

**Service Needs and Perspectives of Hidden Homeless
First Nations People in Prince Albert**

Evelyn Peters
Department of Geography
University of Saskatchewan

Vince Robillard
Director of Operations
Prince Albert Grand Council

August 2007

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1.0 Executive Summary and Recommendations

This report is based on a collaborative research project between the Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services Inc. and the University of Saskatchewan, and was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the National Housing Secretariat. Hidden homelessness was defined as individuals who would be absolutely homeless (on the streets or in shelters) if it were not for the assistance of friends or relatives. Because the available literature suggested that gender, age and family status affect the experience of homelessness, the study attempted to interview individuals from each of five groups: male youth age 15 -19 years; female youth age 15-19 years; adult males age 20 years and over living without their dependent children; adult females age 20 years and over living without their dependent children; and individuals living with their dependent children. The initial set of interviews took place between June 13, 2005 and September 16, 2005. In total, 143 people participated.

Even though all of the participants shared the characteristic of hidden homelessness, they had diverse characteristics and needs.

Recommendation: *First Nations hidden homeless people are a diverse group, and initiatives that meet the needs of some may not meet the needs of others. A variety of strategies will be needed for different sub-groups of hidden homeless individuals.*

The majority of participants had low levels of employment, education and income.

Recommendation: *The low level of education and employment, particularly for adult males and females, suggests that much of this population will not be able to find stable housing on their own. Housing initiatives would need to be accompanied by interventions that address employability or social assistance. High mobility rates obviate the need for shelter for this population.*

There were very high levels of addictions, trauma (residential school experience, foster home, experiences of correctional facilities, etc.) as well as physical and sexual abuse in this population.

Recommendation: *The high incidence of chronic conditions, addictions, trauma and abuse in the hidden homeless population suggests that simply providing housing will not be enough to meet their needs. A variety of services also need to be provided.*

The majority of participants indicated that First Nations cultures, spirituality and access to elders were important to them. Access to elders was mentioned most often.

Recommendation: *First Nations cultures were important to the majority of hidden homeless participants, with access to elders particularly emphasized. Services to hidden homeless First Nations people need to address this aspect, and not just focus on housing and other social and economic services.*

Many participants indicated that they did not have someone to rely on in an emergency, or when they needed to talk.

Recommendation: *The absence of dependable social networks among many participants underlines the need for social services support for this population.*

Service use generally seemed low, given the high needs of this population. Service for meeting emotional needs, cultural and spiritual needs and for finding housing seemed particularly low. This survey did not explore in any detailed way why individuals did not use services. However the unsuitability of available services, attitudes of service providers, and participants' lack of information were mentioned by some participants. This is an issue that requires further study.

Recommendation: *Explore with key hidden homeless people what some of the barriers to the use of services are. An important part of this would be exploring the effect of having Aboriginal service providers.*

Most of the counseling services used by participants were not delivered by First Nations or Métis organizations.

Recommendation: *The high level of addictions for this population, and participant's statements that First Nations cultures and elders were important suggest that First Nations participation in counseling/addictions services should be increased.*

A number of participants identified particular services that would address their situation. These are listed below in order of the number of participants who mentioned the particular service.

Recommendation: *Explore the possibility of providing housing programs for youth and students (15 participants).*

Recommendation: *Explore the provision of housing services for single adults not living with their children (12 participants).*

Recommendation: *Create and advertise at the street level, a centralized source of information for homeless people (10 participants).*

Recommendation: *Explore the possibility of creating a drop in shelter that is open more hours of the day (6 participants).*

2.0 Introduction

This report is based on a collaborative research project between the Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services Inc. and the University of Saskatchewan.¹ The project is unique in that it involves a First Nations organization working with university researchers to explore urban First Nations issues. The larger project is a longitudinal study with three rounds of interviews that attempts to explore factors associated with change or lack of change in individual's housing situation over time. This report examines service usage among participants interviewed in the first round, with a view to describing what participants themselves had to say about the services they used and had access to.

The project was undertaken in response to a call for research on hidden homeless populations by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the National Housing Secretariat. Hidden homelessness was defined as individuals who would be absolutely homeless (on the streets or in shelters) if it were not for the assistance of friends or relatives. The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services and other organizations about the characteristics of participants and their perspectives their service use and access to services. This report also provides the participants' perspectives on the services from which they have been turned away. The resulting information may help inform the Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services and other organizations about gaps in service needs of hidden homeless First Nations people in the city.

¹ PAGC Urban has been involved in a variety of initiatives to address First Nations homelessness in Prince Albert (City of Prince Albert 2001, 2004; PAGC 2000, SIIT 2000).

3.0 Method

According to the census, the 2001 population of Prince Albert was 34,291, with an Aboriginal identity population of 10,185. A large proportion of the Aboriginal population is First Nations, represented by the Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC). City planners and representatives of First Nations organizations suggest that the First Nations population in Prince Albert may be higher than that reported by the census because of the difficulty in documenting a mobile population many of whom live with other households.

The data in this study come from the first round of interviews from a collaborative project between Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services Inc. (PAGC Urban) and the Geography Department at the University of Saskatchewan. Because the available literature suggested that gender, age and family status affect the experience of homelessness, the study attempted to interview 25 individuals from each of five groups, male youth age 15 -19 years, female youth age 15-19 years, adult males age 20 years and over, living without their dependent children, adult females age 20 years and over, living without their dependent children, and individuals living with their dependent children.

The purpose of the study was not to obtain a representative sample of hidden homeless populations, but to gain some understanding of the situation of these five groups. The initial set of interviews took place between June 13, 2005 and September 16, 2005. In total, 143 people participated. Participants for this study were reached through various avenues. The assistance of a variety of organizations in Prince Albert was critical to reach the hidden homeless because they had contact with clients who were living with others and the ability to refer them to the study. Organizations also had rapport with and trust of potential

participants which researchers could draw on to build the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Over the summer, a total of 57 (39.9%) participants came to us as a result of posters and pamphlets at organizations or referrals from organization staff. Information and interviewing sessions at organizations generated another 22 (15.4%) participants. There were also attempts to reach people who did not use organizations. Interviewers used direct recruiting on days when there were few interviews scheduled, or when scheduled interviews fell through. The geographical scope of this recruiting was limited to downtown. Direct recruiting generated 27 (18.9%) participants. Nine participants (6.3%) were referred by a friend or family member to the study. Interviewers also drove to areas outside the downtown to put up posters at apartment complexes, laundromats, corner stores, grocery stores, daycares, colleges, hospitals, health clinics and street posts, in order to recruit city-wide. Overall, 28 (19.6%) respondents were reached with posters outside of the downtown.

While there was an attempt to contact a spectrum of hidden homeless situations, it is likely that the project was biased to individuals with more precarious socio-economic characteristics. Posters and recruitment materials used a variety of terms including “couch surfing” and “can’t afford your own place”, but it is likely that individuals going to school or working and rooming with friends or relatives to be able to afford rent, would be less likely to participate in the study.

