



2018 KAMLOOPS YOUTH HOMELESSNESS COUNT REPORT



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A Way Home Kamloops Society

Axis Family Resources

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Youth Against Youth Homelessness

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Executive Summary

Communities across Canada are confronted with the multiple challenges of homelessness, the opioid crisis, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, low rental vacancy rates, steady increase in rental rates, and greater demand on food banks and other community service providers due to income levels and poverty. How these factors have affected housing for youth (ages 13-24) in Kamloops is the central focus of this report. Youth homelessness is an under-researched area and there is a need for communities across B.C. to understand the magnitude of this urgent issue. Through A Way Home Kamloops, Kamloops was the first community in all of Canada to conduct a youth-specific homelessness count in 2016. Our community innovated distinct methodology designed to uncover the hidden nature of youth homelessness. Other communities including Metro Vancouver, B.C., Nelson, B.C., and St. John's, Newfoundland have followed suit in implementing distinct methodologies as part of a Youth Homelessness Count.

A Way Home Kamloops is proud to be a leader in the development of Youth Homelessness Counts. In the fall and winter of 2017, representatives from several organizations, along with young people with lived expertise of homelessness, met on an ongoing basis to revise the survey from the *2016 Kamloops Youth Homelessness Count* (October 13th - 21st, 2016). The committee reviewed lessons learned from the first youth homelessness count and integrated these learnings into our practice and development of the second youth homelessness count conducted May 8 - 10, 2018. The *Youth Homelessness Count* survey was revised to serve several purposes – to create a more youth-friendly and accessible survey, include questions that addressed the specific queries of different community organizations, and add more response-options to arrive at a more comprehensive portrayal of housing instability and insecurity experienced by youth in our community. With these revisions to the survey we wanted to better comprehend both the extent and the types of housing insecurity and instability experienced by youth, the youths' understanding of their recent circumstances, and what they deemed as necessary for them to achieve a permanent, stable and secure housing environment.

To this end, the highest priority was placed on the voice of youth in providing insights into their lived-experience and recent housing environment, self-identifying the broader factors and life-challenges (i.e. family conflict, addictions, unsafe housing, eviction, job loss, jail, disability, mental health, etc.) that have created significant barriers to completing their education, acting on further educational opportunities, acquiring stable employment and / or developing life-skills.¹ The purpose of this youth homelessness count is to elevate the voices of young people with lived expertise who are so often silenced and to highlight their experiences of hidden homelessness which are often not recognized by traditional methods such as the Federal Government's Point in Time Count which tends to have a focus on the adult population. If young people are telling us they are without a home, it is our responsibility to understand what this experience is like and how we can develop the services needed to address their distinct needs.

To this end, thirty-nine (39) community partners (including non-profit organizations, government agencies, School District #73, and representatives from Thompson Rivers University) worked together to roll out our second community Youth Homelessness Count. This community collaboration and coordination ensured that many youth at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness would have an opportunity to share their lived expertise to promote change. In an attempt to not only identify youth who were currently homeless, the committee and its volunteers, conducted the survey with a multitude of youth throughout the community to capture those who may have been housed at the time of the survey, but had been homeless at some point over the course of the year. One thousand and eighty-six (1086) youth completed surveys that were then reviewed, from these surveys 136 youth self-identified as homeless, having experienced homelessness over the past year (May 2017 - May 2018). Less than 10% of the 136 surveys were incomplete and the Youth Count Committee analyzed these surveys to identify their experience of homelessness.

Taking into consideration numerous factors from each survey (such as the varied and often numerous housing contexts these youth self-identified as experiencing, their sense of their

¹ Sixteen (16) surveys were rejected for either a lack of sufficient information to include, evidently false information, had taken the survey already, or for being above 24 years of age.

own housing stability at the time of the survey, the number of times homeless throughout the year, their reasons for being homeless, sources of income, and their needs to establish housing security and stability) a fluid set of categories on a continuum of housing experiences based on housing security, stability, and consistency was created to better capture and situate all of these differing youth experiences with homelessness:

Visibly Homeless ↔ **Hidden Homeless** ↔ **Experienced Homelessness**
(56) (30) (50)

Visibly Homeless

The most precarious, unstable and insecure housing contexts at the time of the survey are categorized as “Visibly Homeless”. The majority of these youth stayed most nights in a public street space - empty building / shed, or combined the public street space with other opportunities, such as an emergency shelter. A much smaller number were identified in particular institutional settings (hospital, jail, prison or remand), or vehicle or motel / hotel and classified as Visibly Homeless based on other factors provided in the surveys.

