	**193**

Community Living British Columbia	12
Ministry of Children & Family Development	49
Ministry of Social Development	38
Total Government Run Programs	**99**
Total Programs	**292**

For the purposes of this research, we divided support services into several categories, as described below. Enumerating the programs in each of these categories allows us to better assess need and to provide organization to the inventory. Other groupings are possible; we have chosen these simply to represent the main needs that we identified throughout the research.

Advocacy – People at-risk of homelessness regularly seek help with advocacy regarding landlord tenant issues, access to funding, and legal issues (to name just a few). For the purposes of this study we are only including advocates who would help the homeless or at-risk, and are not including other types of advocacy such as social justice advocacy or government lobbying.

Basic Needs – Basic needs cover necessities such as food and clothing. For some people, programs in other categories - such as counselling - might be considered a basic need; however, for the purposes of this study we have limited the programs in this category to those which most people use regularly or on a daily basis.

Counselling – This includes programs where there is counselling offered for free or for a very limited fee. This category does not include counselling components within other larger programs and only includes

those stand-alone services that are designed to specifically provide certified therapeutic counselling services.

Financial & Legal – This category includes services related to financial and legal issues specifically designed to help those in need.

Health (Physical) – Physical health programs include doctors, dentists, and street clinics. This category may not include every program related to a person's physical health; other such programs can be found under wellness.

Health (Mental) – Mental health programs provide support to people living with mental health concerns; this category includes services such as drop-in, housing support, and financial support.

Housing – This category only includes programs, services, and housing provided by non-profit housing providers. For more information about affordable housing in Kamloops see the *Kamloops Affordable Housing Study* at kamloopshap.ca. Although respite housing is a huge need - for youth with challenges, disabled people of all ages, and senior citizens – such programs are not included here. There are some respite services offered through the Ministry of Children and Family Development as well as Community Living British Columbia.

Information & Referrals – Information and referral programs are designed to provide help-seekers with information that will assist them in the search for support or referrals that direct them to that support.
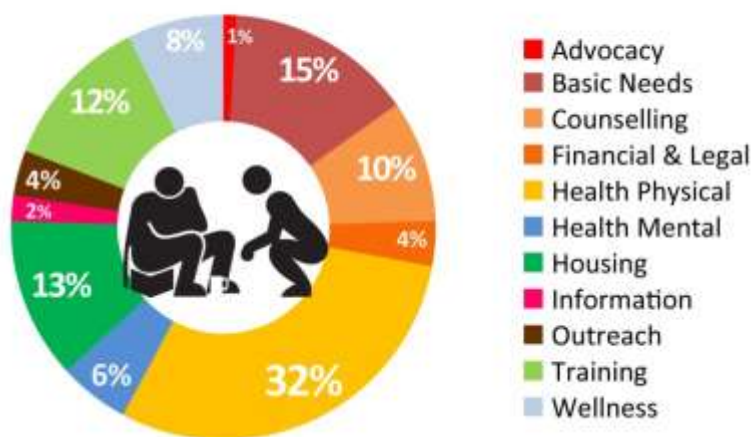
Outreach – The purpose of outreach programs is to seek out clients in the community rather than waiting for them to find an agency or program themselves.

Training - Training programs offer learning opportunities for a wide range of skills, from first aid to culture. Of particular interest is the area of Life Skills Training. The Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan has a goal that specifically addresses Life Skills and a report on the training opportunities for people at-risk in our community can be found at kamloopshap.ca. This report does not include life skills as a category because a comprehensive stand-alone study has already been conducted.

Wellness – Wellness programs include those related to health that are not directly physical or mental, but in some cases a bit of both. Wellness programs such as socializing and mentoring are important to people's integration in the community. This category does not include the programs that have already been listed under physical or mental health.

One of the main reasons that we have gathered this program information is to inform the work of community agencies in Kamloops. It is our hope that anyone considering the development of a new program will be able to first visit ewaykamloops.ca, and the report, to see what similar programs may already be available. Agencies will then be able to learn more about existing programs and contact the people providing them to learn about their opportunities and challenges.

Programs by Mandate

Legend:
- Advocacy
- Basic Needs
- Counselling
- Financial & Legal
- Health Physical
- Health Mental
- Housing
- Information
- Outreach
- Training
- Wellness

From the preliminary information we have gathered so far, it appears as though community agencies may want to consider more formalized advocates and referral services, increased outreach programs, more mental health programs, and possibly more programs to help with financial and legal issues.

Listed below are all of the categories of non-government services, with the number of programs offered in each area. Effort has been made to place each program within only one category, however there are a total of 203 program mandates listed below because some programs satisfy more than one mandate.

