

# Two-Eyed Seeing of Indigenous Homelessness in Halton



policy  
legislation  
affordable housing  
mental health



community ties  
residential schools  
colonial history  
reconciliation

**A Community Needs Assessment  
by Halton Community Legal Services - 2018**

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# Background

This is the second report arising from the Indigenous Homelessness Needs Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Project (the project) led by Halton Community Legal Services (HCLS). We conducted interviews with 12 people who self-identified as Indigenous and were experiencing, or had experienced, homelessness in Halton Region. This report documents these interviews to help address the knowledge gap around the needs of the low-income Indigenous population in Halton as they relate to homelessness and the risk of homelessness.

HCLS is a community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario. The project is being undertaken in the spirit of reconciliation, recognizing that HCLS plays an integral role in the provision of legal services and access to justice for Indigenous people in Halton Region. The Indigenous Homelessness Needs Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Project is part of HCLS's effort to enhance its services to meet the unique needs of the Indigenous community in Halton. The project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Legal Aid Ontario and the Advocacy Centre for Tenants-Ontario.

## Our approach

Prominent in the boardroom of HCLS is a replica of the Two Row Wampum Treaty belt, documenting a friendship treaty between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee.<sup>1</sup> It is there as a constant reminder of the legacies of colonialism and the legal clinic's responsibility, as a social justice organization, to act in response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People emphasized that Canada never fully honoured the Two Row Wampum or other treaties, but implemented policies intended to remove Indigenous people from their lands, suppress their nations and governments, undermine their cultures and stifle their identity.<sup>2</sup> These policies have contributed to Indigenous homelessness today.

The project's statement of principles attempts to capture the spirit of the relationship between Indigenous and non-

Indigenous peoples recorded in the Two Row Wampum. The belt consists of two rows of purple beads separated by three rows of white beads. The purple rows represent settlers and Indigenous peoples, and signify two parallel paths and sets of beliefs and laws. The three white rows represent "purity, good minds and peace".<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of the project, a 'good mind' included the ability to apply the 12 dimensions of Indigenous homelessness in our work. The definition, developed by Jesse Thistle, launched at a national conference on homelessness on October 26, 2017. The purple rows in the wampum belt came to represent the different ways of understanding home and homelessness under Canadian<sup>4</sup> and Indigenous<sup>5</sup> definitions of homelessness. The white rows are a constant reminder that colonization is a root cause of Indigenous homelessness, as Thistle writes.<sup>6</sup> They are also a reminder that research involving Indigenous peoples in Canada has largely been conducted by non-Indigenous researchers, using approaches that have not reflected Indigenous worldviews. Unsurprisingly, this research has not necessarily benefited Indigenous peoples and communities.

This project applied the framework of Two-Eyed Seeing to ensure that we conducted the interviews with good hearts and good minds, were open to new ways of knowing homelessness and created safe spaces for communication. This framework was developed by two Mi'kmaq elders<sup>7</sup> and requires an understanding of homelessness from settler and Indigenous perspectives without emphasizing one perspective over the other. Seeing with both eyes promotes solutions that address the local (colonial) context of high rents and lack of affordable housing and the broader (Indigenous) context of community and connectedness.

## Situating ourselves and project set-up

This phase of the project was designed as a community-based action project.<sup>8</sup> This was the first time that HCLS conducted research with Indigenous people. Our purpose was to

use the knowledge we acquired through the interviews to create positive change within our community.<sup>9</sup>

As a legal clinic situated within the formal justice network of the province, we anticipated issues of trust and questions regarding motive, and developed a strategy to address these valid concerns.<sup>10</sup> Our first step was to form a project advisory committee of Indigenous service providers from the adjacent communities of Peel and Hamilton, non-Indigenous service providers from Halton and Indigenous people with lived experience of homelessness. Since research shows that Indigenous staff can reduce barriers and foster positive interaction,<sup>11</sup> we recruited an Indigenous community worker who identified as a member of the Cayuga Nation to lead the community engagement. HCLS is also a member of the Halton Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, which is chaired by a locally recognized knowledge keeper. This was an important link to Indigenous community members connected to school boards, and enabled the committee to provide some informal oversight and resources to the project.

Unfortunately, the Indigenous community worker left the project just as the community-based research activities were beginning and the first two interviews had been carried out. We decided to continue the interviews without reposting the position so as not to delay the important work we were doing. This was a strategic decision based on our experience with the first recruitment: hiring the community worker took three months and we had to post the position twice in order to attract a pool of Indigenous candidates. Recruiting and retaining this Indigenous employee was challenging because the employee had to cover large geographical distances and four separate municipalities, and because Halton has a small Indigenous community that lacks a peer network to support Indigenous workers.<sup>12</sup>

We had a senior staff lawyer conduct the interviews since HCLS had experience in leading other community-based research projects, had led other projects in partnership with the Indigenous community, and had successfully built trust with Indigenous clients.<sup>13</sup> While non-Indigenous, this lawyer had Indigenous community engagement skills and extensive training to ensure that she delivered services in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner. In addition, HCLS retained the McLean Consulting Group to support specific project activities, such as the interview participant sharing and talking circle, as needed.

## Sampling, participant recruitment and ongoing challenges

Our goal was to conduct between 15 and 20 interviews with Indigenous people living in Halton Region. We anticipated that recruitment would be difficult because the Indigenous population in Halton is small, diverse, situated throughout the region and largely hidden; there are no recognized elders; and culturally based services and Indigenous-led community or social service organizations headquartered in the region are lacking. As a result, we decided to recruit using a method known as respondent-driven sampling,<sup>14</sup> which allows researchers to access hidden or difficult-to-reach populations. A researcher starts with one member of the population (called a seed) who refers the researcher to another potential interviewee, and so on. The assumption is that the people best able to access hidden populations are peer group members.

Four Indigenous people who had experienced homelessness and had a pre-existing relationship with HCLS were invited to be interviewed. Three agreed and served as the seed participants. They were asked to identify members of their social networks with similar experiences and invite them to participate in the project. Each seed participant was given a \$25 gift card for completing the interview and an additional gift card for each individual they recruited into the project.

At the same time, we engaged in outreach with HCLS's community partners, emphasizing housing and homelessness services providers. The use of intermediaries in outreach has been an effective approach to reach highly disadvantaged populations.<sup>15</sup> Lessons learned from this research were applied to this project to overcome anticipated cynicism and mistrust that Indigenous participants would have toward bureaucratic government organizations, and their aversion to involvement with the legal system. Community posters were displayed in libraries and distributed through a local food security organization with a network of more than 80 partners. Posters were also distributed electronically by the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network to its more than 400 frontline staff.

Recruiting participants through community services intermediaries was problematic due to differences in voluntary Indigenous self-identification practices. This was not surprising, as the environmental scan we conducted found that better collection of local data, plus shared definitions and processes for self-identification, was needed.<sup>16</sup> Some organizations had no practice in place; others did, but were unsure of the level of compliance by frontline staff.<sup>17</sup>

To increase the recruitment rate, HCLS staff engaged the

clientele at sites such as community dinners and food banks. Outreach was also extended to adjacent municipalities to engage individuals who had left Halton to access services and supports not available locally. Additionally, recognizing the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in custody and involved in the criminal justice system, we approached other legal aid service providers at the courthouse and in custodial institutions to assist with recruitment.