Hidden Homeless

Those youth considered to have less insecure but very unstable housing environments are categorized as “Hidden Homeless”. Often referred to as “couch surfing”, there was considerable variation in housing environments as these youth self-identified as homeless or were classified as homeless based on the high levels of instability within their housing situation. The majority spent most evenings at “someone else’s place”, or were renting under insecure conditions (only temporary, and would have to leave soon).

Experienced Homelessness

A third category is defined as having “Experienced Homelessness” (and considered potentially vulnerable to increased housing instability and insecurity). These youth had experienced homelessness in the past year and felt that they had acquired a more stable housing situation at the time of the survey, but recognized they had important unmet needs (such as money, job,

education, supportive housing, cultural services or services for mental health, physical health, or addictions) before they would be able to achieve a more consistent, stable and secure housing context.

The first section of the report, titled **Results** provides some general information for all 136 youth on the continuum, and then provides more detailed information under each of the main categories. General observations on the survey results are provided to conclude the section.

The second section, titled **Profiles**, provides more detailed and comprehensive information on reasons for the youths' homelessness (current and past) and the particular needs identified to acquire stable, secure and consistent housing environments. Different profiles were created based on age, gender identification, ethnicity, and specific life experiences (e.g. 6-12+ months homeless, child welfare, released from jail in the past year, youth agreements).

The final section provides outcomes from specific questions formulated by representatives from the School District for Grade 10 students as to accessing supportive adult figures to address housing concerns and their awareness and support for other students / friends confronting unsafe or unstable housing contexts.

A Way Home Kamloops would like to recognize and express our gratitude to all the youth who participated in this survey and shared their voices and difficult experiences in hopes of change. This Youth Homelessness Count report will inform A Way Home Kamloops' advocacy efforts to prevent, reduce, and end youth homelessness in our community and beyond to ensure every young person has a way home.

Introduction

Youth homelessness counts are important to identify youth experiencing hidden homelessness and give voice to the distinct developmental needs of young people. In Canada, Youth Counts are a new area of innovation and research as the first Youth Count Toolkit was published by the Homeless Hub in 2016. Prior to this, A Way Home Kamloops had set a community goal to conduct a youth homelessness count, but needed a framework that the toolkit provided. A Way Home Kamloops conducted Canada's first youth-specific homelessness count in October 2016. This count enacted distinctive youth methodology, and partnered with the adult Point in Time Count to conduct the street count. In 2017, the A Way Home Kamloops steering committee reflected on lessons learned in the first count and made a consensus vote to develop a youth count separate from the point in time count. This would provide opportunity for innovation such as being able to create a youth specific survey. A Way Home Kamloops formed a working group to develop a youth homelessness count for spring 2018. As a result of this innovation, A Way Home Kamloops launched a new and revised 2018 Youth Homelessness Count with improved methodology that created a platform for youth to share their voice for change.

Who is A Way Home Kamloops?

A Way Home Kamloops is a collective of 200+ members from all sectors including youth, non-profits, landlords, businesses, students, ministries, government, and community members. We were the first community in all of Canada to develop and implement a local community plan to end youth homelessness: "A Way Home: A plan to end youth homelessness."² This plan has transformed our community towards ending youth homelessness and provided a model for other communities to adapt to their unique context. A Way Home Kamloops provides community coordination to reduce gaps in services & ensure there are no wrong doors for homeless youth. Our community collective ensures every sector and member has a pivotal role to play in ending youth homelessness. An annual youth homelessness count is critical in measuring our progress towards ending youth homelessness in Kamloops.

² A Way Home Kamloops. (2018). A Way Home: A Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Kamloops. A Way Home Kamloops Society. Retrieved from: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/ca955f_5879de6f64fb4debb9babb6517303422.pdf

Who Did the Count?

The A Way Home Kamloops Committee led the development of our community's second youth homelessness count. The collective launched a call for volunteers to form a Youth Count Committee, which involved a working group of different organizations including: A Way Home Kamloops, School District 73, Volunteer Kamloops, Boys & Girls Club, Secwepemc Children & Families Services, Axis Family Resources, and students from Thompson Rivers University from the Nursing and Social Work programs. Danielle Kreutzer from Axis Family Resources took a lead role in Volunteer Coordination and chairing the Youth Count Committee. The Youth Against Youth Homelessness Committee, the youth voice of A Way Home Kamloops, took a strong leadership role in developing magnet events and putting together backpacks to give to youth experiencing homelessness. The business sector, local Rotary Clubs, Interior Savings, and the United Way Thompson Nicola Cariboo partnered and provided survival items and coffee gift cards to give to youth who participated in the Count. Additionally, Thompson Rivers University Associate Professor, Terry Kading, and undergraduate researcher, Caitlin Quist, partnered to provide research support in analyzing the information collected and developing the survey.