Participants were screened with an initial question that asked whether they identified themselves as First Nations and to ensure that their housing situation would be classified as “hidden homeless”. The majority of participants met the interviewer at the downtown offices of PAGC Urban. Interviews were carried out at various locations including restaurants, PAGC Urban rooms, or quiet areas in various organizations. Pre-interview

conversation was important and often was quite lengthy. Participants often had questions or would start to talk about what was going on in their life. The first step of the interview involved explaining and signing a consent form and collecting information so that participants could be contacted for the subsequent interview. Most interviews were taped and interview time varied from 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours. Interviews combined qualitative questions with scales. Participants received a cash honorarium for the time they spent on the project. They also received a contact card and a list of resources. In many cases the interviewer would point out specific organizations most useful to the participant. In addition, some participants were referred to the front desk to apply for PAGC programs such as ABE10, jobs and transitional housing applications.

There are several questions that provide the materials for this report. At the beginning of each of the interviews each participant was asked:

Before we start any questions I want to give you the chance to tell us your ideas about your housing situation and what could help people who are in a similar situation. Your ideas can help us understand hidden homelessness. Is there one thing you want to tell us about your condition or your living condition or housing situation?

The final question of the interview was:

At the beginning of the questionnaire, we gave you the opportunity to tell us your ideas about your housing situation and what might help people who are in a similar situation. Now that we have finished the questionnaire, is there anything else you would like to mention?

This question provided the respondents with an opportunity to reflect on what they had talked about during the interview process and to provide further responses if they chose.

There was also a question that specifically asked participants which services they had used in the last six months, and which ones they knew about. Participants were asked about services to help them find work; medical services; counseling services, or services to help

them feel better, emotionally; services to help them with spiritual or cultural needs; education services for themselves; services to help them find a place to live; services to help them find money, food for clothing; transportation services; legal services. The final question on service use asked if the respondent had been turned away from services or organizations. If they had been turned away, the interviewers asked which ones, and probed about the circumstances if it seemed appropriate.

4.0 Characteristics of Participants

In the following section we situate the hidden homeless population by emphasizing its diversity, the importance of recognizing that this population is only part of the larger urban First Nations population, and by noting that while statistics demonstrate high need levels in this population, it is also important to recognize these individuals as people who are trying to cope with often very difficult situations. The next section describes some aspects of social and economic characteristics. This is followed by a summary of data about health, addictions and trauma. Finally, the report summarizes information about ties to culture and social networks.

4.1 Diversity

Even though this research only worked with hidden homeless populations, it is important to remember the diversity within this group. For example, some individuals who relied on friends and family were very close to being absolutely homeless, as described in the following section of an interview.

Female Youth: *I just stay at different houses or sometimes like I don't sleep at all. Like last night.*

Interviewer: *Yah. What happened last night?*

Female Youth: *Me and my brothers just all walked around*

Interviewer: *You don't stay at your parents' place at all or no?*

Female Youth: *(non verbal negative response)*

Interviewer: *Why not?*

Female Youth: *I don't get along with my step-mom and my mom is mean. She calls me a slut and everyone calls me that and I just say okay.*

Interviewer: *Do you go to school?*

Female Youth: *No.*

Interviewer: *You don't go to school at all?*

Female Youth: *No.*

Interviewer: *No. So where are you living right now; at the present?*

Female Youth: *Nowhere.*

Interviewer: *Do you find yourself sometimes living on a couch or at any friend's place?*

Female Youth: *All the time.*

Interviewer: *For how long you've been on a couch?*

Female Youth: *A couple of months now.*

Interviewer: *A couple of months?*

Female Youth: *Yah.*

Other participants were staying with family until they saved up enough money for a place of their own.

Interviewer: *Are there any reason you live here instead of having your own place?*

Adult Female: *Because I am trying to get full time employment. The reason why I don't have a place is because I moved. I did have my own place a year ago. Like I've always had my own place, you know, but then when I move and I come back it's always hard to get set up again.*

Interviewer: *Okay.*

Adult Female: *You know, like I decided to go. Like I moved to North Battleford for a job and I didn't have a place there but I stayed with a friend's lady so I stayed there for a bit. The job didn't work out. It wasn't the big job that I went there for. I moved to Regina to stay with my cousin to try to find work over there. That didn't work 'cause there was no work. I couldn't find anything that I was able to do. To get my own place yet you know.*

Interviewer: *So right now you're not, you're working part time and you're not really making enough money?*

Participant: *Yah, like I have three jobs. There's not enough, there's no. It's not stable like it's up and down. You know it's a certain amount this time a certain amount this time. I can't guarantee my hours. There's no stability.*

Recommendation: *First Nations hidden homeless people are a diverse group, and initiatives that meet the needs of some may not meet the needs of others. A variety of strategies will be needed for different sub-groups of hidden homeless individuals.*

Before we discuss the characteristics of the population interviewed for this study, it is also important to situate them within the larger urban First Nations population. In the context

of public perceptions that all urban First Nations people are poor and socio-economically marginalized, it is essential to emphasize that urban First Nations residents are increasingly represented in the employed, well educated middle class (Wotherspoon 2003). The population interviewed for this project is not representative of all urban First Nations people. Participant characteristics are presented to provide a context for the analysis that follows.

Finally, it is inappropriate to view the participants of this study only through the lenses of need. Their housing histories and the strategies they used to provide shelter and the means of subsistence for themselves demonstrate characteristics of resilience and innovation. Many contributed to the households where they were staying by buying groceries, childcare, or doing housework. Many were taking steps to change their circumstances. The following quotations highlight some of these initiatives.

Female Youth: *My life. I'd like to, change it around, and don't be where I am. Don't live the way I live. To be finished school, to be finished school, and to be a mom. To be myself. It's the way I used to be. I used to be a real honest, trustable person. I'm not even that anymore....Because of the way I'm living. Because of where I live.*

Adult Female: *I'm just determined to succeed. Yah, 'cause I've lost everything. My marriage, my kids, I won't get custody of my kids back and I'm still out here. I'm still trying, like I'm not giving up. I'm still remaining positive that things will eventually fall into place and. You know, and I know I can have a future. I want a future but it's gonna be a lot of work on my part to make sure I have that.... I'd like to finish my 12 and take the course through SIAST, and then work in Prince Albert here at one of jails. (Adult Female)*

Adult Female: *I feel like I'm crawling out of it, you know, because I was [absolutely] homeless at one time and I'm crawling out of it and I also did have a habit but I kicked it. That's why I'm, I am to the point where I'm, I'm crawling out of it because I finally got a home, you know....I'm getting, I'm looking for, you know, a school or something that I can do that'll keep me busy, you know, during the day and then I can go home, you know, and know that I have a home to go to, you know, and I feel safe about it, you know, and basically trying to get better for my children as well so that they have a healthy mom, you know. (Adult Female)*