Group	% of whole	Subgroup	Programs
Advocacy	1%	Advocacy	2
Basic Needs	14%	Child Minding	2
		Clothing & Household Items	6
		Food	14
		Identification	1
		Showers/Laundry/Hair	3
		Transportation	3
Counselling	9%	Addictions	2
		Family Counselling	3
		Individual Counselling	2
		Support Groups	11
		Violence Prevention	1
Financial & Legal	3%	Financial	3
		Legal	4
Health (Physical)	30%	Blood Born Infections	2
		Dentist	1
		Doctor	2

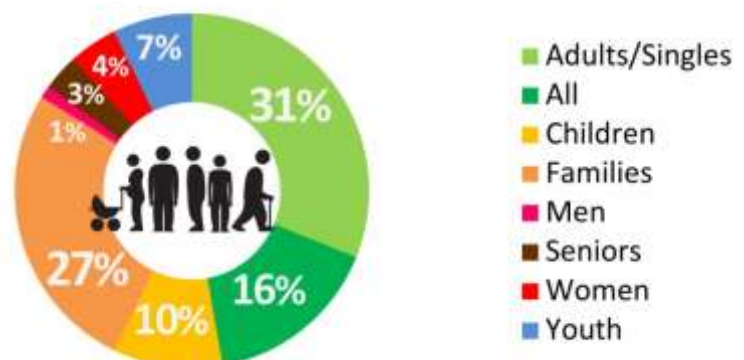|			
		Harm Reduction	3
		Nutrition	8
		Pregnancy & Infant Care	28
		Physical Recreation	17
Health (Mental)	**5%**	Mental Health	11
Housing	**12%**	Shelter	3
		Subsidized Housing	5
		Support	12
		Transitional Housing	5
Information & Referrals	**2%**	Information & Referrals	5
Outreach	**3%**	Outreach	7
Training	**12%**	Continuing Education	5
		Employment	5
		Language	2
		Parenting	11
		Volunteer Opportunities	1
Wellness	**7%**	Drop In	7
		Mentoring	8

Mandate Findings

- There is a marked absence of stand-alone advocacy programs (though support service workers in most agencies fulfill advocacy roles)
- Drop-in and socializing programs are restricted in availability (unavailable after regular working hours and on holidays)
- Free counselling is lacking
- Financial assistance comes only through a limited number of organizations
- It is very difficult to find legal help, housing, dentistry, pet care, childcare, immigrant services, and language services
- While there are several meal programs, there are very few on weekends and holidays
- Recreation programs are readily accessible at affordable rates but difficult to find for free
- There is a lack of housing attached to services for pregnancy and early childhood care

Clients

We examined the numbers of programs for specific target clients. The following data includes programs identified as existing *only* for the specified target group. For example, a service designated for "adults" will not also be included in the categories of "men" and "women." Programs counted in the "all" category allow anyone to access the program;

Target Groups

- Adults/Singles — 31%
- All — 16%
- Children — 10%
- Families — 27%
- Men — 1%
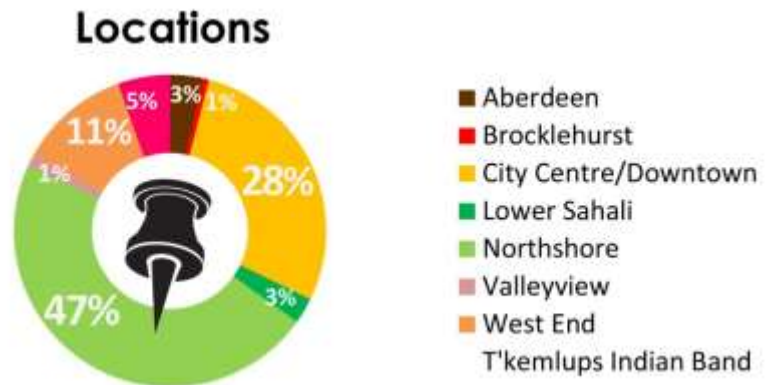- Seniors — 3%
- Women — 4%
- Youth — 7%

these programs do not appear under any other categories. While some categories are age-related (children, adults, youth, and seniors), we did not specify age ranges for these categories during data collection; rather, agencies were free to use their own definitions:

Client Group Findings
- There are significantly more programs targeting a general population than more specific groups
- Many adult/singles programs are accessed by men, but are not explicitly for men or tailored to their needs intentionally; this is significant because, while the at-risk population is increasingly diverse, we must keep in mind that a large percentage of the street-entrenched and high-needs population are single men with unique needs of their own.

Location

We also examined the location of the programs listed in the inventory, as shown categorized by census neighbourhoods in Kamloops. We collected location information for 132 of the 193 non-government programs with 6 of those 132 programs stating that the location "varies".