Youth Count History

A Way Home Kamloops was the first community in Canada to conduct a youth-specific Point-In-Time (PIT) count in October 2016. Locally, our collective recognized gaps in the Federal Government's PIT Count methodology that was underestimating the magnitude of youth homelessness. For example, in the 2016 Youth Homelessness Count, A Way Home Kamloops identified 56 youth currently homeless, while the PIT Count identified only 6 youth currently homeless. As youth homelessness is a hidden issue, the methodology needs to be adapted to identify young people experiencing couch surfing or episodic homelessness. The count also needs to be youth-friendly as many young people may not even be aware that their experiences of housing insecurity could be considered homelessness.

In 2017, A Way Home Kamloops launched the results of the first ever youth homelessness count that garnered provincial and national attention³. In 2018, the awareness of the need for youth specific counts led to an expansion with Metro Vancouver and Nelson, B.C. implementing youth-specific methodology to shed a light on an issue that has long been ignored.

Why a Youth Specific Count?

A Way Home Kamloops made the decision to do a youth specific homelessness count due to the following reasons:

- A broader definition of youth homelessness.
- Different methodology geared towards the distinctiveness of youth homelessness.
- As youth homelessness is characterized by hidden homelessness (50% of youth in the 2016 Youth Count identified as experiencing hidden homelessness such as couch surfing), the count identifies youth who may not access services and are less visible.
- Occurs over a longer period of time in order to capture hidden homelessness.
- Identifies youth who have experienced homelessness in past year, as well as currently homeless.
- Involves the School District and captures the general youth population that may be experiencing more episodic homelessness.
- Provides opportunities for youth engagement and leadership.
- Survey is designed with youth-friendly language that meets the developmental stage of youth.
- Methodology gives voice to youth who may not be captured in the general Point in Time Count.
- Research shows that traditional PIT counts can offer important information about a community, but can't accurately provide an exact number of people experiencing homelessness in a given community"⁴, which makes the Youth Count both unique and necessary.

³ McParland, K., & Baker, J.P. (2017). 2016 Youth Homelessness Count. *A Way Home Kamloops Society*. Retrieved from: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/ca955f_2be3d72b74e44d9a91dc4608403d32ff.pdf

⁴ Donaldson, J. (2017). Point-In-Time Toolkit. *Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press*. Retrieved from: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/download-chapter/PiT%20Count%20Toolkit.pdf>

- Provides valuable demographic data to help inform prevention initiatives.
- Increases public awareness about youth homelessness.
- Lack of knowledge and research information about youth homelessness, so the Youth Count data adds to this growing body of knowledge.

Purpose of the 2018 Kamloops Youth Homelessness Count

The 2018 Kamloops Youth Homelessness Count fits A Way Home Kamloops' goal of monitoring our community's efforts in preventing, reducing, and ending youth homelessness. The word "count" can be somewhat misleading, since identifying a clear number of individuals experiencing homelessness is only part of the purpose of any count. Youth Counts will only identify the minimum number of youth experiencing homelessness. The most important part of a youth homelessness count is it provides valuable information about the experiences of the homeless population. By surveying youth experiencing homelessness, we may identify gaps in services, emerging needs, and the relative success of A Way Home Kamloops' initiatives aimed at preventing homelessness and supporting those experiencing homelessness.

The information collected during this count will assist A Way Home Kamloops to:

- Establish a community benchmark of the minimum number of youth experiencing homelessness
- Provide an opportunity for youth to share their voice about their needs
- Build relationships with youth experiencing homelessness and connect them to services
- Increase public awareness, set community priorities, and create supports that meet gaps in services
- Prevent other youth from experiencing homelessness by providing community education
- Advocate for policy change and opportunities that youth need to succeed.

Count Organization

Planning

To steer the planning process, a Youth Count team was formed from within A Way Home Kamloops, with the A Way Home Kamloops Executive Director and AXIS Family Resources Youth Team Lead acting as the Youth Count Coordinators. The team met bi-weekly to plan and organize Count activities.