## Our sample

Between December 21, 2017, and February 23, 2018, we conducted 12 interviews. Each participant was recruited independently, as none of the original seed participants or the other nine was able to recruit any other participant. This was notwithstanding local lived experience: two participants indicated that they had lived their whole lives in Halton, one had spent the majority of their life in Halton, and two others had been in the area for 40 years and 19 years, respectively. With few exceptions, it was apparent through the interviews that participants' lack of social connections was not just with other Indigenous people who had experienced homelessness, but with any other Indigenous people. Exceptions were three students at a local college interviewed through its Indigenous support centre and a participant who had lived all his life in the region and received support from Indigenous friends. Three identified as Métis and nine as First Nations.<sup>18</sup>

Recruitment of participants is ongoing. To ensure the most robust data set possible, additional interviews will be conducted as participants come forward.

## The interview process

Interviews were carried out at a location chosen by the participant when possible. Some chose to come to the HCLS main office, while others preferred the shelter where they were staying, or in a public place. Refreshments and snacks were provided to participants during and after interviews.

The first two interviews used open-ended questions and a storytelling approach. One participant agreed that the information he had provided to his lawyer while receiving legal services could be included in the project. This was so he did not have to repeat his story and in recognition of the trust he had developed with his representative. The next six interviews were conducted in a more structured way to facilitate data analysis. The last three interviews were conversations held at an informal drop-in session at the Indigenous support centre, with the interviewer posing some probing questions.<sup>19</sup>

The consent process was designed to provide participants with significant control over how their information was collected and used. It was a negotiation rather than a standardized process, although consistent information about the project, the purpose of the research and questions was provided. Participants were informed that the interview was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty or impact on the HCLS services they were receiving or could receive. We reiterated to participants that they could choose which questions to answer and how much detail to provide.

To ensure accuracy, a note taker attended the interview and, if the participant agreed, a recording was made. Participant consent was recorded in writing at the start. All participants were advised that any reports based on the information they provided might be made public, but that they would not be identifiable.

Lynn Lavallée, who completed a doctoral thesis using Indigenous research methods, emphasizes that the principle of reciprocity is essential within an Indigenous research framework.<sup>20</sup> The knowledge shared by a participant is a gift, and recognizing their knowledge is important. At the start of each interview, the interviewer presented the participant with a gift of white sage<sup>21</sup> and made an offer to smudge.<sup>22</sup> This was done to demonstrate that the research was being undertaken in a good way and to show respect for the participant. One participant's response to the gift and offer to smudge stands out and connects directly to his experience of spiritual disconnection and homelessness:<sup>23</sup>

**Participant 3:** *Sage. I haven't had a sage plant in a long time*

**Interviewer:** *That came from Six Nations as well.*

**Participant 3:** *Tell them I say 'thank you'. It is so hard to find white sage...*

**Interviewer:** *Even when it's not burning, it smells so good.*

**Participant 3:** *Yeah, it's white sage, though; this isn't normal sage. This is smudging sage, ceremonial sage, which is hard to find nowadays.*

**Interviewer:** *Well, we get it on Six (Nations).*

**Participant 3:** *Yeah, well I don't live near the Six.*

**Interviewer:** *If you wanted sage, we could probably help you out by finding you some sage.*

**Participant 3:** *I love this stuff. I would literally pull off one leaf and smudge with it every day. Of course, I wouldn't have a feather to do it, but I'd improvise. If I had to, I'd make a homemade feather. A fake one...*

# Preliminary Themes and Narratives

Once the interviews were complete, a verbatim transcript was created from the audio recording and note taker’s notes. The transcripts were then coded for:

- the type of homelessness experienced based on both the Canadian and Indigenous definitions of homelessness;
- the causes of homelessness;
- the types of trauma experienced; and
- other elements such as services accessed, and what worked and did not work to help the participant reduce or prevent homelessness.

Based on this coding we identified preliminary themes since, at the time of writing this report, we had yet to discuss them with participants. We expect to do so in a sharing and healing circle in the very near future. A sharing circle or talking circle is akin to a focus group in which researchers gather information through group discussion.<sup>24</sup> Participants in the interview process will be invited to the sharing and healing circle, since this an important way to confirm interpretation of the data and share control of its analysis with the participants. Our discussion of these preliminary themes follows.

**Table I: Types of Indigenous homelessness**

Type of homelessness	Definition	Total
<b>Nowhere to go</b>	Complete lack of access to stable shelter, housing, accommodation, shelter services or relationships; literally having nowhere to go <sup>26</sup>	<b>8</b> (67%)
<b>Emergency shelter</b>	Staying in overnight shelters, for people who are homeless or affected by family violence <sup>27</sup>	<b>5</b> (42%)
<b>Couch surfing</b>	Staying temporarily in a location that lacks security of tenure <sup>28</sup>	<b>6</b> (50%)
<b>Precariously housed</b>	Housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards <sup>29</sup>	<b>11</b> (92%)
<b>Cultural disintegration and loss</b>	Homelessness that totally dislocates or alienates Indigenous individuals and communities from their culture and from the relationship web of Indigenous society known as “All My Relations” <sup>30</sup>	<b>6</b> (50%)
<b>Spiritual disconnection</b>	Separation from Indigenous worldviews or connection to the Creator or equivalent deity. <sup>31</sup>	<b>11</b> (92%)
<b>Going home</b>	For Indigenous persons who grew up or lived outside their home community, who on “returning home” may be seen as outsiders and are unable to secure housing due to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal bureaucratic barriers, uncooperative band or community councils, hostile community and kin members, lateral violence and cultural dislocation. <sup>32</sup>	<b>11</b> (92%)
<b>Escaping or evading harm</b>	Fleeing, leaving or vacating unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or overcrowded households or homes for safety reasons or survival. <sup>33</sup>	<b>9</b> (75%)
<b>Relocation and mobility</b>	Travelling between urban and rural spaces to access work, health, education, recreation, legal and childcare services; to attend spiritual events and ceremonies; to access affordable housing; or to see family, friends and community members. <sup>34</sup>	<b>3</b> (25%)



## Type of Indigenous homelessness

Eleven of the 12 participants experienced more than one type of homelessness contained within the Indigenous and Canadian definitions (see Table I). This is consistent with the idea that homelessness is a fluid experience in which one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change dramatically and frequently.<sup>25</sup>

## Narratives

The research assistant responsible for coding developed a narrative account of each participant's experience from the transcript. This was a way for participants to share their experiences in a reporting style more consistent with Indigenous oral traditions.<sup>35</sup> In accordance with Indigenous oral history and the principle of witnessing, we are obliged to store and care for the history we witnessed and to share it with our broader community.<sup>36</sup>

The narratives were provided in draft form to each of the participants. They were asked to review the narratives carefully and edit the content as they wanted. When satisfied, the

participant was asked to consent to inclusion of the narrative in this report. In one case, contact was lost with a participant after the interview, so the process of reviewing and confirming a narrative could not be completed. This narrative is not included in this report. Approved narratives are included in Appendix 1.