Locations

- Aberdeen
- Brocklehurst
- City Centre/Downtown
- Lower Sahali
- Northshore
- Valleyview
- West End
  T'kemlups Indian Band

Location Findings
- Services are concentrated in the downtown core (28%) and North Shore areas (47%)
- there are limited services in some outlying areas, with the most underserved being: Westsyde, Sahali, Valleyview and Batchelor Heights; this is important because those living in poverty have limited mobility and access to transportation.

Schedule

Our research also examined the scheduling of services. In total, 141 of the 193 non-government programs we surveyed provided scheduling information. This data appears to the right, categorized by the number of days per week the program is typically offered:

Schedules

- Monday – Friday
- 1-2 Days / Week
- 3-5 Days / Week
- 5+ Days / Week
- Variable
- Seasonal
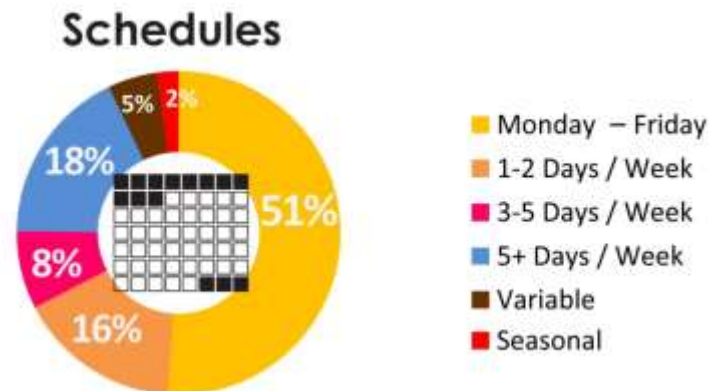
Schedule Findings
- The majority of programs are provided during normal business hours from Monday through Friday
- 16% of programs are offered only one or two days per week, while 18% are offered more than five days a week.

Other Findings

The following is a synopsis of other data that we have been able to collect. These parts of the research have not been pulled out for complete analysis because responses were limited and inconsistent, however the trends are of note. Percentages are of the responses rather than of the total programs.

We learn from questions about staffing that the majority of programs are staffed by 3 or less people, with slightly more of these being part-time rather than full-time employees.

Full Time Staff	Number	%
0 – 3 staff	58	46%
4 – 6 staff	12	10%
7 – 10+ staff	20	16%
n/a	35	28%
Total	125/193	

Part Time Staff	Number	%
0 – 3 staff	68	54%
4 – 6 staff	7	6%
7 – 10+ staff	5	4%
n/a	45	36%
Total	125/193	

The largest number of programs for which we were able to collect information acquire their regular funding from the Provincial Government. Fundraising is the next most common form of funding, while the united Way and the Federal Government also provide significant funding to programs.

Funders	Number	%
United Way	13	8%
Federal Government	14	8%
Provincial Government	47	28%
Civic Government	9	5%
School District	2	1%
Foundations/Societies	9	5%
Donations/Fundraising/Fee for Service	28	17%
N/A	46	27%
Total Program Funders	168	

While we were collecting specific information about programs we also attempted to gather some qualitative feedback from service providers. We wanted to know what the front-line workers perceived to be the greatest barriers to accessing services, and what they think are some opportunities available to increase access to services as well. We were unable to gather enough responses to these questions to warrant a complete analysis. Some of the reasons that we think that responses to these questions were low include:

- The length of the survey was long and workers ran out of time
- The questions may have been too vague or open ended
- The purpose of collecting the information, and how it would be used, may not have been clear

Barriers to Service
Below are the responses regarding the question about what barriers are keeping people from accessing the supports they need to maintain housing.. We find the theme of lack of funding comes up most often, but the list below portrays a good range of the issues and barriers that people face.

- Distance, travel costs
- Funding costs
- Waitlist times
- Funding
- Limited low income and suitable housing in the community
- Limited services available in the community are affordable to seniors
- A challenge for both the tutors and the learners is trying to schedule a time for the tutoring sessions that works for them both
- We are located on a hilly property that is not conducive to those with mobility issues
- Financing of treatment stays is an ongoing issue for some clients
- space constraints
- Transportation issues
- Nutrition issues
- Motivation and volition issues
- Housing support
- Awareness of the program
- Childcare

Recommendations from Support Providers
The following are the responses to the question about what recommendations workers have about ways to improve support services for people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. There are a wide range of recommendations, several call for more access to basic needs like transportation and nutrition. Several recommendations call for better services for youth, women, and at-risk mothers.