Timing

The 2018 Youth Homelessness Count occurred over a three-day period from May 8th to May 10th, 2018. The spring period was chosen for this count in hopes of identifying seasonal differences in homelessness compared to the 2016 count that was conducted in the fall. Additionally, the survey was conducted over three days instead of a week to reduce the likelihood of duplication of responses. In 2016, A Way Home Kamloops conducted the Count over a seven-day period that identified a few duplicate surveys.

Engagement

The A Way Home Kamloops Collective's diverse representation provided a solid foundation to engage partners in the Youth Homelessness Count and to ensure our methods reached all those in contact with youth. The Count itself helped some partners in relationship-building with youth experiencing homelessness. For example, the RCMP participated in surveying youth experiencing homelessness, which helped improve previous relationships. The School District was engaged early in the planning process and Thompson Rivers University provided five students from the Social Work and Nursing programs to help organize and conduct activities. Thompson Rivers University provided a research guru, Terry Kading, who provided guidance to the Count Committee on methodology and supported the creation of the survey tool. Additionally, TRU conducted an analysis of the Count data to support the Youth Count Committee with the report writing process and knowledge mobilization. Youth Against Youth Homelessness was engaged as active members of the planning committee, took the lead on planning the magnet events and creating backpacks containing supplies that would be distributed

to youth during the Count. Community members and businesses were engaged through raising awareness with a media blitz prior to the Count.

Data Collection Survey Tool

A Way Home Kamloops had an opportunity for the 2018 Youth Homelessness Count to develop and innovate our own survey tool to interview youth. In 2016, A Way Home Kamloops used the same survey tool as the general Point in Time Count that was restricted by Federal guidelines. Based on feedback from youth and community partners about the limitations of the tool, we made the decision to develop our own youth survey. Thompson Rivers University provided mentorship to the Youth Count Committee that consisted of community service organizations and young people who developed the new survey tool. In developing the survey tool, the Youth Count Committee consulted community partners, Aboriginal organizations, and the School District. The Youth Count team tested the tool with a group of youth and incorporated their feedback.

The purpose of the survey was to identify the minimum number of youth currently experiencing homelessness or who had experienced homelessness in the past year. The survey included questions about several important issues, such as demographics, barriers to housing, and gaps in services. Screening questions were not developed, as service providers were encouraged to survey all youth regardless of whether they had disclosed an experience of homelessness or not. This was done because many youths may fear stigma or fail to characterize experiences such as running away as youth homelessness.

Funding

Funding from a variety of community sources was essential to the Youth Counts' success. The funding was used for honorariums including, coffee cards, chocolate bars, and backpacks given to youth who participated in the surveys and to those who attended the magnet events. The media was a valuable partner in encouraging community members to donate to the Youth Count.

Methods

A Youth homelessness count is a community wide survey for youth ages 13-24. It uses a distinct survey and methodology to identify youth experiencing homelessness or who may not even identify their housing insecurity as homelessness. Youth count methodology includes a longer period of time (3 days opposed to 1 day) that youth are surveyed in order to capture hidden homelessness. The count involved the following methodology:

- 1. *Service Inventory:*** Organizations that work with youth or have youth access their adult services will have all staff that come in contact with youth during this time period to complete the survey.

Approximately thirty-four different organizations were engaged to conduct the Service Count. The goal was to have the survey integrated into agency workers' daily practice in order to identify all youth who may be experiencing homelessness. Key contacts were established at each organization to act as liaisons with the Youth Count Team and to ensure agency buy-in. The key contacts participated in training and were provided materials to educate their colleagues about the Youth Count. Many key contacts incorporated their training into a regular staff meeting and sent all staff emails to promote the Count. During the week of the Count, bundles of surveys and honorariums were dropped off at each organization to the key contact who then distributed count materials

- 2. *Public Systems Count:*** A youth count works with health, justice, and foster care systems to survey youth connected to public systems.

This component helped to identify youth experiencing homelessness who are connected to public systems through provincial ministries. A Youth Count member was deployed to Kamloops Regional Corrections Centre, and the Integrated Offender Management team identified youth 19-24 in custody who were willing to participate in the survey. Additionally, Kamloops Youth Probation was engaged to survey youth on their caseload. Interior Health Authority distributed the surveys at a variety of their locations. The Ministry of Children & Family Development and Aboriginal Delegated organizations had their Youth Teams complete

surveys with youth in foster care or on youth agreements who had experienced homelessness or housing insecurity. The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction staff asked youth accessing income assistance services to complete the survey as well.