Adult Male: *Ya, I know I could get a home, it's just have ta get into treatment, and that's it, I'm just waiting to get into treatment.*

Male Youth: *I'm working on [changing my life] as we speak, you know. I try to go to sweats twice a week and from the way my lifestyle then it's totally different now and that's all through the help of sweat lodges...[I'd like to change] the way I live... like having a place of my own would be the best thing, I guess, for me right now. Like to call a place my own where I don't have to worry about anybody telling me "Well you gotta get out. You gotta move on" you know. I'm tired of living like that. I really am. I wanna be like self-supporting myself. I'd like to have a good job, you know.*

Head of Family: *I'm feeling like I just changed lots man. Everybody says that around me too. You're a different person. [Before] all I thought in my head was alcohol party and, you know, and drugs all this, you know when. Sex, drugs and rock and roll but now it's different eh. I'm getting older. Getting wiser. More intelligent. I just need to straighten out basically, yah. What changed was just program, courses, you know. Friends. Family. My attitude changed. My character, you know, everything when I, you know. I found out I had been like ... the intelligence I had back then was good in a way but it was negative at the same time. The way I was using it, kind of thing, but now I'm using it in the right way, you know. I'm doing things better, to better myself and I'm doing way better than I used to do*

4.2 Socio-economic characteristics

Table 1 summarizes some of the socio-economic characteristics of participants. Families and youth were more likely to live with other families, and therefore the average household size was slightly larger. Adult males were most likely to be living with other unrelated individuals. Almost all of the units were rented by someone else living in the household. The average age is relatively young, with only two individuals over 50 years old. Almost all of the adults had children, although not all of them had children living with them. Except for the youth, many of whom received little income except what they received from family or informally, most participant's main source of income came from various kinds of social assistance sources including Saskatchewan social assistance, child benefits or employment supplements, federal child benefits, unemployment insurance, or training allowance, or social assistance individuals received from their reserves. Average monthly family income was highest because many of these participants were eligible for social assistance for themselves and their children. Adult females had especially low incomes.

Table 1: Participant Housing and Socio-economic Characteristics

	Head of Family (n=27)	Adult Male (n=35)	Adult Female (n=32)	Male Youth (n=25)	Female (n=24)
Housing					
Average number in household	6.2	3.6	4.6	5.0	5.6
Housing unit rented (%)	87.5	92.9	84.4	88.0	87.5
Socio-economic characteristics					
Average age	27.8	32.3	32.3	17.6	18.1
Age range	19-52	23-58	22-63	15-19	16-19
Average number of children	2.6	2.9	2.6	0.04	0.3
Main income from social assistance (%)	68.2	77.3	86.4	45.5	25.0
Average monthly income (\$)	687.00	596.00	417.00	260.00	326.00
Employed (%)	18.5	5.7	15.6	16.0	16.7
Have less than high school certificate (%)	70.4	88.6	62.5	92.0	95.8
Do not normally get enough to eat (%)	18.5	77.4	37.4	33.3	38.8
Moved in the last month (%)	51.9	96.0	96.9	96.0	62.5

Employment and education rates were low, with very low rates for adult males. Many of the youth were attending school at the time of the survey, so their completion rates will probably be higher in a few years. About one third of the participants did not get enough to eat on a normal day, with three quarter of adult men who did not normally get enough to eat. Low levels of employment and income help to explain why this population is unable to afford their own housing units. Almost all participants had moved in the month before the interview. The mobility rate is probably over-estimated for male and female youth because some of the interviews took place in September just after school had started, and some of these youth had just moved into town to attend high school. The high mobility rates in the rest of the population are create particular challenges in delivering services, and emphasize the need for shelter to enable individuals to meet their social, economic and health needs.

Recommendation: *The low level of education and employment, particularly for adult males and females, suggests that much of this population will not be able to find stable housing on their own. Housing initiatives would need to be accompanied by interventions that address employability or social assistance. High mobility rates obviate the need for shelter for this population.*²

² LaPrairie (1994) makes a similar point about Aboriginal people in inner city areas.

4.3 Health, Addictions and Trauma

Slightly more than one third of the participants rated their health as good or excellent (Table 2). In comparison, almost two thirds of non-Aboriginal people living in cities in Canada rated their health as good or excellent. The difference between these populations is probably greater because the average age of the participants is quite a bit lower than the average age of the non-Aboriginal population, and health problems, on average, increase with age. Moreover, it is likely that participants under reported some conditions, and other may have not been diagnosed.

Table 2: Incidence of Chronic Conditions (%)

	Family (n=27)	Adult Male (n=35)	Adult Female (n=32)	Male Youth (n=25)	Female Youth (n=24)	Total (n=143)	Non- Aboriginal ³
Health is excellent or good	57.7	34.3	40.6	41.0	16.7	38.7	61.5
Asthma, Chronic Bronchitis, Emphysema	19.2	14.7	31.3	12.5	29.2	21.1	
Arthritis, Rheumatism	11.5	26.5	21.9	0.0	16.7	21.1	
Back Problems (excluding Arthritis)	26.9	38.2	34.4	4.2	12.5	24.6	
High Blood Pressure	0	11.8	9.4	4.2	8.3	7.0	
Migraine Headaches	19.2	38.2	15.6	12.5	16.7	21.1	
Skin Infections	3.8	5.9	9.4	8.3	8.3	7.0	
Diabetes	7.7	8.8	3.1	0.0	8.3	5.6	
Epilepsy	19.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	
Heart Disease	0	5.9	0.0	4.2	4.2	2.8	
Cancer	0	2.9	3.1	0.0	4.2	2.1	
Stomach or Intestinal Ulcers	7.7	11.8	15.6	0.0	4.2	8.5	
Pneumonia	3.8	2.9	6.3	0.0	4.2	4.2	
HIV	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	
AIDS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Hepatitis	19.2	23.5	31.3	0.0	12.5	18.3	
Liver Failure	7.7	5.9	9.4	0.0	0.0	3.5	
Tuberculosis	0	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	2.8	
Bi-Polar Disorder	0	0.0	0.0	4.2	0.0	0.7	
Schizophrenia	19.2	2.9	0.0	4.2	0.0	1.4	
Depression	7.7	20.6	37.5	0.0	16.7	19.7	7.4
No Chronic Conditions	26.9	25.7	18.7	60.0	54.2	35.0	50.6
Three or more Chronic Conditions	26.9	37.1	18.7	0.0	4.2	19.0	

³ Tjepkema (2002)

Participants show chronic conditions associated with homeless people in other studies – conditions associated with poverty, addictions and violence - such as high rates of respiratory illnesses, arthritis, and musculoskeletal disorders, hepatitis and liver failure probably related to addictions, and high rates of depression. Adult men and women including those living with dependent children were particularly likely to have chronic conditions.