## Safe spaces and service gaps

Participants were asked, "If you could make changes that would improve the system, what would they be?" Participant 8's response makes it clear that addressing service gaps and creating safe spaces for Indigenous persons to access culturally responsive services in Halton is a justice issue:

**Participant 4:** *First of all, I'm a sixties scoop survivor. There is nothing right now for sixties scoop survivors. Even if it was just one time a month, at least we could get together. Even to this day there's nothing for nobody... So I guess we're going to the burial grounds with broken hearts.*

**Interviewer:** *So space for a community to get togeth-*

Figure I: Factors contributing to Indigenous homelessness in Halton



er, place to gather?

**Participant 4:** *Yeah, somewhere... A friendship centre, that'd be nice. A healing centre, that'd be nice to hear other people voice their different stories. What else? Somewhere that somebody could come maybe into the region. A health professional or somebody like (a traditional practitioner).*

Participants consistently raised the issue of accessing indoor and outdoor space that was visible, positive, dedicated and safe. This is consistent with the findings in a Halton report dealing with at-risk youth. That report recommended providing culturally safe spaces for Indigenous youth.<sup>25</sup> Participant 11 described the need this way:

“Halton needs a community centre. Halton needs a community space. Something outdoor. ...I think Halton needs to bring in Elders. Halton needs to bring in something to honour this territory. This territory, as much as it is Ojibway territory, this is Haudenosaunee territory as well and four of our Nations sat here in the 1700s. Our nations sat here as well. I think our people need to ... There needs to be some space or something to honour those. I mean, we have Burlington and we have how many, there's almost 3-4000 Indigenous people. They need to know where it's at. There needs to be something for the youth. I think that's my biggest thing.

For older participants who identified as sixties scoop survivors, and participants who had experienced trauma, the need

for space was just as important. Participant 4 put it this way:

“I think it's very important that people have a place to go, that they know it's safe, that they can be proud, that they can learn the proper traditions. And I think that all builds having that pride in yourself and not listening to the negative. We're fed a lot of negative and it's because a lot of us have been in a negative light, have lived a negative life. And the only way we're going to correct that is by saying 'let's get the correct information from the correct people'. And if we don't have that in Halton, or we don't have that outreach in any type of community, we're doing injustices.

Access to traditional methods of healing such as medicinal sage, ceremonies like smudging and access to sweat lodges, healers and elders were repeatedly identified as service gaps. Opportunities to attend local pow wows, drumming workshops, craft workshops and community gardens were also raised.

Several housing-specific service gaps were identified, including dedicated Indigenous housing, housing search assistance, supportive services to help retain housing, assistance with first and last month's rent, and information on other community services such as food banks. One participant stated that easy access to these services is important, otherwise the service is irrelevant. He described experiencing barriers in accessing services because he did not have proper identification or a phone. When he could use a phone to call a service provider, he routinely encountered voice mail.

# Some Lessons Learned

In the fall of 2017, HCLS's board publicly committed to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and to review the clinic's policies, practices, procedures and services that affect Halton's Indigenous community in its next strategic plan. The lessons we are learning through this project will inform that work.

Learning how to conduct ethical research with the Indigenous community informs how we deliver ethical services. We will continue to use the Two-Eyed Seeing approach to increase our understanding of Indigenous legal traditions and principles. Our experience with sharing control over processes and data, and how data is used, also goes to the heart of our commitment to develop respectful relationships with our clients and the community.

We are committed to continuing this research to improve our capacity to deliver holistic services. Working with the Indigenous community on this project has made it clear that the relationships that develop are not based on a single transaction or a series of them. Relationships with participants have been built on trust and commitment, and are qualitatively different from the traditional and more transactional Western relationship between lawyers and clients. These relationships involve a commitment by HCLS to the participants and community that our supports and services will continue past the end of the project.

The interviewer has already received multiple contacts from participants seeking legal services. Participants are able to access the lawyer directly and avoid the standard intake

process. This reflects our journey to become a “different kind of lawyer”<sup>26</sup> that started with the Legal Health Check-up pilot project. We understand that people are drawn to our services through direct experience, because negative experiences have throughout their lives erected barriers of cynicism, suspicion and aversion to both legal and non-legal services.

## Next steps

In April, we worked with the surveyors in the federal Point-in-Time Count to develop a partnership between the count and the project. Cultural competency training was provided to increase surveyor knowledge of the context of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. We are optimistic that training and some additions to the survey language will increase the number of people who self-identify as Indigenous in the survey, thereby increasing our knowledge of their experience. People identifying as Indigenous through the Point-in-Time Count were invited to a traditional community feast as part of building relationships with them prior to inviting them to participate in the sharing and healing listening circle.

A focus group with Indigenous service providers was also held in April. After holding the sharing and healing circle, we will present our results to the community at large and start to develop a community action plan to respond to the needs of Indigenous people with experience of homelessness in Halton.

# Appendix I: Narratives

## NARRATIVE 1 Participant C's story

C is a 27-year-old man who has lived in Halton most of his life. He identifies as Métis on his mother's side and currently resides with his mother in Halton. His father lives on the West Coast. Despite being housed by his mother, C considers himself homeless and without any real sense of home. He feels that his mother houses him out of obligation and says that due to a lack of financial resources, he has nowhere else to go.

C came to Halton Community Legal Services to appeal a decision on Ontario Disability Support Program benefits. He had been previously denied benefits for his learning disability and schizophrenia delusional disorder. Now he has been approved to receive these benefits. C's mother has not coped well with his disabilities.

Over five years ago, C applied for rent-geared-to-income housing in Toronto through Housing Connections. C cannot work due to his disabilities, so his options to secure housing have been limited. C applied in Toronto because he believed that it might offer quicker access to housing. He also selected Toronto because it had more supports and better public transit. But it is difficult to move off the waiting list, and C has yet to receive an offer.

C subscribes to naturopathy and holistic medicine, choosing not to take medication for his mental illness. He is unaware of any traditional healing or Indigenous resources in Halton. If C knew of any, he would want to connect to these communities. As a young person, he feels shut out of the system and detached from the community he was raised in.

## NARRATIVE 2 Participant D's story

D is a 42-year-old man who first came to Halton at age 2 with his sister to be adopted by a family in Burlington. He was born on a reserve in northwestern Ontario, but has never

returned there. His adult life has been marked by moving from one shared accommodation to the next, never truly feeling safe. Once this school year ends, he will be back in Halton region looking for the next place to live—a cycle that never ends.

**“ Interviews are always interesting because you can get accommodations for your interviews, but . . . for full-time work it doesn't seem to work out.**

For D, having completed a certificate and diploma program, education has always been a priority. He has plans to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree, but it will depend on his ability to afford tuition. Right now, D works part-time and receives Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits, as he had a stroke that caused a permanent brain injury. Ten years ago D began applying for Employment Insurance, then Ontario Works, and finally he received ODSP.