- 3. *School District Count:*** The youth count works with the School District to survey youth who may be experiencing housing insecurity.

School District 73 partnered with A Way Home Kamloops and agreed to survey all grade ten students in the entire district during the Youth Count. The School District included local principals in the planning who engaged teachers to incorporate the survey into regular classroom activities. Youth Against Youth Homelessness identified this grade as a key turning point in their experiences of housing insecurity, which led to this grade being targeted for the Count.

- 4. *Magnet Events:*** Youth-specific magnet events were hosted to engage youth to participate in the Count.

Youth Against Youth Homelessness took the lead on developing a community barbeque and fun event for youth who participated in the Count. The event was hosted at Henry Grube and the Lions Club put on a barbeque with food that was donated from Safeway. The City provided a variety of games and local non-profits hosted community booths with giveaways including clothing and food.

- 5. *Street Count:*** Volunteers are trained to survey youth on the street who may or may not appear homeless. Youth-specific hotspots will be mapped out.

A Way Home Kamloops worked with nursing students from Thompson Rivers University who collaborated with community partners to map out youth-specific hot spots for the street count. Local volunteers were engaged through the Volunteer Kamloops website and Thompson Rivers University. Volunteers were asked to participate in one of two training sessions to prepare for the Count. On the day of the Count, volunteers were given surveys and a route to follow, in order to accommodate geographically to all youth in the community.

6. Count Booths: Booths were set up outside youth hot spots with volunteers to survey youth.

A Way Home Kamloops worked with the City of Kamloops to secure permits to host booths in community at youth hot spots. This included two libraries, the skate park, various bus loops, and on the street, such as Tranquille Road. Volunteers coordinated each booth that was set up to engage youth passing by to participate in the survey.

Limitations

The A Way Home Kamloops Committee is a pioneer and trailblazer in the new world of developing methodology to uncover the hidden nature of youth homelessness. As part of this work, A Way Home Kamloops, takes every opportunity to reflect on learnings from the Youth Count and identify areas of improvement. The Youth Count Committee took into consideration lessons learned from the 2016 Youth Count and were able to integrate our learnings into this new Count. While the 2018 Kamloops Youth Homelessness Count attempted to be as youth friendly and comprehensive as possible, there were still many limitations to the process. These limitations include:

- The Youth Count is a snapshot of youth homelessness and will only report on a minimal number of youth experiencing homelessness in our community. As the experience of homelessness for youth is fluid and episodic, not all youth will be captured in an annual point in time count. This count provides an additional opportunity to understand the picture of youth homelessness and to elevate the voices of youth to be heard regarding the types of solutions that would make the difference for them. This information helps community partners develop the services and fill the gaps that youth are identifying.
- The process of giving youth honorariums to honor their time and voice in sharing their experiences of homelessness is very important. However, it does create the potential for duplication of surveys with the added incentive of the honorarium.

- The majority of Youth Count surveys were fully completed; however, there were a few incomplete surveys which totaled less than 10%. There may be many reasons that youth did not fully complete the survey, which could include being emotionally triggered, confusion around language in the survey, time restraints or a need to continue the survival hustle to have their basic needs met. Sixteen (16) surveys were rejected for either a lack of sufficient information to include, evidently false information, had taken the survey already, or for being above 24 years of age.
- The School District 73 partnered with A Way Home Kamloops and surveyed all grade ten classes in the entire district. Additionally, Twin Rivers Education Centre and Street School completed the survey with students from a range of grades who were willing to participate in the survey. This is a limitation as not all grades were surveyed, but was an opportunity to get a snapshot of youth in grade ten experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in our community.

A Way Home Kamloops intends to utilize their knowledge of these limitations to improve upon future youth homelessness counts by continuing to incorporate youth friendly language, identifying information our community partners need to develop services that meet the distinct needs of youth, and to further refine our results.