A little less than one third of participants indicated that they felt they had a drinking problem or that someone else felt that they had a drinking problem (Table 3). Heads of families were the most likely to say this. Almost one third also said that they or someone else thought they had a drug problem, either using street drugs or misusing prescription drugs. Adult men reported the highest rate of drug problems. None of the participants used solvents. Over half indicated that some traumatic past events contributed to their current housing situation. The rate was highest for adult men. Almost three quarters of the participants indicated that they had been physically or sexually abused, with the rate for adult females at

Table 3: Participant Health, Addictions and Trauma Characteristics

	Head of Family (n=27)	Adult Male (n=35)	Adult Female (n=32)	Male Youth (n=25)	Female Youth (n=24)	Total (n=143)
Participant or someone else thinks participant has a drinking problem (%)	40.7	28.6	34.4	32.0	29.2	32.9
Participant or someone else thinks participant has a drug problem (%)	29.6	51.4	25.0	20.0	29.2	32.2
Traumatic experiences contributed to current housing situation (%) ⁴	51.9	67.6	59.4	40.0	79.3	59.9
Have been physically or sexually abused (%)	74.1	71.4	72.0	80.0	54.2	70.8

80 percent. These addictions rates are similar to those found among other homeless populations. The rates of abuse are similar to those found in other studies for homeless women, but they are higher for men in this study than other studies have found. These

⁴ Traumatic experiences included events such as living in a foster home, attending residential school, spending time in a correctional centre, and other traumatic events that respondents did not volunteer information about.

characteristics suggest that this population requires a variety of services in addition to housing.

Recommendation: *The high incidence of chronic conditions, addictions, trauma and abuse in the hidden homeless population suggests that simply providing housing will not be enough to meet their needs. A variety of services also need to be provided.*

4.4 Culture and Social Networks

The survey also asked participants about the importance of access to traditional cultural activities (Table 4). Traditional cultural activities were very or somewhat important to over

Table 4: Participant Culture and Social Networks

	Head of Family (n=27)	Adult Male (n=35)	Adult Female (n=32)	Male Youth (n=25)	Female Youth (n=24)	Total (n=143)
Culture						
Participants who indicated that traditional culture was very or somewhat important	70.3	82.4	61.3	72.0	91.5	75.2
Participants who indicated that First Nations spirituality was very or somewhat important	66.7	82.4	61.3	76.0	91.7	78.7
Participants who indicated that contact with elders was very or somewhat important	85.6	88.6	78.1	100.0	95.8	89.4
Social Networks						
Participants who always have someone to count on when they need help	59.3	58.8	43.4	68.0	66.7	58.7
Participants who have someone who listens when they talk most of the time	59.3	61.8	59.4	72.0	66.7	63.6

half of the participants, with female youth most likely to indicate they were important, followed by adult males. Patterns were similar for First Nations spirituality. Almost all of the participants indicated that contact with elders was very or somewhat important to them. This suggests that elders have an important role to play in meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of hidden homeless participants.

Recommendation: *First Nations cultures were important to the majority of hidden homeless participants, with access to elders particularly emphasized. Services to hidden homeless First Nations people need to address this aspect, and not just focus on housing and other social and economic services.*

Except for adult females, over half of participants felt that there was always someone they could count on when they needed help. For adult females, only slightly over half said they always had someone they could count on. Another perspective, though, is that between 32-57 percent of participants do not always have someone who can help when they need it. This emphasizes the important role that various service organizations need to play in hidden homeless individual's lives. Even though they depend on friends and family for shelter, they do not feel that they have individuals who can give them help if they need it. A slightly higher proportion of individuals felt that they always had someone to talk to when they needed to talk, but still there were a substantial proportion of people who did not.

Recommendation: *The absence of dependable social networks among many participants underlines the need for social services support for this population.*

5.0 Use and Knowledge of Services

Table 5 describes the general features of service use within the last six months, for survey participants. Except for educational services, male and female youth generally had the lowest service use. This may be because many are staying with relatives, and some of their basic needs may be met this way.

Table 5: Proportion of Participants Who Used Services for Different Needs in the Last Six Months

	Family	Adult Male	Adult Female	Male Youth	Female Youth	Total Average
To help find work	42.3	74.2	53.6	25.0	32.0	45.4
Medical services	61.5	41.9	64.3	33.3	44.0	49.0
To help emotionally	34.6	35.5	42.9	33.3	32.0	35.7
To help with spiritual or cultural needs	26.9	48.4	35.7	41.7	40.0	38.5
Educational services for yourself	53.8	45.2	50.0	79.2	56.0	56.8
To help find a place to live	30.8	29.0	50.0	29.2	16.0	31.0
To help find food, money or clothes	42.3	77.4	60.7	45.8	32.0	51.6
Legal Services	26.9	22.6	21.4	20.8	24.0	23.1
Proportion of Services First Nations or Metis	34.1	38.3	31.8	30.9	37.3	34.5

Adult males were most likely to use services to find work, followed by adult females. Lower rates for youth probably reflect the fact that many are in school, and many heads of families are eligible for social assistance and occupied taking care of their families. Nevertheless, the very low employment rates among adult hidden homeless suggests that service use should be higher – possibly participants recognize that their chances of obtaining employment through the uses of employment services are low.

About half of the participants used medical services in the past six months, with lowest rates of use among males, both adult and youth. Although it is difficult to make comparisons, this appears to be lower than the rate for urban non-Aboriginal people (Tjepkema 2002). With the high rate of chronic conditions this rate therefore seems low. Only about one third of participants used services to help them feel better emotionally. In the context of high levels of addictions, past trauma and abuse, this rate also seems low. Unfortunately the interview did not ask specifically about addictions services.

Despite the fact that many participants indicated that culture and contact with elders was important to them, two thirds had not used cultural or spiritual services, including contact with elders, sweats or other cultural practices in the last six months. It is not possible to find out, from the questionnaire results, whether this was because participants did not know where to access these services, or whether this reflected a choice not to use these services. However, some participants felt that this contact was important for changing their situations.

Adult Male: *I am involved with an Elder...who has been taking me to sweats. He helps me with my problems, you know. It just takes my mind away from all that, you know. I can go to a sweat lodge and sit down and pray and think about my situations and, I don't know, how to go about dealing with them a bit more positive way I guess, you know. Change the lifestyle I guess. That's the only thing that I know that's working for me today is, you know, not to use drugs and alcohol and go to sweats. Try to change your life around, you know.*

Interviewer: Do you find it's hard to keep straight and narrow given your situation. Giving just what's going on right now in your life?

Adult Male: Oh, my life it's having it's up and downs and, you know, like even that is kind of stressful. That's the reason why I'm going to these sweats. It's just, you know, I go there and I pray and I ask for help and I ask that the Creator to protect me from all this negative, you know, things people say about me or, you know, whatever it may be man. You know, like I always ask that he protects me from that so that I can keep going, like, to keep going with my head up instead of letting people get to me where I wanna give up, you know. Wanna drink, you know. It always leads to that when things are not working right for somebody eh. They don't have that belief of a higher power eh. They always tend to go back to drinking and doing drugs.