- Provide Transportation
- Increased Advocacy
- Emergency Services for Youth – Food & Shelter
- Reduce gaps in promotion, gaps in people being aware who can take the course
- Reduce stigma about the mental health program
- Reduce gaps in places available (shelters) for youth to refer them too when they are not able to be at the youth clubhouse but have nowhere to go
- Reduce gaps in places for people to access meals
- Reduce gaps in housing people
- Provide resources on the weekends as well as weekdays
- Reduce gaps in funding for supplies
- Reduce gaps in funding
- Provide a safe place for women
- Provide service for high risk pregnancy, such as housing for women who are pregnant.
- Provide more crisis or drop-in services
- Better access to volunteer opportunities
- Better networking across the community for addiction plans/referrals between agencies with increased relationships with IHA
- Have more dentists come and join the office so there can be more hours of operation for Dental Clinic.
- Make changes in service easier to navigate
- Provide better accessibility to supervised shelter in between transitions
- Stronger Youth Outreach
- All Female Treatment program
- Integrated caregiver / early mom detox.
- Encourage attendance and participation in TRU hosted social work meetings.
- Provide more Housing support
- Provide more Transportation support
- Provide more Nutrition support

The study going forward

We look forward to continuing to collect data about support services in Kamloops through monitoring use of ewaykamloops.ca and through continuing to gather feedback in the community. We look forward to sharing the process of the project and its development in the hope that we can learn better ways to quantify need and end homelessness. Representatives from the homelessness action plan will be visiting agencies to introduce the project, and evaluating ewaykamloops.ca over the coming year.

7   Development of the Project

Introduction

The inventory project and ewaykamloops.ca are intended to provide our community - including support service providers, help-seekers, and the general public – with key information about the availability and utilization of support services for the homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

The project emerged as one of the first and most significant undertakings of the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan (HAP), which ends to aim homelessness in Kamloops by 2015. The inventory project supports the following goal and strategy as outlined in the HAP:

**To connect people with the help they need by adopting
a network approach to support services.**

Underlying this goal and strategy, and this entire project, are several important principles:

1. Effective and accessible support services are keys to maintaining housing
2. Addressing homelessness requires a concerted, strategic and evidence-based effort
3. Hard research is required to assess the availability and use of support services
4. Informed research on support services must combine the perspectives of support providers and those who are accessing supports

The project itself was born in the fall of 2010, with the HAP Steering Advisory Group overseeing the development of a project outline with the HAP coordinator. Since then, many people throughout the community have contributed time and energy. These people include:

- Representatives from over 45 community agencies
- The Homeless and At-risk of Homelessness
- The Homelessness Action Plan Coordinator and Steering Advisory Group
- Student research assistants
- Thompson Rivers University Nursing Students
- Thompson Rivers University School of Social Work
- Data Coordinator
- Independent Writers / Researchers
- Focus Group Participants
- Web programmers and designers

For a complete list of individuals donated time, energy, and resources to the Inventory Project, please see the **Appendix A: People** in this report.

The project proceeded according to the following timeline:

Fall 2010	Project development
Jan. to Dec. 2011	Survey development and collection
Oct. to Dec. 2011	TRU research partnership and qualitative project development
Jan. to March 2012	Qualitative research: interviews with homeless people and data analysis
March 2012	Development of online survey for database development
March to Dec. 2012	Presentations to agencies and data collection
Nov. 2012	Presentation of qualitative research at BCASW Conference
Nov. 2012 to March 2013	Focus Groups
Jan. to March 2013	Completion of research, development of online resource, report writing

Outcomes

The project has resulted in several key outcomes and resources which will benefit the City of Kamloops in its fight against homelessness:

- a robust database of support service agencies and programs available in Kamloops
- an online interface for the database – ewaykamloops.ca
- qualitative research on help-seeking behaviour and consumer perspectives of support services
- information sheets for services that are difficult to access, designed to assist help-seekers
- a full report outlining the project, the results of the research, homelessness, and support services

ewaykamloops.ca

The end result of the project is ewaykamloops.ca, an online searchable database of support services and a storehouse of general information regarding supports for the homeless and at-risk of homelessness. This resource is populated by the data collected through surveys of agencies and program coordinators.

Ewaykamloops.ca provides support service providers and help-seekers with key information on over 45 agencies and 200 programs. This information includes:

- Agency names, locations, and contact information
- program names
- program mandates
- program addresses, phone and email contacts
- program start and end dates
- program schedules
- target client group

- program eligibility
- program fees
- information for people who would like to donate to or volunteer with agencies

This information is accessible through ewaykamloops.ca, a clean and user-friendly interface, on the web or via mobile device. Agencies and program coordinators are asked to update their agency and program information regularly so that the resource accurately reflects changes in the support services landscape. New programs may be added, old ones deleted, and changes to existing programs may be updated.

The site provides three ways to search for information:

- By entering key words in the search bar, which align with key words entered by program leaders when they update information about their programs
- By browsing a list of agencies and organizations in Kamloops that align with key areas of supports such as addictions, counselling, food or clothing.
- By selecting and browsing within one of the three focus areas – housing, support services, and financial independence

For areas in which there are few services available – such as childcare, pet care, and legal advocacy - we have created information sheets that may be downloaded from the website.

The Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan is dedicated to helping agencies utilize ewaykamloops.ca and will be visiting all willing participants to provide training on how to update their programs and get clients involved. The research portion of the project will continue as we gather information about how supports are being improved and how people are using the online resource.

The Life Skills Development Project
During the development of the Support Services Inventory, the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan also sponsored the creation of a complementary project called the Life Skills Development Project, which works toward fulfillment of goal 4 of the plan:

*Build the basic skills that people need to maintain housing and independence
by improving access to life skills coaching.*

Life skills – ranging from cooking and cleaning to self-esteem and conflict resolution – are critical for people transitioning out of poverty and/or hoping to maintain stable housing. For this reason, they have been treated separately from other support services.

The Life Skills Development Project has involved a thorough assessment of existing life skills programs in Kamloops and a community consultation with community stakeholders and service providers. This assessment and consultation helped produce an inventory of life skills, a life skills network of service

providers, and directory of life skills programs available in Kamloops. To coordinate and enhance delivery of these existing programs, the project has proposed an inter-agency life skills workshop series.

The Life Skills Development Project is an important complement to the support services project. For more information on this project, please find a complete report at the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan website or on ewaykamloops.ca.

Methodology

The goals of the project were to collect data about support service agencies and programs for the homeless and at-risk of homelessness in Kamloops, British Columbia. The primary methods of data collection were 1) a paper-based questionnaire, 2) interviews with agency directors and program coordinators, and 3) an online questionnaire. Throughout the entire process, students in the Nursing and Social Work departments of Thompson Rivers University played key roles in the collection and analysis of data. The questionnaires and data collection methods were necessarily flexible. At various points in the data collection process, we adapted our approach to accommodate the needs of agency personnel.

The Support Services Inventory research proceeded in several distinct phases, as outlined below:

Phase 1: Development & Pilot – January 2011 to March 2012

In Phase 1, we piloted our survey instrument and collected feedback on its effectiveness. Activities were as follows:

- Development of paper-based survey instrument by Student Research Assistant and HAP coordinator
- Initial contact with key agency representative, in person or by telephone
- Review of research protocol with key agency representative
- Identification of program leaders to supply data regarding individual programs
- Signing of information release form by program leaders
- Delivery of paper-based questionnaire
- Retrieval of questionnaire and gathering of brochures and additional program information
- Review of questionnaire results
- Scheduling of interviews with program leaders
- Interviewing of program leaders and provision of evaluation form with stamped addressed envelope

In Phase 1, we recruited students from the Faculties of Nursing and Social Work at Thompson Rivers University. These student assistants distributed surveys, conducted interviews, and followed up with program leaders.

Challenges in Phase 1 included the logistics of contacting and following up with program leaders within the constraints of a single semester, as well as the collection of funding information. Because we were not necessarily in contact with the Executive Director directly, staff did not always have ready access to funding information.

Phase 2: Refinement and Project Phase – March 2012 to December 2012
Learning from the challenges of Phase 1 and realizing that there were more programs than originally expected, we decided to develop a more efficient method of data collection. We subsequently developed an online questionnaire and outlined two options for agencies to provide information.

Option 1 was an "Agency-Led Process" involving four steps:
1   HAP contacts agency director, introduces the research and process, and answers questions.
2   Agency director introduces the process to program leaders, who complete the online questionnaire; director then forwards all responses to HAP.
3   HAP compiles questionnaire results and contacts agency director with questions, if any.
4   HAP compiles research results and shares with agency.

Option 2 was a "HAP-Led Process" involving four steps:
1   HAP contacts agency director, introduces the research and process, and answers questions.
2   Agency director decides on the utility of a presentation from HAP staff to introduce the process to program leaders; director then provides contact information for program leaders, whom are then contacted by HAP with the link to the online questionnaire; HAP collects responses directly from program leaders.
3   HAP compiles questionnaire results and contacts program leaders with questions, if any.
4   HAP compiles research results and shares with agency.

These two options were outlined clearly in an introductory letter sent to agency directors. It soon became apparent that agencies needed different levels of support in completing the questionnaire. Follow-up by email and phone was conducted by Patty Cornborough, TRU BSW student. Data coordinator Bonnie Mclean assisted with data collection, transcribed Pilot Project data, and further developed the online resource and presentation materials.