Youth Voice

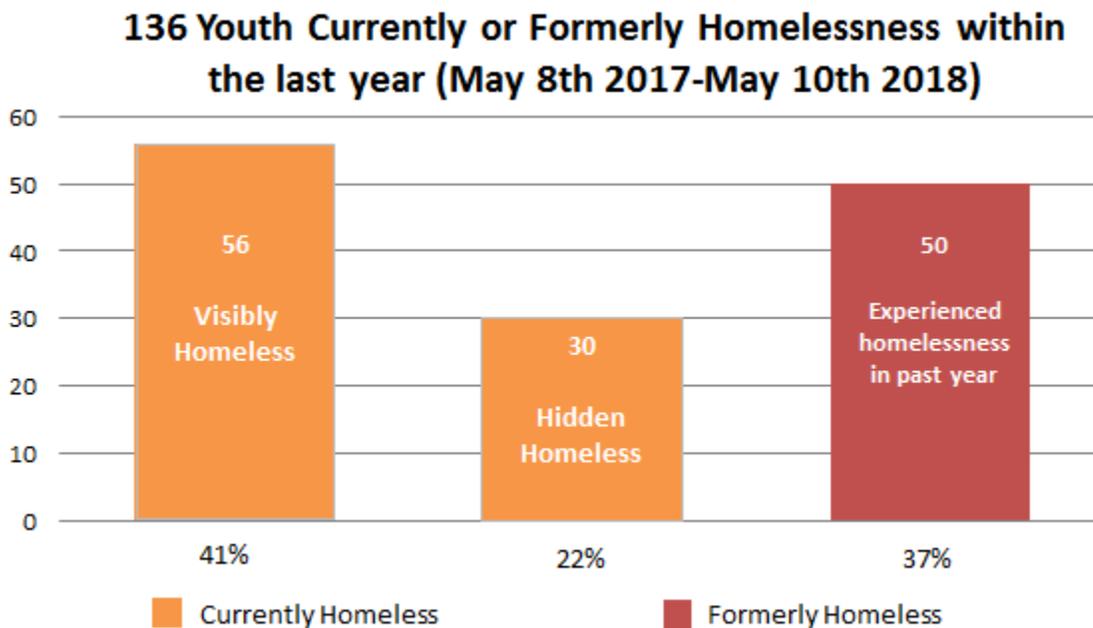
“I’m always ready for better”

Findings of the 2018 Youth Count

The 2018 Youth Count provided a platform for youth to share their voice in what their experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity have been in hopes of preventing and ending youth homelessness. So often adults try to define youths’ experiences of homelessness using broad definitions, while others use narrow definitions. This report has been designed to give voice to youth who are so often silenced to share their diverse experiences of homelessness to inform change.

Out of the survey respondents, 136 youth identified they had experienced homelessness in the past year. There are many different faces to the experiences of homelessness that youth face, but for the purpose of this report three categories were defined: “visible homelessness”, “hidden homelessness”, and “experienced homelessness in the past year”.

56 youth said they were currently experiencing visible homeless, which includes living on the streets, staying in shelters, and not having any safe place to go. 30 youth identified they were currently experiencing hidden homelessness, which includes experiences of couch surfing and episodic experiences of homelessness. 50 other youth identified they had experienced homelessness in the past year.



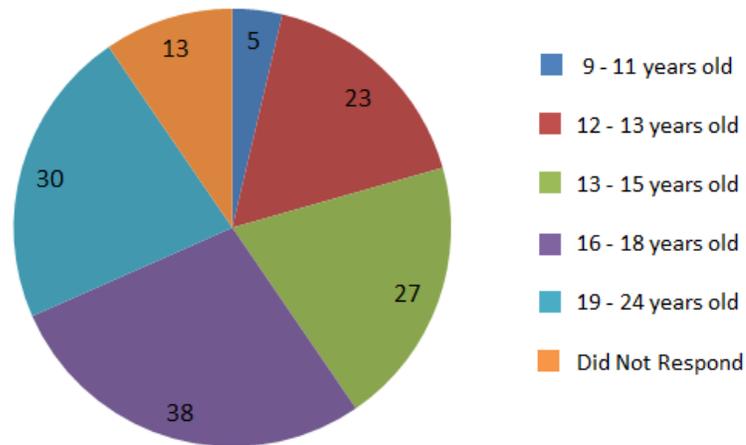
136 Youth Had Experienced Homelessness

In total, 136 youth identified they were currently homeless or had experienced homelessness in the last year. Although 136 youth identified as experiencing homelessness, not all youth responded to every single question in the survey. The following percentages included in the graphs are based on those youth who responded to that particular question in the survey.