D thinks his disability has prevented him from getting hired by employers, who have simply dismissed him based on his learning disabilities. D has asked for accommodations for his learning curve, but finds that despite his qualifications, the conversation usually ends with the interview. Going off ODSP would present too many unknowns: how many hours would he get at work and how would he afford his medication?

When D moved back to Halton after time away at school in the United States, he began the scramble of finding a place to live. While he never found himself with nowhere to go, he had to live with roommates or the landlord. He would rather have a whole apartment, but could never afford to live independently. D's constant fear of being unable to pay rent and ending up on the streets has kept him working at all costs, as without an address his ODSP would be in jeopardy and his life would begin to unravel quickly. He needs meals and medication to prevent seizures from reoccurring.

Even though D has a desire to visit his former community in northwestern Ontario, he has learned it is plagued with addiction issues and the effects of mercury poisoning. Addiction is a very difficult subject to raise with his birth mother and it

usually ends the conversation. His large family—four siblings and two half-siblings—are scattered throughout the United States, Halton and Hamilton, but they have reconnected over the years. One of his sisters, an Indigenous woman out West missing for 10 years, was ultimately found by the RCMP. D sees his siblings who have families of their own and wishes he could have that too. He has always lived a life walking in two worlds, as an Indigenous person and as a non-Indigenous person.

**“ You get references to entitlement with, say, band money, funding for school. A lot of people say like “I wish I was Aboriginal so I could get that money.”**

The one place D felt connected to his culture was the Indigenous support centre at college. Through this inclusive space he felt comfortable just being himself, and not having to answer questions about his status or tuition funding. At birth, D’s mother registered him for status through the Indian Act, which gives the holder important legal rights. Through his status, D could apply to his band for assistance with his tuition fees. While at school, he faced many negative attitudes towards his Indigenous identity. Peers accused him of being entitled to benefits only due to his status, something he wished they could more fully understand. He even felt that he couldn’t identify as Indigenous for fear of these discriminatory attitudes. He hopes to replicate his feeling of belonging while at the support centre, by connecting with an elder to seek guidance. He has not found people in Halton with shared experiences, no one to appreciate his history of adoption, being raised Catholic and its intersection with his Indigenous heritage.

D’s ultimate goal is to find secure housing that would last longer than a semester at school. He wants assistance finding accommodations and managing his finances. D is concerned with paying rent on time and minimizing the moving expenses he has incurred. At his age, he wants to stay in one place and build a life.

### **NARRATIVE 3** Participant K’s story

K is a 63-year-old woman from a First Nation in Ontario who came to Halton 20 years ago seeking better living opportunities. Unfortunately, her cycle of homelessness was not broken but rather perpetuated. K moved throughout the region coping with precarious housing, including living out of a

van, a toxic basement and a farm. Recently she moved into an apartment in Milton.

K’s story of homelessness began when she was separated from her family and her reserve; she is a child of the Sixties Scoop generation. In April 1962, the Children’s Aid Society forcibly took K from her family and placed her in foster care in a small Ontario community. A family adopted her and her younger sister, but at 16 K left due to abuse she suffered there. With the help of a neighbour she moved out on her own, seeking assistance through Ontario Works to support herself. K later learned that she had four more siblings born after she was “scooped,” but she didn’t know where they had been placed. To this day, one sibling remains missing.

**“ [I was] brought up [with] “take the Indian out of the child”... “You’re going to be a drunk just like the rest of them”**

The time spent with her adopted family took a significant toll on K, mentally, physically and emotionally. She was raised to feel inferior due to her Indigenous identity. She was told to stop being Indian. She was shamed. A visit to Children’s Aid Society for counselling didn’t provide any solutions. Her adopted family saw K through a lens of stereotypes, believing she would grow up to develop an alcohol or drug problem. That she was a girl added to these discriminatory attitudes. Her adopted family told her she would be a whore. After feeling alone and with nowhere else to go, K left and returned to the reserve she was born on, searching more than ever for a real sense of identity. This is a process that she has continued throughout her adult life—where does she fit in?

K had been raised by her grandparents on the reserve, but after her time with her foster family she was broken and untrusting. Back at the reserve K found her grandmother, but much had changed since she had been taken. The family home she remembered was gone and her siblings weren’t there; most had ended up in foster care. Her mother had always been in and out of her life, suffering from her own disabilities. K’s childhood memories from the reserve are now fading, but she continues to ask “why” and seek answers about the events in her life.

**“ Mentally, physically, emotionally—you try to rise above it all. Then you take whatever is available. You have no choice. You have no money.**

Once she relocated to Halton in 1999, K was faced with the same struggle to find housing she had dealt with as a young

adult. She had nowhere to go but to housing support, which meant accepting living accommodations as they came up. Through Ontario Works these could be a room for rent or an emergency shelter, never an apartment of her own. When she asked for more options she was told to move to Hamilton, a Band Aid solution to a lack of housing in the region. When K tried to rent through the private market, there was always a reason she couldn't move in: the landlord didn't accept Ontario Works recipients, wanted a tenant who was working full-time, or pets were not allowed. Always something. Not until K found a proactive voice through the legal clinic could she secure an apartment. At age 63 she finally has an apartment; not a basement prone to flooding.

Throughout her time in Halton, K has not connected with other Indigenous people, nor does she know where to do so. As a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, she would like to meet other people who have gone through that experience. A simple start could be a monthly meeting for survivors in the community. The hope would be to have a friendship and healing centre for people to voice their stories and learn from one another. K wants to be able to access social and health services out of a centre in her area. Hamilton and Toronto are too far to travel to, especially with limited finances and poor health. Where is the network in Halton?

## NARRATIVE 4 Participant Q's story

Q is a 66-year-old woman whose family, from a reserve in eastern Ontario, came to Toronto for better employment opportunities. Q has been in Halton for the last 40 years, living day-to-day on an Old Age Pension of \$1079 a month. In the past Q has rented housing on the private market, and when that fell through, turned to emergency shelters. She is now registered with Halton Access to Community Housing (HATCH), living in a rent-geared-to-income unit.

**“The life in foster care was so much different than the life that I was used to; I had to ask for food, I had to ask for fruit, I wore the same skirt for three or four days...”**

Q's beginnings of homelessness trace back to her teenage years. At 11, she and her brother were placed into foster care due to neglect by their mother. Their father had been ill and unable to care for the kids. Living in a foster home was very different. Everything required permission, from eating an orange out of the fridge to changing her clothing. She didn't

cope well with this structure and began to run away from the foster home.

At 16, Q began staying with her mother instead of the foster home. She had dropped out of high school and soon began dealing with a tumultuous home life. Her experiences during this time of being raped, beaten up and not fed properly were traced back to her mother. Severe physical abuse was inflicted on her and her brother. After leaving foster care to go back with her mom, Q felt like excess baggage: no one wanted her around. To protect her, Q's father made her a Crown ward through the family court system, which would ensure she wouldn't be placed back in her mother's custody. This trauma has had a lasting impact on Q as a parent, who vowed to always provide for her children, no matter the cost.