Phase 3: Online Development and Focus Groups – September 2012 to December 2013

In Phase 3, a team was formed, made up of

- Project Lead   Tangie Genshorek, HAP Coordinator
- Research Lead   Michael Crawford, TRU Social Work Department
- Research Assistant   Patty Cornborough, HAP/TRU
- Database Hosting   Wilf Froese, Partner at Idealever
- Report Writing   John-Paul Baker , Contractor

- Data Coordinator   Bonnie Mclean, Contractor
- Graphic Design   Cameron MacQuarrie, Contractor

This team met repeatedly to deliberate and discuss how the information collected through surveys could best be presented. The decision was made to host a stand-alone website with a user-friendly interface that would help support service workers and help-seekers locate agency and program information, as well as provide other resources related to support services. This website is called ewaykamloops.ca.

Development of the website and database platform was guided by 1) consultation with the HAP Steering Advisory Group, 2) discussion in project team meetings, and 3) feedback from the community through two focus groups:
Focus Group 1 – SSI Team members and program providers
Focus Group 2 – Program providers and members of the general public

Data collection and coding continued throughout Phase 3, and in March 2013 the coded data was prepared for presentation in this report and to populate the database.

Challenges and Limitations
Systems of data collection had to be revised after initial efforts proved difficult. It can be somewhat challenging to ensure participation on the part of service providers, and many needed help or encouragement to participate. This meant providing in-person support, which can be time-consuming and labour-intensive.

Involving university students in data collection presented some logistical challenges, particularly because their contributions were bound by the semester system. Thus, good follow-up with agencies and organizations often meant visits or contact by more than one person, adding another layer of logistical challenges.

As explained elsewhere in this report, tough decisions had to be made regarding what to include and what not to include. As a result, there are many important programs and services that do not appear as part of the inventory. That said, ewaykamloops.ca and the report are designed as ongoing living processes, and the lines between what is included and what is not will change in the future if the community of users deems it necessary.

Analysis and presentation of the data also brought challenges. Great care had to be taken to ensure that programs were not being double-counted, and programs with broad mandates had to be pegged into specific categories. Despite the challenges and limitations of this research, it remains a very useful baselines measurement of support services that will guide future evidence-based decision-making. Moreover, the Ewaykamloops.ca online tool should prove useful for help-seekers and those who support them.

8   Conclusions

This research has not been done strictly for research's sake, but as part of the fulfillment of the goals of the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan. In the first half of its five-year mandate, the HAP can boast several major accomplishments. The establishment of a Local Housing Board and a Leadership Council, increased public awareness and organizational partnerships, a stronger network approach on the part of service providers through efforts such as the Kamloops Integrated Community Collaboration, the Rent Bank, the Life Skills Development Project, and now the Inventory Project and Ewaykamoops.ca: all of these efforts have helped people in Kamloops to achieve greater stability, the community to respond to the needs of its residents, and service providers to connect with and support those in need. Overall, these accomplishments have increased our community's capacity to care for its people and the people's capacity to thrive.

It would be folly, however, to declare the work complete. While there are still people living in poverty or lacking housing stability, there is still a job to do. And the exact nature of this job must be amenable to change as the community changes. Ours is an aging society, and seniors' issues may require even greater attention in the future. A focus on early intervention may make youth a stronger priority. Population increases will include people migrating to Kamloops – or through Kamloops – in search of services and employment. Our community, and the Homelessness Action Plan, must be prepared to respond to these shifts in demographics and priorities.

Further, while the Homelessness Action Plan can boast some important accomplishments, the plan does not include a goal of increasing the stock of affordable housing. With a housing-first philosophy and a greater understanding of the exact gaps in housing, we must make this a community priority. New partnerships must be formed and new financing raised to ensure that there is actually enough suitable housing for the people of our community.

This project and ewaykamloops.ca represent the result of a lot of work, but the work must continue to ensure enduring relevance of the inventory. Agencies and organizations must update their program information so that the resource stays current. And the community must provide feedback on the tools so that they can be improved. The HAP is committed to engaging the community in developing this resource.

This project may form a valuable contribution to the body of research on homelessness and related issues in Kamloops. The project also advances the importance of community-based research and evidence-based practice. Moreover, it is our hope that this serves as a valuable precedent for other communities hoping to conduct similar baseline assessments and establish similar tools.

Sources

"A Plan, Not a Dream." *Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.* http://www.caeh.ca/a-plan-not-a-dream/

Arno, P.S. et al. "The impact of housing status on health care utilization among persons with HIV disease." *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 7(1) (1996): 36-49.

Barker, C. & Collins, P. "Psychological help-seeking in homeless adolescents." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 4(55) (2009): 372-384.

Bassuk, E. "The characteristics and needs of sheltered homeless and low-income housed mothers." *The Journal of the American Medicatl Association* 276(8) (1996): 640-646.

Biggerstaff, M.A., et al. "Living on the edge: Examination of people attending food pantries and soup kitchens." *Social Work* 47(3) (2002): 267-268.

Boyce, W. et al. *Canadian youth, sexual health and HIV/AIDS study.* Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education, 2003.