Interviewer: Yah

Adult Male: But, and not only that, it's whatever they're into I guess. Like say if they're street people or they're on drugs or if they're people who use needles, you know, that's kind of hard for them too and not only them, me, like 'cause I prefer not to do any of that stuff. You know, I've never been one known to be a needle user or anything like that but, you know, they're having it rough out there. But me, I don't do that any more. I work on myself first and get myself stable eh.

Educational services were used by the largest proportion of participants. This use was highest among youth, but adult men and women and heads of families also used education services.

This seems to reflect a conviction by many participants that education was a way out of their situation.

Interviewer: Like from your perspective, what do you think would help kids your age get their own places or get onto their own feet?

Female Youth: Stay in school.

Male Youth: Okay. Need their education today. Make something of their lives I guess.

Despite their current housing situation, only one third of participants had used services to help them find a place to live. Participant comments (see below) suggest that this is either because such services do not seem to exist in Prince Albert, or that individuals do not know about them. The services that participants mentioned in this category were places that provided various kinds of social housing. Services to help find food, money or clothes

were listed next most frequently to educational services. Adult males and females were most likely to use these services. Legal services were mentioned least frequently by participants.

Given the very high needs of the hidden homeless population, it could be expected that service use would be higher. It would be useful to explore in more depth with some homeless participants what the barriers to service use are. Some respondent comments detailed in section 6 below suggest that services may not meet the particular needs of hidden homeless people (for example the requirement of an address before social assistance can be provided), that hidden homeless people experience attitudes by service provider that discourage them from using services except when they have to. Participant perceptions of their needs (see section 7) suggest that many do not know what services are available.

Recommendation: *Explore with key hidden homeless people what some of the barriers to the use of services are. An important part of this would be exploring the effect of having Aboriginal service providers.*

The last line of Table 5 indicates that about one third of the services accessed by participants, that were delivered by First Nations or Métis organizations. There is very little literature available to put this into perspective, but the a recent study in Winnipeg study on Aboriginal mobility noted that “one of the most important findings was that, of the services being accessed, it was estimated that nearly 20% were delivered by Aboriginal agencies. This finding confirms the importance of Aboriginal services and also points to the diverse set of services being delivered” (Distasio, 2004, 68). Other researchers have documented the need for culturally appropriate service provision for Aboriginal people (Golden, 1999; SIIT, 2000; Beavis, 1997; Carter, 2004). The results of this study suggest that these First Nations and Métis services providers may be providing a greater proportion of services to the Aboriginal population in Prince Albert, than in other cities.

Table 6 lists the proportion of each group and of all of the participants who had used particular services in the last six months, or knew about them. Jobs First at CANSASK and HRDC had the highest number of responses, and they were most often mentioned by adult males, followed by adult females. Many of the services participants accessed or knew about for counseling were related to addictions. The highest use/knowledge was for PACADA (Prince Albert Counseling and Drug Addictions) and Catholic Family Services.

Recommendation: The high level of addictions for this population, and participant's statements that First Nations cultures and elders were important suggest that First Nations participation in counseling/addictions services should be increased.

In contrast to the services participants used/were familiar with in the counseling area, most of the educational services were delivered by organizations and programs affiliated with First Nations and Métis organizations. Similarly, while some participants used churches, more mentioned elders, sweats and First Nations celebrations (e.g. Pow wow) in the cultural/spiritual category. Again, this emphasizes the importance of culturally appropriate service delivery.

The only housing service used or mentioned were social housing providers or social services that provide financial support so that youth can be more independent with respect to housing. It is not clear from questionnaire responses whether this is because there are no services that help individuals find or stay in housing, or whether participants are not familiar with places where they can ask for this assistance. A majority of adult and heads of families used or knew about the Food Bank. Many also knew about legal aid, although relatively few participants used this service. In the category of "other services" the Friendship Centre was mentioned most often, followed by the PAGC, then Social Services, and the YAC (Youth Activity Centre).

Table 6: Organizations Participants Used in the Last Six Months or Knew About

	Head of Family (n=27) %	Adult Males (n=35) %	Adult Females (n=32) %	Male Youth (n=25) %	Female Youth (n=24)	Total (n=143)
Employment						
Gov't Employment Services	53.8	83.9	60.7	50.0	20.0	55.2
Medical						
Doctor, Clinic, Hospital	61.5	41.9	64.3	33.3	44.0	49.0
Counselling						
PACADA	15.4	19.4	28.6	4.2	4.0	14.9
Deer Creek	0	6.5	7.1	0	4.0	3.7
Sask Mental Health	0	0	10.7	0	0	2.2
Victoria Hospital Healing Circle	15.4	16.1	3.6	4.2	4.0	9.0
Catholic Family Services	19.2	6.5	7.1	12.5	16.0	11.9
MACSI	3.8	3.2	0	0	0	1.5
ISKWEW	3.8	0	10.7	0	4.0	3.7
Education						
SIAST	46.2	38.7	64.3	25	16.0	38.8
SIIT	11.5	12.9	7.1	0	0	6.7
FNUC	15.4	9.7	10.7	4.2	0	8.2
Gabriel Dumont	7.7	6.5	0	0	4.0	3.7
Wonska	7.7	6.5	3.6	16.7	32.0	12.7
Westmore	0	0	0	16.7	20.0	6.7
Academy of Learning	3.8	0	3.6	4.2	4.0	3.0
Cultural/Spiritual						
Churches	11.5	12.9	7.1	4.2	0	7.5
Elder, sweats, pow wow etc	19.2	32.3	7.1	29.2	28.0	23.1
Housing						
Northern Spruce	0	12.9	10.7	4.2	0	6.0
Men's Shelter	3.8	6.5	0	4.2	0	3.0
PA Housing Authority	23.1	6.5	21.4	4.2	4.0	11.9
16-17 program	3.8	0	0	8.3	8.0	3.7
Money, food, clothing						
Food Bank (includes Share-A-Meal)	57.7	63.5	82.1	31.7	40.0	56.0
Salvation Army	3.8	29	17.9	4.2	0	11.9
2nd Harvest	3.8	16.2	10.7	0	8.0	8.2
Legal Aid	42.3	38.7	35.7	25	24.0	33.6
Other						
Native Co-ordinating Council	0	0	17.9	0	0	3.7
YAC	0	9.7	14.2	12.5	36.0	14.2
Social Services	19.2	29	46.4	12.5	16.0	25.4
YWCA	0	3.2	32.1	0	12.0	9.7
Friendship Centre	30.8	51.6	53.6	20.8	56.0	43.3
PAGC	50	29	28.6	25	16.0	29.9
Mobile Crisis	3.8	3.2	10.7	4.2	4.0	4.2

6.0 Services or organizations that have turned participants away

Of the 117 individuals who answered the question “Have you ever been turned away by service providers or organizations?” 37 indicated that they had. In some cases participants did not offer a reason for being turned away, and in some cases it is difficult to understand the answer (Table 7). Interviewers did not probe in situations where participants seemed unwilling to elaborate.