**“I'm a survivor. Because I had to survive for my kids. Had to survive to get my status, had to survive for being in the work field, going back to school...”**

Q visited her family's reserve in order to obtain status, a decade-long struggle for her Indigenous community to recognize her as a member of their band. Status as an Indigenous person is important for Q, as it provides legally protected rights and benefits. On what the government gave her (through ODSP), she could not provide for herself, whereas with status, Indian Affairs would help. If she needed a chair for the bathtub, this came through Indian Affairs. If she needed a walker, this came through Indian Affairs. Whatever the provincial government wouldn't give her, Indian Affairs did once she finally obtained her status.

Q is proud to say she is Indigenous. She is a child of mixed parents, an Indigenous mother and an Irish father. Her mixed background has brought considerable discrimination from her Indigenous community, which has rejected her as one of their own. Even after obtaining status, Q was barred from becoming a member of her band at the reserve because her husband was not Indigenous. As per the Indian Act, bands themselves have the right to grant membership and to determine who can access resources and property. Q was longing to become part of this community. She wanted to live on the reserve her family came from, but still she faced exclusion.

At 40, Q moved onto a different reserve near Brantford for eight months and tended a large garden that fed many people within that community. Her husband and son lived with her on reserve, a place where she wanted to be in order to continue her cultural practices. But domestic abuse by her husband brought Q's time on reserve to an abrupt end. On the reserve, abuse towards women is not accepted, as women are the life-

blood of the community. She feared her husband and faced the most difficult decision of her life as a parent: to raise her son on her own or preserve his relationship with both parents. Her past promise to always provide for her children echoed in her mind, and Q left the reserve with her husband and son.

Q's family has been affected by residential schools. Two of her aunts shared some experiences from their time there. Q has found it very difficult to accept that her aunts might have experienced sexual abuse at school. Her aunts have struggled to tell the family about this time in their lives, but made it clear they felt alone and hated due to their culture. Q hasn't found anyone to talk with about this history, and wishes someone else understood. Coming from Toronto, she had seen the benefit of communal gathering spaces, where food and clothing were available and people could connect. Nothing similar exists in Halton.

Being homeless has had a major impact on Q's perceptions of social services in Halton. She has battled through being denied housing and living in emergency shelters. While living in a shelter, she reconnected with her love of community gardening and tried to engage other people to contribute and talk to one another. She believed that working on this garden would give people purpose within their lives and a sense of home when they didn't otherwise have one. This didn't always meet instant acceptance, but she continued to encourage others. She has survived to support her children and provide them with better opportunities than were available to her. She wishes that more information was readily available to someone in her position, struggling to access the basic necessities of life. Before Q entered the emergency shelter, she didn't know where food banks were in Halton or who to speak with about waiting lists for housing. She needed these supports before going into a shelter.

## NARRATIVE 5 Participant P's story

P is a 36-year-old man who has been homeless since he was discharged from hospital and had no one to turn to. He is a member of a Cree community in Manitoba. Ten years ago P was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and degenerative disk disease; his illness now requires him to use a wheelchair. Being on the street in a chair, he wasn't able to get a job and going anywhere was a struggle. The only financial assistance P received was from Ontario Works, but paying for meals and his medication was nearly impossible. Being homeless was an experience P had lived through in his

teens and early twenties; this time, after being pushed out of Toronto, he ended up in a provincial park.

**“ Homelessness comes in any manner knocking at your door. Mine was a hospital. Got out of the hospital and didn't have anyone, anywhere to go.**

At age 2, P was adopted out of his Cree family to a non-Indigenous family in northwestern Ontario. He was raised in a Christian household, very different to the reserve community he was born on. After completing Grade 8, P became frustrated with school and dropped out. From being removed at such a young age, P has little attachment to his reserve community, which has suffered by being surrounded by non-Indigenous communities. The people still on reserve no longer have a strong sense of their traditions and culture. Once he got out of the school system, P left his adopted family in search of answers about his Indigenous identity.

By his mid-twenties, P had been in and out of many shelters in Toronto. He had four children of his own, but after his diagnosis and a split from his partner, the Children's Aid Society took the kids away. P had no family in the area to live with and faced going back to an emergency shelter. He never felt that he had his own space and couldn't bring his belongings with him to temporary accommodations.

In order to make some money, P began crafting and selling dream catchers in the Toronto area. Unfortunately his art supplies put him over the two-bag limit at most shelters across the city. He sat on the waiting list for subsidized housing for five years, watching many apartments being given to others. Once he could see no end to the constant waiting, P set out for the park in Halton to pitch a tent in the camping grounds. He lived there for five months.

While at the park, P continued to craft dream catchers and care for the land he was living on. He was not permitted to sell his wares on park property, so he was without income. This restricted his access to the medication he needed and to transportation. He wanted to seek services that would connect him with other Indigenous people, but the park was isolating.

During this time P developed an idea for a communal shop for fellow Indigenous peoples who were struggling to find permanent housing. He wants to see a space for Indigenous people to share their skills and work with their community, while at the same time earning a living to improve their circumstances.

After living in the park for several months while waiting to be approved for housing, P was put up in a hotel, once again temporarily. From there, he waited for his reserve community

to provide his status information. Like many other Indigenous people who have lived off reserve, P struggled to obtain his status card, a piece of identity that would entitle him to legally protected rights and benefits from the government. This constant state of not knowing where he will live has taken a significant toll on P; he has lost all faith in government services.

## **NARRATIVE 6** Participant M's story

M is a 24-year-old man from a small reserve on the east coast who came to the Halton area to attend college. He had been in a program in eastern Canada for homeless youth. M's father is Indigenous and his mother is of Norwegian and Irish descent. He lived on reserve with his family for 12 years. M's home life was extremely hard as a child, as both his parents were abusive. His father was physically abusive and is now in jail, while his mother was psychologically abusive towards M and his Indigenous identity. He has many half siblings from his father.

His mother and father were unable to provide for M, so he was sent to a group home temporarily with the hope of living with his grandparents. As a minor M was involved with police on drug charges and sent to a youth juvenile detention centre. M never completed high school, so when he later chose to attend a drug rehabilitation program, he completed his high school equivalency (GED). Before M could move in with his grandparents, he lost his grandfather and became homeless.

His cycle of homelessness began on the East Coast and continued into Halton, with M learning to access community dinners and food banks. In his opinion, it has been easier to cope with being homeless in Halton due to the generosity of people. He has found cultural support through the Indigenous support centre at the college. However, it is still hard to access many social services, as they are spread out across the region.

When M first came to Halton for schooling, he lived in a basement apartment with no windows and no door on the bathroom. He and five other people paid \$570/month each. M did not realize that this living situation was illegal, and soon after he moved there the home came under investigation. The homeowner tried to extort M for rent money, and ultimately M had to leave. He began couch surfing with strangers he met on the Internet.