The most common response when youth were asked how long they were homeless in the past year was episodes of 1-2 months (39% of youth) while 38% of youth said they were homeless 6 months to 12 months. This indicated that Kamloops youth may either experience short episodes of homelessness, or longer durations of homelessness where they struggle to acquire stable housing. This highlights the diversity within the youth homelessness experience and the need to have services for youth at-risk of homelessness and for those who are street entrenched. No youth should have to go through a prolonged experience of homelessness and the experience should be brief and rare if at all. Within the School District #73 surveys, only 7 of the 617 grade ten students reported they were homeless in the past year and it was only for a brief period of time.

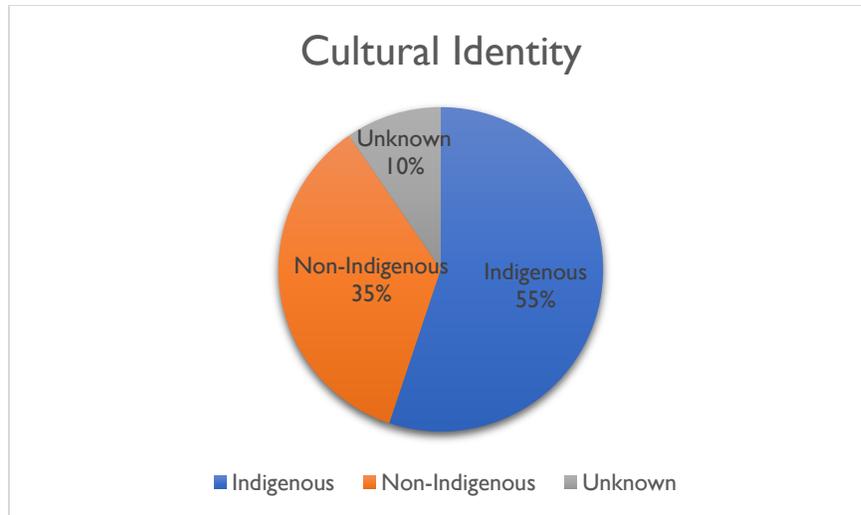
Age First Experienced Homelessness



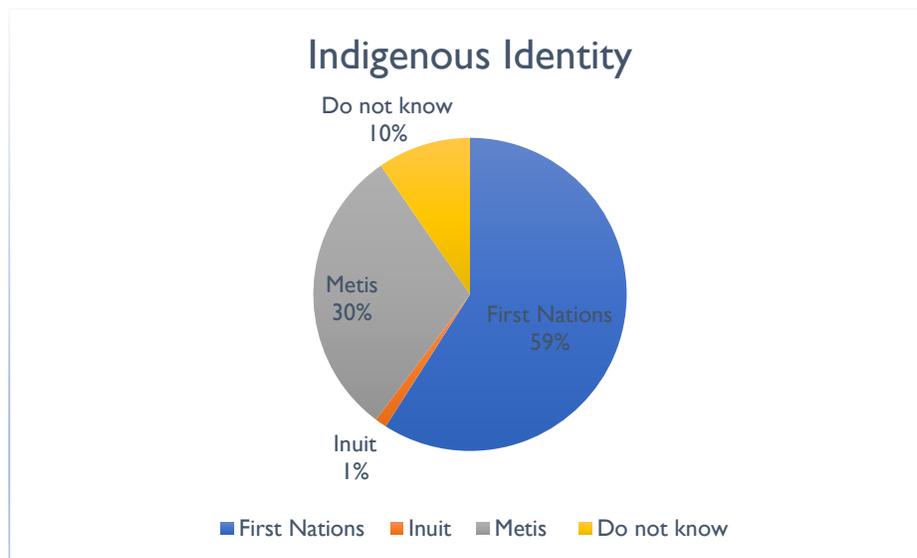
A look into what age Kamloops youth first experienced homelessness demonstrates that there is a significant need for early prevention. Survey results showed 40% of youth said that their first experience of homelessness was between ages 9-15. This highlights the hidden nature of youth homelessness and the need to LISTEN to youth who are experiencing housing insecurity in order to connect them with the appropriate supports that will lift them out of and/or help prevent their homelessness in the first place. 38% of youth identified their first experience of homelessness was between ages 16-18, highlighting the vulnerability of youth under the age of 19. It is possible that stereotypes and systemic barriers prevent youth from securing stable income or housing when under age.