Table 7: Services or Organizations that Turned Participants Away

Organization	Number Refused Services	Reasons for Refusal
Social Services	12	Because I wasn't 18 Applied but did not receive benefits Living with parents, not considered to be on her own Because of situation Had to live in town for more than 3 months
Legal Aid	5	Case was tricky
16/17 year old program	2	Because client lived with grandmother Because client lived with mother
Food Bank	2	Because there was no food Person was being ignorant
CB Gospel Outreach Program	2	Kicked him out Turned him away
YWCA	2	Outstanding rent No money, unable to pay
Mobile Crisis	2	Didn't call back Didn't help out
Share a Meal	1	Turned away because of drinking
PAGC	1	Left a resume
Hospital	1	Drug addictions
Others ⁵	6	

⁵ The other organizations individuals mentioned but did not give a reason for refusal included the men's shelter, the Crisis Centre, the PA community housing authority, SIAST, Northern Spruce Housing, and the Friendship Centre.

In some cases the refusal was appeared to be because the participant did not meet program criteria. At the same time, it is clear that some program criteria are not designed to meet the particular needs of hidden homeless people. Youth, for example, could not access social assistance if they were living with relatives, making it difficult for them to be independent. One participant noted the difficulty caused by the requirement to have an address before he could get social assistance. He noted that he needed social assistance in order to obtain housing and therefore an address.

Adult Male: *Maybe like Social Services should just like if you can't that's the reason why you're trying to get a place. That's why you're trying to get help is for them to get, so you can get on assistance but you have to have your own mailing address before they even help you so that's, I think that's really stupid. That's 'cause you're trying to get, your trying to get, so you're trying to get an application to get welfare so you can get a place but you have to have a mailing address before they even help you.*

For another participant, the sense was not that organizations turned him away, but that none of them could provide him with the help that he required.

Interviewer: *Have you ever been turned away from any services or organizations in Prince Albert?*

Adult Male: *Story of my life. Yah.*

Interviewer: *Okay, so who?*

Adult Male: *Social Services.*

Interviewer: *Social Services.*

Adult Male: *I've asked the MLA for help but I that didn't work. I asked Family Services. They were just there to listen you know?*

Interviewer: *Family Services?*

Adult Male: *They didn't answer. Friendship Centre.*

Interviewer: *Friendship Centre. So they haven't turned you away?*

Adult Male: *No they haven't turned me away.*

Interviewer: *Okay.*

Adult Male: *They don't help you.*

Interviewer: *So they don't turn you away but sometimes they don't help. Is that what you're saying?*

Adult Male: *Yah, yah.*

Similarly, this participant also noted that his partner felt reluctant to continue to use services because she had been refused so many times.

Adult Male: *She even has a hard time paying rent... She couldn't pay for it and I know that even Social Services is helping her. ...She's afraid to talk to those people because it's, I don't know, it's like trying to, it's hard to get money....You're afraid to ask 'cause they'll say no a lot of times.*

Two instances where participants were refused services highlight the need for short term or emergency shelter.

Interviewer: *Have you ever been turned away from a service or organization in Prince Albert? Is there anybody that said "we can't help you" or "we don't wanna help you?"*

Female Youth: *Just the Y like because of the outstanding rent like when I ended up in the hospital a couple of weeks ago they wanted to know if I had a place to go and I said no and they said do you think we could and they phoned the YW and they said no, 'cause I owe money.*

The hospital staff phoned the YWCA to see if they would accept the young woman upon her release from hospital as a transition stop, but the individual had a previous unpaid debt there and the YWCA has a policy whereby they do not receive clients until they have paid their bills. The young woman ended up staying with friends. One adult man had not been able to use the men's shelter because there was a shortage of staff at the time.

Interviewer: *Has there been any place in Prince Albert that has ever turned you away?*

Adult Male: *Yah.*

Interviewer: *Where would that have been?*

Adult Male: *The homeless shelter.*

Interviewer: *The men's shelter. The Friendship Centre one?*

Adult Male: *Yes. They said they didn't have enough staff.*

Interviewer: *Not enough staff, hey? How long ago was that?*

Adult Male: *About, it was like in February.*

Other participants identified attitudes by service providers that made it difficult for them to even ask for services, even though they had not been refused. They talked about being made to feel "small".

Head of Family: *Like, you know, it's hard enough asking for help to have some lady kind of look down on you. Kind of makes you not even go ask for, you know to help you pay rent or whatever.*

While few participants voiced these feelings, some suggested that they might feel more welcome if there were more First Nations staff in organizations, or if there were individuals who had experienced homelessness and could identify with participants. While individuals who specifically volunteered these observations were in the minority, a recent study of hidden homeless people in prairie studies emphasized similar themes (Distasio et al 2005).

Head of Family: *Get Indian workers in there to help us.*

Adult Female: *More counselors that understand the situation of people that are on the streets and know the experiences, "been there done that". Then people on the streets could see that as a job they could do.*

7.0 Participants' perceptions of their service needs

Many participants could not identify services that might address their housing situation. However, a number of themes emerged from the suggestions that participants did make. These had to do services for youth and students, low cost or subsidized housing for single adults, centralized information, and a 24 hour homeless shelter. These are discussed in turn, followed by direct quotes from the participants.

Services for youth, including for students, were mentioned most often by participants – 15 participants identified these as important initiatives that could help to address their situation. While mostly youth emphasized this, a few adults did too. Many of the youth suggested that social services and housing should be made available to individuals before they were 18. Participants felt that there were services available for women and for families,

but not for single youth. Several participants suggested that housing units should be made available for students who came to Prince Albert in order to go to school. Youth also identified the need for a variety of resources in addition to housing, including financial and emotional support.