British Columbia. Minstry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Housing Policy Branch. *Counting Homelessness – Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities.* Print.

Brown, S. & Wilderson, D. "Homelessness prevention for former foster youth: Utilization of transitional housing programs." *Children and Youth Services Review* 32 (2010): 1464-1472.

Carlson, J. et al. "Service utilization and the life cycle of youth homelessness." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38 (2006), 624-627.

Cheff, R. & Oliver, V. "The role of sexual health services among homeless young women living in Toronto, Canada." *Health Promotion Practice* 13(3) (2012): 370-377.

De Rosa, C.J. et al. "Service Utilization among homeless and runaway youth in Los Angeles, California: Rates and Reasons." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 24(6) (1999): 449-458.

Ensign, J. & Panke, A. "Barriers and bridges to care: Voices of homeless female adolescent youth in Seattle, Washington, USA." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 37 (2002): 166-172.

Ernst, M., et al. "Runaway youths knolwedge and access of services." http://www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/nrc_final_report_4_22_10.pdf

Federation of Canadian Municipalities. *The State of Canada's Cities and Commmunities 2012*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Federation of Municipalities, 2012. Print.

Greenber, G.A., et al. "Client-level measures of services integration among chronically homeless adults." *Community Mental Health Journal* 44(5) (2008): 367-376.

Hammer, H., et al. "Runaway/thrownaway children: National estimates and characteristics." http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/nismart/04/

Henry, R., et al. "HIV/AIDS health service utilization by people who have been homeless." *AIDS and Behavior* 12 (2008): 815-821.

"Housing Matters." *BC Housing. http://www.bchousing.org/Initiatives/Housing_Matters*

Hoyt, R.D. & Whitbeck, L.B. *Nowhere to grow: Homeless and runaway adolescents and their families.* New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1999.

Hughes, J.R., et al. "Youth homelessness: The relationship among mental health, hope and service satisfaction." *Journal of the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 19:4 (2010): 274-282.

Johnson, K.A., & Tyler, A.K. "Trading sex: Voluntary or coerced? The experiences of homeless youth." *Journal of Sex Research* 43 (2006): 208-216.

Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan. http://www.kamloopshap.ca/

Kort-Bulter, A.L., & Tyler, A.K. "A cluster analysis of service utilization and incarcerations among homeless youth." *Social Science Research* (2011): 612-623.

Laird, G. *Homelessness in a growth economy: Canada's 21st century paradox. A Report for the Sheldon Chumir Doundation for Ethics in Leadership.* Calgary, AB: Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership, 2007.

Levitt, A.J., et al. "Impact of chronically street homeless tenatns in congregate supporting housing." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82(3) (2012): 412-420.

Mamocha, S., & Nickrash, B. "Healthcare experiences of the homeless." *American Academy of Nurse Practitioners* (2009): 39-46.

May, E.B. "Factors associated with effective help-seeking behavior among homeless persons: A cross-sectional study of San Diego's street homeless population." Diss. San Diego State University, 2011.

O'Toole, T., et al. "Where do people go when they first become homeless? A survey hof homeless adults in the USA." *Health and Social Care in the Community* 15(5) (2007): 446-453.

Slesnick, N. & Sznajder-Murray, B. "'Don't leave me hanging': Homeless mothers' perceptions of service providers." *Journal of Social Service Research* 37(5) (2008): 457-468.

Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia. *Knowledge for Action: Hidden Homelessness in Prince George, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nelson and Nanaimo.* Burnaby, BC: Social Planning and Research Council of BC, 2011. Print.

Smith, M.Y., et al. "Housing status and health care service utilization among low-income persons with HIV/AIDS." *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 15(1) (2000): 731-738.

Appendix A   People Involved in the Project

The Kamloops Support Services Inventory was made possible through funding from the United Way and a community wide collaborative effort. The people who gave their valuable time and energy to the project appear here:

Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan Steering Advisory Group

	Brenda Aynsley,	Executive Director, United Way
	Jennifer Casorso	City of Kamloops, Recreation Supervisor Social & Community Development
	Bob Hughes	Executive Director, ASK Wellness Centre
	Louise Richards	Executive Director, Elizabeth Fry Society, Kamloops
	Doug Sage	Executive Director, Canadian Mental Health Association
Researchers	Tangie Genshorek	Project Lead / HAP Coordinator
	Michael Crawford	Research Lead / TRU Department of Social Work
	Patty Cornborough	Research Assistant / TRU student
	Jayden Riley	Research Assistant / TRU student
	Amy Berard	Research Assistant / TRU student
	Shayla Driver	Research Assistant / TRU student
	Susan Duncan	Student Recruits / TRU Department of Nursing
Database	Wilf Froese	Database Hosting / Idealever
	Cameron MacQuarrie	Graphic Design
	Bonnie Mclean	Data Coordination
Writing	John-Paul Baker	Report Writing
	Jordan Marr	Writing
Data	Jesse Sales	TRU students, Department of Nursing
	Charlene Wiebe	
	Jenna Spooner	
	Andrea Strain	
	Erin Pater	
	Laura Tkackanko	TRU students, Department of Social Work
	Alex Watt	
	Rebecca Stewart	
	Kurtis Mingoy	
	Arielle Herault	
	Glenda Roache	
	Andrea Ballance	
	Ashley Glover	
	Candace Nicholas	