M is now living in an apartment with two roommates, each paying \$575/month plus Internet fees. The apartment is not maintained by the landlord and has a roach problem. The group has tried to raise concerns but has only met denial by

the landlord. One roommate is leaving and M will be unable to afford the unit without another roommate. He is seeking a two-bedroom apartment for him and his girlfriend, who is a full-time student and working to support herself. It has been extremely difficult to find an apartment in Oakville that they can afford.

## **NARRATIVE 7** Participant A's story

A is a college student who moved to the Halton area from the East Coast to enroll in college. Growing up there were no family discussions about their Indigenous background. His maternal great-grandmother was Métis, but this identity was never mentioned. Only after a distant relative told A and his two siblings did he began to develop a keen interest in his identity. A has done research and used an ancestry website to learn more about a cultural background he had only connected to in history class.

Since A has been in Halton, he has lived in a condo and within a house, shared accommodation that has not been ideal but what he could afford as a student. His condo landlord attempted to evict him so a family friend could move in. He faced animosity from the landlord's daughter and did not have legally protected rights under the Residential Tenants Act because he qualified as a boarder. He has since moved places to live with roommates, and doesn't feel he can be picky as a student. Even though it has crossed his mind, A believes obtaining status as an Indigenous person will be difficult because there are still too many unknowns in his family tree. Moving forward, A would like to explore his self-identification more and dedicate time to researching his history, which he has only come to know as a young adult.

## **NARRATIVE 8** Participant J's story

J is a 29-year-old man from the East Coast who grew up in a mixed family: his father is Indigenous and Chinese and his mother is Brazilian. J has been living in the Halton area to attend college and is seeking admission at university for next year. He wants to pursue more education and now lives off student loans and a part-time job.

Growing up, J's family never lived on reserve because his father wanted to protect the children from being exposed to his alcohol problems. However, J was raised to visit the reserve on



weekends, listening to stories from elders and being immersed in his culture. During his childhood J felt the impact of racism; the colour of his skin changed the way people perceived him.

**“ They said things like “I didn’t know Natives could work hard.” He liked proving them wrong.**

Both his friends and coworkers saw him differently because of his background. On his first job as a landscaper, his coworkers frequently made racist comments about Indigenous people; none of them knew that J was Indigenous himself. When one of his friends told the other workers J was in fact Indigenous, they said things like, “I didn’t know Natives could work hard.” J liked proving people wrong. He doesn’t want to be forthcoming about his identity because he wants people to get to know him for the person he is, instead of prejudging him. He has heard the negative stereotypes that have been used: “Natives get handouts.”

Through these experiences, J wants to have a tough skin, just as his father did when he first came to Toronto after completing high school. J’s father experienced considerable racism when he came to Toronto in the early 1960s looking for work. After an outing at a bar where a fight broke out, J’s father and uncle faced harsher punishment than others. This differential treatment is what J’s father hoped to rise above, working hard to build a business, to show others in his community that they did not need to be victims.

J left home at 18 to start an independent life, attending university and opening his own small business. For a while after leaving home, J didn’t feel comfortable going back to visit the reserve because he felt he would be seen as an outsider and not welcomed. Since his time at college in the Indigenous support centre, he has realized that he will be accepted and has made it a priority to connect with his home community. J has visited his reserve several times over the past year and hopes to continue this relationship. It is difficult in Halton to find supports for Indigenous people. He wants to attend pow wows, but Hamilton is too far to go during a busy school week and while maintaining a job.

## **NARRATIVE 9** Participant L’s story

L is a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, and has lived in Halton her entire life. At age 4, she was taken from her mother by the Children’s Aid Society and put into foster care. The foster home was near her mother’s house in Oakville, and L began to

run away back home. She was confused about the separation from her mother. At the age of 5 she was adopted into a loving French-Canadian family. They were not prepared for the strong-willed L, who would continue to search for her mother and roots.

L’s mother is a residential school survivor and had seven children. Residential schools were government-funded, church-run schools set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of Aboriginal children. Many children were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. The ongoing impact of residential schools is felt through generations and has contributed to continuing social problems. L’s mother is Ojibway from Manitoulin Wikwemikong (First Nation).

**“ I was a very confused 16-year-old, part of the Sixties Scoop and not even knowing it. So where does an Indigenous 16-year-old go in Halton?**

When L was 14, after running away to live with her mother, she was again made a ward of the Crown and returned to foster care. At this time she ran away with carnivals that passed through town. She felt this was empowering: to be independent and not have to rely on those she felt had let her down. L moved home briefly into her adopted family but once again was not successful in bonding. She went back on the road with a carnival, moving continuously from town to town. This lifestyle was unsustainable, and at age 16 she decided to move to Toronto. She hoped a bigger city centre would bring more opportunities for work and an apartment.

Instead of more opportunities, L found that in the city there were more people like her, street kids with nowhere to go. She was accepted into a women’s shelter as a form of temporary housing. Being only 16, L was not accustomed to following rules of a shelter and did not fit well into the environment. She didn’t see why she needed a curfew when she had been living independently for the past two years.

She soon left the shelter to couch surf with friends, trying to work in order to rent her own apartment. This also offered her an opportunity to learn some of the life skills she needed in the city. When she was able to save up for an apartment, it was not a permanent solution to her problems. She didn’t have the discipline to pay rent each month, and no one told her she could face eviction if she fell behind on a payment. This led L to seek refuge back in the shelter system.

Being homeless was a perpetual cycle of getting her things together and then going back to the shelter when she could no longer afford an apartment. For L it was a constant in-and-out

of precarious housing. These struggles brought on depression, and after a failed suicide attempt, L came to be in hospital for six weeks.

Due to the discrimination that L witnessed towards Indigenous people, she quickly decided not to identify herself or to associate with members of the Indigenous community in Halton or the city. L didn't want to be treated as different, and did her best to hide her identity. When dealing with police, she described herself as being from Oakville, never identifying [as Indigenous], as she had witnessed those who did be beaten or worse. She experienced differential treatment and came to distrust police through these interactions.

L has had a history of abusive relationships and is a victim of domestic violence. She entered these relationships for the feeling of security and safety that she initially felt with the person. It was extremely difficult to leave for fear of re-entering the cycle of homelessness she had known before. In fear from her husband, L took her two children and stayed in a women's shelter in Halton. She returned to the matrimonial home but eventually succeeded in making a clean break. Many people did not want to rent to a single mom, whether she was Indigenous or not. L was able to stay with her adopted family until she saved enough money to afford her own place. It was a proud moment when L could put a down payment on a house.

**“ Halton is so out of touch with . . . sometimes you say ‘Oh I’m Native’ and then you become that ‘Oh how interesting, tell me about it.’ ”**

During her recovery L was able to complete hairdressing school and develop a marketable skill. Working as a hairdresser in Oakville for 32 years, L used the opportunity to educate people. Her customers did not know she was Indigenous and often brought up topics in the news, such as issues at Six Nations reserve.

L has had difficult conversations with her daughter about her identity as an Indigenous woman in Halton. When her daughter was accepted by a prestigious ballet school, she faced an enrolment form that asked whether or not she identified as Indigenous. Her daughter chose not to identify for fear of repercussions. Today she is extremely proud of her heritage, having learned so much more about her family's history.