Table 8: Services for Youth

Adult Female: *Just to have more resources for young people, like young single people.*

Adult Male: *So just more awareness and maybe just, yah, awareness, so maybe a lot of people will start helping to fund more shelters. Fund more places for youth to hang out to feel safe.*

Female Youth: *Yah, they should help people like even younger. Like even if they're not even old enough to get cheques or anything they should at least like give 'em cheques to live on and help them out to get clothing.*

Female Youth: *I mean youths should be able to find housing no matter what their ages 'cause right now it's a problem that when youths are homeless, like, they can't have a place of their own until they're actually 18 and it makes it harder, like for young mothers to be on their own and like when you're younger and you, like you're homeless and everything they want you to go on welfare but you're too young to go and there's only one other program for that and they don't let you live on your own either, so I think there should be housing for youths....There should be, there should be some kind of income for kids that don't have nowhere to go and that don't have anything at all.*

Female Youth: *They should have help youth. There's families out there just 'cause you're not old enough.*

Female Youth: *Just more safe houses for kids and men.... 'Cause there's lots of places for women to go. There's barely any places for men....More peer support. Kids that have been through it and they are okay now and stuff.*

Female Youth: *It would be nice if there was like maybe at least one or two apartment buildings that were low enough rent that students could rent or people my age group. I don't really have that much money so we're not stuck on the street.*

Female Youth: *They only help families that have kids. They need to have services to look after the needs of youth who don't have children.*

Male Youth: *We should be, you should be able to get a chance at age 17. Welfare checks or be able to get housing.*

Male Youth: *Make the 16-17year old program available to 15 year olds.*

Male Youth: *Yah. Something that'd help somebody in my kind of situation would have to be having, having somebody there to like give you the confidence that you could do something. I have a real good friend of mine. He's a real bad criminal but he's a good friend and he's telling me all the time "You're almost there Drill, you can make it.*

Male Youth: *Probably a, kinda like what they have in college like dorm rooms and all that....Pretty much people from up north that wanna go to school in Prince Albert and other places....They would need a place to stay.*

Male Youth: *In school at Wonska; YAC people work there; they help to find place. Give rides, make appointments; go with you and speak up for you....They don't like renting to younger people – think you're going to party.*

Head of Family: *Well, if, like if I could what I would do is try to get like subsidies from anywhere, for Social Services or anything just to, to be able to have a chance to go back to school and then have them help with rent and the bills.*

Head of Family: *They should give students an opportunity for these housing programs but because you are a student, you're not eligible 'cause you're not working. So if your gonna be going to school for five, six years, that means you're gonna be living out of, I guess, apartment, whereas, you know, I guess that's the only thing I'm thinking. Housing programs available for students.*

Recommendation: *Explore the possibility of housing programs for youth and students.*

Adult men and women not living with children of their own, emphasized the need for housing that was affordable for a person on one employment or social services income.

Twelve participants identified this as an important initiative. Participants noted that social services payments did not cover rent as well as utilities, food, clothes and other necessities.

Some of them indicated that housing was available for families, but not for single people.

Table 9: Affordable Housing for Single Adults

Adult Female: *They should lower the rent because the rent is high. The low income housing takes forever. There are no emergency housing available immediately. If I didn't know anybody I'd probably be on the street too.*

Adult Female: *I think some of the barriers to finding a place to live is a place that's affordable within your means 'cause welfare only allows you a certain amount and then you're digging into your grocery money and that to make up the difference or I've been trying to find a place where utilities are included.*

Adult Female: *I was thinking you know a little bit more low income. Low income housing is something that is definitely hard to get a hold of... That's the problem that we do have in PA, sometimes we just can't keep up with the rent. With the utilities on top of it and having a minimum wage job you there is not a lot of subsidies. Like you need to eat."*

Adult Female: *I haven't had my own place since the 1st of July 2003. So it's been 3 years. I've lived family and I. I have a small pensions and I just find that I can't afford to live by myself. It would take most of my pension.*

Adult Female: *Need more subsidized housing and more places for single people 'cause it caters, I noticed around here a lot of the housing and it caters to people with families, people with kids and stuff like that.*

Adult Female: *People with a certain amount of income live in low poverty housing then studies (health) come and condemn the building and kick them out.*

Adult Female: *For them or myself. I wish they had different housing for single, working people like they have housing for elders like a little, like senior housing units that they have all along. Like I wish they'd have for a single, working, middle aged people. I wish they had something like that.*

Adult Male: *For low income single people that are on the street. They should have an apartment building where they can go. Specifically for people like that. Start 'em off....*

Adult Male: *And probably if I could I'd probably get my own place but all the prices, the prices and everything else is going up there too but the welfare stays at the same too and they don't even have enough, I don't have, I don't get enough to even try getting on in a small place or something like that. I do get my cheque on a day. It only lasts for about an hour and a half after I'm done paying whatever I have to pay out.*

Adult Male: *Like some of the rent, you know. Should be a little lower for those people who can't afford or they or my reserve should give me money for help too you know.*

Adult Male: *It's really, really hard because like in my situation now I'm unable to work and the rate that they give for welfare for a place to live are like \$210 a month and you can't get a place like that for, any place for \$210 a month.*

Adult Male: *Like, like Northern Spruce Housing on the way up there, you know. Like to be eligible you have to have kids eh and I thought that was kind of stupid but I guess that's just how they go. I think they should change that.*

Recommendation: *Explore the provision of housing services for single adults not living with their children.*

Many participants indicated the need for a centralized source of information. These suggestions came mainly from male adult and youth participants, although several heads of families also made this suggestion. Ten participants emphasized simply the provision of information, but three participants also indicated that hidden homeless individuals needed help in learning how to find housing and services, and needed an advocate to help them deal with discrimination. Some participants focused on the need for information about housing, but others included services, events, and employment as well as a place where people could get their questions answered. These suggestions resonate with a recent study of Aboriginal migrants to Winnipeg that also found that there was a need for a better information delivery system that was more visible and central to maximize exposure (Distasio et al 2004). The Golden Report (1999) on homelessness similarly suggested a central clearing house for information.

Table 10: Centralized Source for Information

Adult Male: *Um, they could give more information, like, put it on the bulletin board, like at that, across from the library there.*

Adult Male: *Yah, like more notices, you know something when you're somewhere somebody has pamphlets or something...have something to look forward to and check instead of just hearing it and nothing's happening.*

Adult Male: *Just put more information out on jobs and that. The best place to go for your education, where they'll accept.*

Adult Male: *Other than that, you know, like maybe, what do you call that in Saskatoon they have like Meals on Wheels but not that but like an Awareness on Wheels where they can hand out pamphlets to people they see on the street for upcoming events or possible planning, or programs, you know, then because these people don't go into buildings that produce these programs. Like people do need to know about these buildings so when it's there. So how come I didn't know that, you know what I mean?...Like Awareness on Wheels for all aspects of life.*

Head of Family: *An office where somebody can ask questions.*

Male Youth: *Maybe the housing situation should be more open, like out in the open where you can find them easier.... 'Cause I have looked and I haven't been able to find some.*

Male Youth: *Listing for single people. That would be good and ways of helping person get on, into a house or to ever get a one bedroom place on welfare, you know. That's just a thing like that where you don't have to have a family allowance to get a place.*

Male Youth: *I think they should have scheduled meetings every month on people who have trouble finding places and they should have people to, they should have career employers and housing employers. They should have a group of people eager and willing to get somebody off the street into a house and into a job.*

Male Youth: *Like the program that hooks you up with jobs I would say that....Like Canada Employment Centre does that but it's not helping people why they don't go to people that are homeless.*

Male Youth: *Would be nice to have my own place. Oh yah, there are places but I just don't know who I can go to find any help.*

Recommendation: *Create and advertise at the street level, a centralized source of information for homeless people.*

However, simply providing information may not be sufficient. Several participants suggested that some individuals do not know how to look for housing, or do not know how to avoid being evicted. One participant also suggested that there is also a need for advocacy to address the discrimination that participants face in their search for housing. Because relatively few individuals mentioned these issues, it may be useful to explore them further.