	Kimberly Turner	TRU students, Department of Social Work
	Hayley Smith	
	Stephanie Mortenson	
	Christina Su	
	Christina Jarvis	
	Daniel Lysons	
	Seliina Stamm	
	Meghan Reed	
	Kelcey Anderson	
	Rachel Cain	
	Mike Moss	
	Tim Unaeygbu	
	Riyo Loveys	
	Taylor Kew	
	Cassandra St Peter	
Focus Groups	Carmin Mazzotta	City of Kamloops
	Gaudenza Ramunno	IHA, Street Nurse
	Lisa Deol-Rollo	IHA, Street Nurse
	Iris Rich-Mackay	Thompson Rivers University
	Anne Lafrance	Kamloops Immigrant Services
	Barry James	Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Centre
	Christopher Hunt	Ministry of Child & Family Development
	Teal Quinn	Concerned Citizen, lived experience
	Tammy Caza	Concerned Citizen, lived experience

Supports for Homeless People in Kamloops: Research & Resources

Appendix B   Funders & Partners in Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan Initiatives

Funding for the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan is provided through a partnership between the United Way and the City of Kamloops. Other funders include donations from the general public, and:

- The Stollery Foundation
- Interior Savings Community Fund
- The Kelson Group
- Highland Valley Teck
- The Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Vancouver Foundation
- The Tula Community Fund

$60,000 is dedicated from the City of Kamloops over three years, to ensure the creation of the Housing Board and comprehensive study of Affordable Housing in the community. The members of the **Kamloops Housing Board** are as follows (as of Dec 2012) A public call for members will be put out in 2013 through the City of Kamloops.

Jeanie Cardinal	White Buffalo Aboriginal Health Centre
Jennifer Casorso	Social & Community Development Supervisor
Peter Chau	BC Housing Regional Supervisor
Blake Collins	City Planner, Development & engineering Services
Nikki Deverell	Think Outside the Box Developments
Kelly Fawcett	The Kelson Group
Tangie Genshorek	Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan Coordinator
Sukh Heer Matonovich	TRU Student Engagement & Retention Coordinator
Carmin Mazzotta	City of Kamloops, Housing & Homelessness Coordinator
Stefen Reid	Trophy Developments
Wendy Sims	ASK Wellness
Renee Taylor	Citizen at Large

HAP Leadership Council (as of Dec 2012) Advisors on Policy Issues

Patsy Bourassa,	Canadian Home Builders' Association
Steve Earl,	Kamloops Chamber of Commerce
Kelly Fawcett,	The Kelson Group
Chief Shane Gottfriedson,	Tk'emlúps Indian Band
Viktor Gundel,	Spiritual Care Department Royal Inland Hospital
Ray Jolicoeur,	Kamloops This Week

Kevin Krueger,   Kamloops South M.L.A
Terry Lake,   Kamloops North M.L.A
Nathan Lane,   Thompson Rivers University, Students Union
Cathy McLeod,   Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo M.P
Mayor Peter Milobar,   City of Kamloops
Christopher Phillips,   Interior Indian Friendship Society
Carol Spicer,   Kamloops District Labour Council
Rotating Representatives from the Homeless Community

Changing the Face of Poverty
The Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan was started at the *Changing the Face of Poverty* table. This group boasts a membership of over 130 people including representatives from the faith community, the non-profit sector, business, local government, and concerned citizens. This group receives regular updates about the HAP, and contributes advice on an ongoing basis. This group is facilitated by the Elizabeth Fry Society with ongoing funding from United Way.

Kamloops Working Group on Homelessness (KWGH)
The *Community Advisory Board* for the distribution of *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* funds (by HRSDC) is also closely tied to the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan. The HAP Coordinator attends regular meetings of the K.W.G.H and reports on HAP progress with the aim of ongoing engagement with the sectors represented by the group. The HAP Coordinator also contributed to the goals of the 2011 HPS Community Plan for Kamloops.

Other Community Tables with HAP involvement
The HAP is also proud to take part informally in the following groups:
BC Association of Social Workers
Chamber of Commerce
Kamloops Integrated Community Collaboration
City of Kamloops Social Planning Council
Youth Services & Youth Housing Working Group
Kamloops Central Business Association Safety Committee