L was reunited with her natural mother 20 years after being taken. Then the two of them could heal and L could begin to understand what had occurred to them and gain some answers about who she was. Then she could bond with her loving adopted family, which never really gave up on her.

Along with her daughter and natural mother, L went to her reserve. They stayed there to meet family and community members and to attend a pow wow. It was very difficult to connect with people, having never lived on reserve, spending so much time away in Halton. The reserve community kept their distance from L. She was called an “apple”, a derogatory term to describe someone of mixed background. But L describes herself as being very proud to be Indigenous, and has continued to go every year since with her family, friends or anyone who wants to understand her culture.

**“ Let your mess be your message. ”**

Throughout her adult life, L found no supportive programs in Halton. All she wanted was a place to go where people would understand her roots. In thinking about future generations of Indigenous community members, she would like a cultural centre, somewhere to be safe and proud of your heritage. She feels that having a centre would build pride in oneself and the community. It would also educate the people of Halton about the history of Indigenous people. L believes it is very important that fellow Indigenous people share their story.

## **NARRATIVE 10 Participant P's story**

P is a 35-year-old Indigenous man from the Algonquin First Nation. He has worked on and off as a roofer for the past 20 years, taking jobs in Halton and Peel. He was born and raised in Milton, but his family is from an area near North Bay that is home to both Métis and Algonquin peoples. P's remaining family continue to live up North, on reserve.

P has been homeless for the past two and a half years. He lives with his cousin and a friend in a park. They constructed a teepee from a walnut tree and transport truck tarps. Before he came to live in the park, he lived in a small place in Milton, given to him to use by an old family friend.

P's history of homelessness began over 10 years ago. Since 2006 he has been living on friends' couches, moving from place to place as the need arises.

In 2004, P and his ex-partner had a son together but they broke up two years after. The dissolution of the relationship started a pattern of P moving back and forth from North Bay to the Halton region, depending on what work he was doing. He has experienced a lot of family hardship in the last five years, losing his two sisters, uncles and mother to sickness; now just he and his brother are left.

## NARRATIVE 11 Participant T's story

P has addiction issues that have led to incarceration for periods of his life. When released, he has couch surfed and tried to get back on his feet. He owes outstanding fines but doesn't have enough money to pay them off; he pays child support to his ex-partner and works whatever roofing jobs he can. He has experienced racial discrimination in Halton on numerous occasions, most often hearing racial slurs directed at him on the street. Often the language is directed at alcoholism, violence and generalizations about his skin colour. These interactions have infuriated him.

In his time as a homeless person P has never accessed any shelters until now (April 2018). He says his biggest problem is that there are no men's shelters in Milton, only Oakville. His community supports, his friends and his employment are all in Milton. He has accessed community dinners and the food bank in Milton for the past four years. He tries his best to use these resources, though not having transportation it can sometimes prove difficult to walk to each location. Any time P gets hurt or needs medical attention, he pays out of pocket at a clinic or hospital, because he has no OHIP card or identification. He needs assistance in obtaining his status card from his reserve community.

Culture is extremely important for P; he wants to keep his fluency in Ojibway, his mother's language. P hunts for moose and elk in parks and goes fishing. In Milton, he has a group of friends who share similar ancestry he meets up with; he also uses Facebook to stay connected to his community. He has attended Aboriginal Week in Toronto to celebrate cultural practices and connect with other people. P grew up attending spiritual ceremonies with his mother, performing tobacco offerings and learning drumming from his uncle. He hasn't been able to attend any ceremonies in recent years as he has no money to travel and is constantly struggling to make ends meet.

P ultimately wants to live in Milton, in a house he can afford, close to his group of friends. If he moved back to North Bay, it would be easier to find cheap housing, but limited work is available. All Halton shelters are in Oakville and Burlington, and he doesn't want to continue to wait for a bed, especially in the winter months. His stress continues to build each day he has to wait. He would like to attend programs in Milton for Indigenous community members, like drum workshops, craft making and regular gatherings to share ideas and problems. Such gatherings would go a long way to improve P's condition of life.

T is a 35-year-old woman who describes herself as a very traditional Indigenous person from the Cayuga Nation. Her father is from Six Nations and her mother is Jamaican. T grew up visiting the reserve her father was raised on, attending family gatherings, funerals and pow wows. When T's grandmother passed away her family stopped visiting the community, and not until she had her first son at 21 did she reconnect with her Indigenous identity.

For many years T had not acknowledged her past traditions and the ceremonies that were once so important to her. When she came to know someone in Peel who asked if she'd be interested in helping open a community centre for Indigenous people, she quickly agreed. T wanted to bring change in her own life and for her community; this new network was a way to do this.

**“I'm meant to do something more right now. I'm meant to connect with something else.”**

At age 21, T had completed her Bachelor of Business Administration through college and had recently given birth to her first son. After the child arrived, her former partner left the relationship and T was a sole parent. This was a traumatic experience to go through, and T felt very alone in thinking about her future. She moved back in with her parents, who offered their love and support. Then she decided that she was meant to be doing more and wanted to connect with something else. She remembered the words that the woman had said to her when she first proposed the idea of the community centre: “This is the community, this is what we're going to bring back.”

That resonated profoundly with T. She moved to Peel Region, and began building the centre and connecting fellow Indigenous people who had been displaced off reserve. In the centre's early stages, she was doing a variety of roles, trying to work on community outreach, cultural coordinating and the administrative side of the organization. She has continued to support this network.

The goals of the community centre were to preserve and continue a traditional way of life amongst Indigenous people, irrespective of their Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe or Cree culture. Their drive and motivation was to connect Indigenous people with one another and re-teach culture and language. With increased demand for social services in the community, such as shelters and food banks, the centre has shifted its fo-

cus to meeting these pressing needs. It has been difficult to continue to run the cultural programs and outreach for youth, as funding is limited. T believes in the importance of these programs, especially to teach children spiritual practices and impart a connection with the land.

T has been struggling for years to obtain status for her five children. T holds full status under the Indian Act, having been registered by her father before the law was changed in 1986. The changes meant that there were now two qualifications, status and non-status. A non-status person might be the descendant of mixed parents like T, or someone whose family never registered under the Indian Act. The government has changed the laws surrounding who qualifies as a status Indian, and T's children were denied each time. After she attempted five times to register her son, she eventually gave up.

**“ Halton needs a community centre. Halton needs a community space.**

This systemic failure will not have an effect on the practices and traditions T wants her family to maintain. She knows their culture and she'll continue to do what she and her family have done their whole lives: living respectfully on the land and practicing their ceremonies freely. On reserve, T and her kids can all partake in ceremony. This is how they pass on the culture, the language; everything. She is recognized and accepted on reserve, which was very different from how she felt while living in Peel. In Peel, she felt disconnected from her Indigenous community, and the school board where her children attended had very different ideas about school hours, nutrition and the connection with children. There were many things that didn't fit her culture.