Table 11: Advocacy and Assistance in Finding Housing

Adult Male: *Should be some, there should be programs to help homeless people go find a place to live. There should be programs like help you find apartment. There should be services for apartments. Like where do you go and ask is there any apartments available and have somebody that takes them. I don't know why the Friendship Centre don't do it. They can even put something up on the wall, eh. They don't have anybody, any counselors in this town that actually know where to help me find a place to live. Yah, I mean, that people that care about, you know, hey you need a place to stay. I'll help you find a place to stay and they keep at it until they find you one 'cause they expect you to go out and do this yourself, eh. I mean, a lot of people they don't know how to do this, hey.*

Head of Family: *I think just more information. Like there are the services out there that will help you with housing but you don't know how to go about it. To get, like you don't know the phone number or anything like that to show you what to do or help you out on what to do.*

Adult Male: *Some of these groups like PAGC, they should be helping 'em. Especially single mothers with problems. [They should provide] councilors. Council 'em on how to keep your house running....Not to be evicted, you know....'Cause it's real and you're evicted you have nowhere to sleep.*

Adult Male: *Well being Aboriginal in the city and all the time I'm being shunned by people because I am not the right color, creed or social standing so all the times that I'm having a hard time and I apply to place for houses and because I'm Aboriginal and suspected of being a drug user or on alcohol or in other words that person will not trust you.... 'Cause of that I have a hard time finding a residence in the better neighborhoods like. I, myself, I don't consider myself an alcoholic or drug user....Like if I phone somebody on the phone I get treated nice eh so just go on talking about it but when they see me like, if I, I don't know, this person I just talked to on the phone....You know, like, like someone took it or it's not available any more or the rents too high or how can you pay rent? Do you do drugs? Is there any alcohol parties after this or, you know? It goes on from there, eh? Because of that I do have a hard time finding a better accommodation in the city.*

Participants from all of the categories except for male youth identified the need for a 24 drop in shelter for individuals who are homeless. They suggested that this shelter should be available to men and women, open 24 hours of the day, and not have residency requirements. Several participants indicated that weekends were particularly difficult because there were no places where participants could get food or “hang out” on weekends. Many participants who were staying with friends or family felt that they needed to be absent from the household during the day. As a result, participants felt the need for a place where they could go during the days as well as at night.

Table 12: Need for Drop In Shelter

Adult Female: *Set up some programs for people who, for people on the streets to go. People that don't have places to go. Have a 24 hour shelter place.*

Adult Male: *I just think that that shelter should be staying open because there's some people out there that really got no place to go like and they can't be sleeping outside on a sidewalk and going to school and what not. Or working, you know, full time job and not having a place.*

Female Youth: *And the Friendship Centre should be open on weekends too....I know a lot of people who have no place to go on the weekend and they usually go stay at the Friendship Centre when it's open.*

Female Youth: *I think like a shelter, I wouldn't say a shelter for the homeless, like a shelter for, a shelter for, a shelter for the needy. Like just a shelter for just somebody, anybody can go just spend the night and shower....Somewhere where you can feel comfortable and safe and actually be able to sleep and not have to worry about nothing, yah. Yah just somewhere.*

Head of Family: *They don't have a drop-in centre for men and women. Just somewhere where they go hang out besides the Friendship Centre or, you know, other people's houses. A storefront where they can go and play cards. Where there's things like a free shower, you know....A safe outlet, a safe place.*

Head of Family: *They should have like the men's shelter that they have now, people are only allowed to stay there like if they lived in P.A. longer than a month and they can't go there. It should be like, like it doesn't matter how long you lived in P.A. or not, it should be open to everybody that's homeless or that are... ya it just should be open to everybody I guess.*

Recommendation: *Explore the possibility of creating a drop in shelter that is open more hours of the day.*

There were several other suggestions that did not fall into the categories above. These had to do with the need for assistance with moving, an opportunity for individuals to do handicraft work, two indications that single parents needed more housing opportunities, the need for a shelter for couples, and the need for meals on weekends. These issues point to the diversity of the hidden homeless population and the need to develop program to meet specific needs.

Table 13: Other Needs Identified

Adult Male: *I'd say for moving and stuff like that, you know, like everybody else has trouble moving around and can't find a vehicle or something like that.*

Adult Male: *There's a lot of guys that are out here they know how to do handicraft work. Carpentry and everything so they can make like second-hand furniture for the people that don't have money eh....They should have a, like making furniture like I said. Cupboards, tables, chairs, whatever.But not for the young people but for everyone that wants to make money and that's capable of doing that working 'cause there's people out there that are educated.*

Head of Family: *If they had some place for single moms to just stay for a while.*

Head of Family: *More support for single parents. It's hard to find and keep work, need better childcare. More low income [housing] that is easier to get into – lists are so long.*

Adult Male: *Basically don't wanna go to shelters 'cause they don't wanna get split up. It's usually couple that stay together instead of going to a shelter eh. It's always a men's shelter and a women's shelter. A lot of people that won't go to shelters because of that. We'd rather be together than go into a shelter, yes.*

Adult Male: *Maybe something like meals on the weekends because we're always starving on the weekends.*

8.0 Conclusions

Hidden homeless First Nations' people are a diverse group with a variety of different and overlapping service needs. This is a population that is innovative and resilient, as their complex strategies for obtaining housing and necessities of life demonstrate. However, they are also a very high need group, and providing housing without a variety of services will not be sufficient. First Nations culture and spirituality are important to this group, with the need access to elders being particularly significant. Low levels of service use suggest that there are barriers in place that prevent participants from using services, and this could be studied further. While some participants were turned away from service providers, the overall impression is that programs and services do not suit the needs of this population, and that this is the major reason for lack of use. However, some hidden homeless people also faced attitudes that made them feel unwelcome. Finally, participants felt that they needed more

information about the services that were available. Levels of service provision by First Nations and Métis service providers may be higher in Prince Albert than in other cities, but it seems likely that an even higher level of service provision by this sector would be beneficial. Participants had a number of suggestions about initiatives that would help to meet their needs. These ranged from the relatively expensive provision of housing for different groups, to something that would be less costly – a centralized source of information and assistance.

9.0 Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the participation of hidden homeless First Nations people who agreed to be interviewed for this project. Many hoped that their views would help to create a better situation for themselves and others. PAGC Urban Service Inc. staff provided essential office space, access to phones, photo-copiers and supplies, as well as many aspects of support for the project – information, direction, contacts, and advice. A number of community organizations also provided a great deal of support in helping researchers contact participants and providing information. We also express appreciation to the interviewers, Shauna Wouters, Raul Munoz, and Bobbi Lafontaine, who did wonderful work with this study.

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