From her previous experience in Peel, T wants to see a cen-

tre in Halton that acts as a community space. In her opinion, Halton needs to bring in Elders to create somewhere that honours this territory. This territory has belonged to many nations since the 1700s. There needs to be something for the youth. There needs to be language for the children. The centre needs to be open and state that its purpose is for the next seven generations. That was the original purpose of the centre in Peel.

When she moved her family from north to south Peel, T noticed that people were only coming to the centre for food. No one wanted to learn beading, no one wanted to learn Wampum, no one wanted to share stories. She spoke a little about residential schools with people who came in, but they weren't there to listen.

She believes Indigenous people are losing a lot of healing opportunities. She has faith that healing that starts from the bottom can start to heal these communities. She wants to see that members of her community receive spiritual healing in addition to the food and shelter they also need. The first step is to create a safe space for the community; then more people will want to learn their language. More people will want to engage with children. Others will want to start gardening, a tradition T cherishes.

Ultimately, T connected herself to the centre in Peel when she was 21 because she felt it was something in her blood: her identity. Her mission is to be able to connect more with youth and to impart that connection to the land and their language. By investing resources in teaching youth, the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report will be carried across generations and have a meaningful impact. It's planting the seed and watching it.

**“ I'm a seed and I've just sprouted, so I'm not even fully there. But Halton needs something: a space.**

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# Endnotes

1. Nicole Latulippe, “Bridging Parallel Rows: Epistemic Difference and Relational Accountability in Cross-Cultural Research” (2015). *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 6(2) at p. 8. < <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol6/iss2/77> > .
2. Canada Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Vol. 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back*. (1996) pp. 162-164.
3. Latulippe, *supra* note 1.
4. S. Gaetz et al., *Canadian Definition of Homelessness* (Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2012) at 1. < <https://bit.ly/2pQyyI2> > .
5. Jesse Thistle, *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2017), at 6. < <http://bit.ly/2COezTy> > .
6. *Ibid* at 13.
7. Debbie Martin, “Two-Eyed Seeing: A Framework for Understanding Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Approaches to Indigenous Health Research” (2012). *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research* 201, vol. 44 no. 2 at p. 31.
8. Community-based research has been identified as the best solution to overcome challenges inherent in studying urban Indigenous homelessness. See Wilfreda Thurston, Nellie Oelke & David Turner, “Methodological challenges in studying urban Aboriginal homelessness” (2013). *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* 7(2) 250-259 at p. 251.
9. Michele Leering, “Enhancing the Legal Profession’s Capacity for Innovation: The Promise of Reflective Practice and Action Research for Increasing Access to Justice” (2017). *Windsor Year Book of Access to Justice* 34 at p. 194.
10. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report chapter “A denial of justice” and the response of Indigenous peoples to verdicts in the prosecutions involving the deaths of Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine give a clear sense of how the justice system has failed Indigenous peoples. *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol. 5 (2015) pp. 185-276. An example of the response: Lu Roberts & Rachel Lake, “Canada’s justice system is not for Indigenous Peoples: Reasonable Doubt”. *NOW Magazine* (12 March 2018), < <https://nowtoronto.com/news/canada-justice-system-is-not-for-indigenous-people-reasonable-doubt/> > .
11. Halton Community Legal Services, “Home Is Where the Community Is: An Environmental Scan and Literature Review on Indigenous Homelessness in Halton” (2018) at p. 13. < <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/home-where-community-environmental-scan-and-literature-review-indigenous-homelessness> > .
12. For a description of the challenges in hiring and retaining qualified staff, see the Canadian Human Rights Commission’s Feb. 1, 2018 decision in the Caring Society case. *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFC) et al. v Attorney General of Canada* (for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)) 2018 CHRT 4 at pp 30-31.
13. For a description of the projects with the Indigenous community, see HCLS, *supra* note 10.
14. Used in the *Our Health Counts Toronto Study*, respondent-driven sampling was defined as “a chain-referral technique that is recognized internationally by scientists as a cutting edge method of gathering reliable information from hard-to-reach populations.” M. Firestone et al, “Our Health Counts Toronto – Project Overview & Methods” (2018). Strong social networks and Indigenous community staff within Indigenous-led organizations were identified as key factors for the success of this research. J. Smylie, “Our Health Counts Toronto, Interim Analysis” (2016).
15. Ab Currie (2015), *Extending the Reach of Legal Aid: Report on the Pilot Phase of the Legal Health Check-up Project*, Canadian Forum on Civil Justice, < <https://www.legalhealthcheckup.ca/bundles/legalcheck/pdf/legal-health-check-up-pilot-evaluation.pdf> > .
16. HCLS, *supra* note 10 at p. 14.
17. Initial analysis of data from the non-Indigenous service providers’ focus group held Feb. 28, 2018.
18. Terms participants used to self-identify included: Aboriginal, First Nations, Cree, Métis, Painted Feather Woodland Métis, Aboriginal, “apple”, Indian, Native, Indigenous, Antoine Algonquin First Nation, Six Nations and Cayuga Nation.
19. Flexible approaches was a way to make the participants co-designers of the process. It was important and consistent with the project’s statement of principles that the Indigenous community involved in the project could determine the direction and approaches they preferred. For a review of Indigenous research methods, see Alexandra Dawson, Elaine Toombs & Christopher Mushquash, “Indigenous Research Methods: A Systemic Review” (2017). *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 8 (2). < <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol8/iss2/5> > .

20. Lynn Lavallée, “Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework and two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection” (2009). *International Institute for Qualitative Methodology* 8 (1) at p. 35.
21. Sage is one of the four sacred medicines; the others are tobacco, cedar and sweetgrass. Native Women’s Centre (Hamilton, Ont.) “Traditional Teachings Handbook” at pp. 5-6.
22. “The smudging ceremony is a common purification rite performed in Ontario that involves burning one or more sacred medicines, such as sweetgrass, sage, cedar and tobacco. There are many variations on how a smudge is done.” Ontario Human Rights Commission, “Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed. 11 Indigenous Spiritual Practices” (Toronto: OHRC, 2015). < <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed/11-indigenous-spiritual-practices> > .
23. Thistle, *supra* note 4 at p. 10.
24. Lavallée, *supra* note 19 at p. 29.
25. Gaetz et al., *supra* note 3 at p. 1.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. Thistle, *supra* note 4 at p. 11.
31. *Ibid* at p. 10.
32. *Ibid* at p. 11.
33. *Ibid* at p. 12.
34. *Ibid* at p. 11.
35. Lavallée, *supra* note 19 at p. 34.
36. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg, 2015) at p. 24. < <http://bit.ly/1ivfedJ> > .
37. Ferzana Chaze, Bethany Osbourne & Thomas Howe, “Halton Region Youth In/At Risk Research Report” (2017). *Publications and Scholarship*, Sheridan College Faculty of Applied Health & Community Studies, at p. 50. < [https://source.sheridancollege.ca/fahcs\\_publications/1](https://source.sheridancollege.ca/fahcs_publications/1) > .
38. Currie, *supra* note 14 at p. 25.