Youth Voice

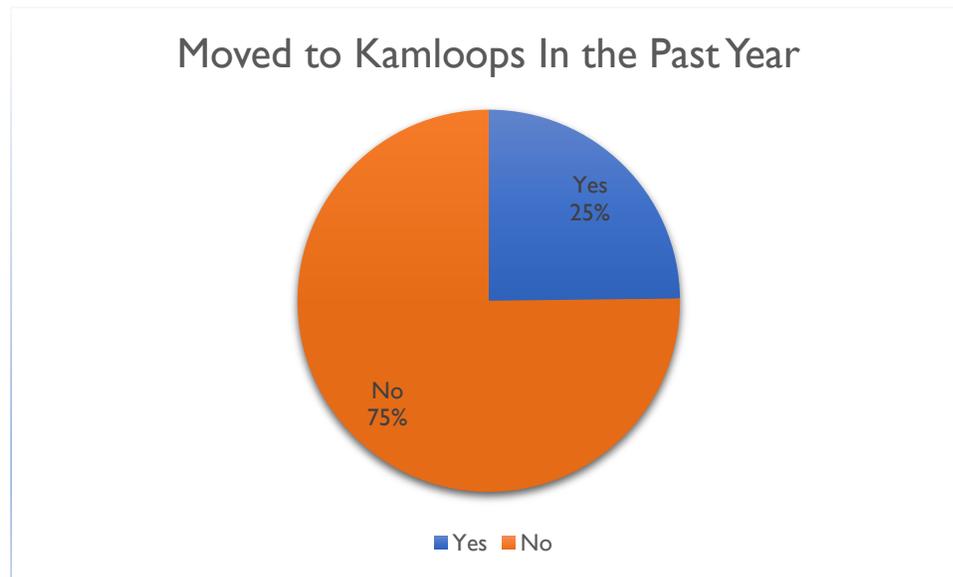
“The whole system is a lie”



One of the most significant findings from the survey confirms what Indigenous communities already know to be true: there is a substantial overrepresentation of Indigenous youth experiencing or who have experienced homelessness within the past year within the community of Kamloops, with 55% of the homeless youth completing the survey self-identifying as Indigenous. This becomes even more significant when contrasted with the fact that only 6% of all youth in Canada identify as Aboriginal.⁵



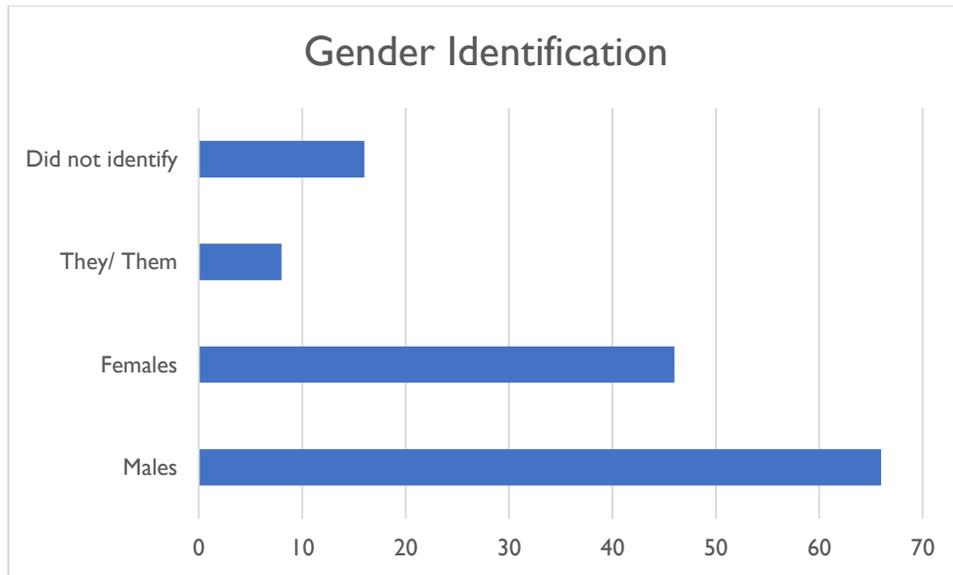
⁵ Statistics Canada.(2011). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations people, Metis, and Inuit. *National Household Survey, 2011*. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>



The majority of youth who identified as having experienced homelessness are from the Kamloops area (75%). Only 25% of youth identified that they had moved to Kamloops in the past year. There could be many reasons for this such as Kamloops being the emergency response hub for many surrounding communities during the British Columbia wildfires. Kamloops is also a central community connecting to the lower mainland, central and northern B.C., and Alberta. Alternatively, youth could be fleeing violence from smaller more isolated surrounding areas with less supports. Regardless of where youth are from, we all have a responsibility to support young people experiencing homelessness, as they are our future.

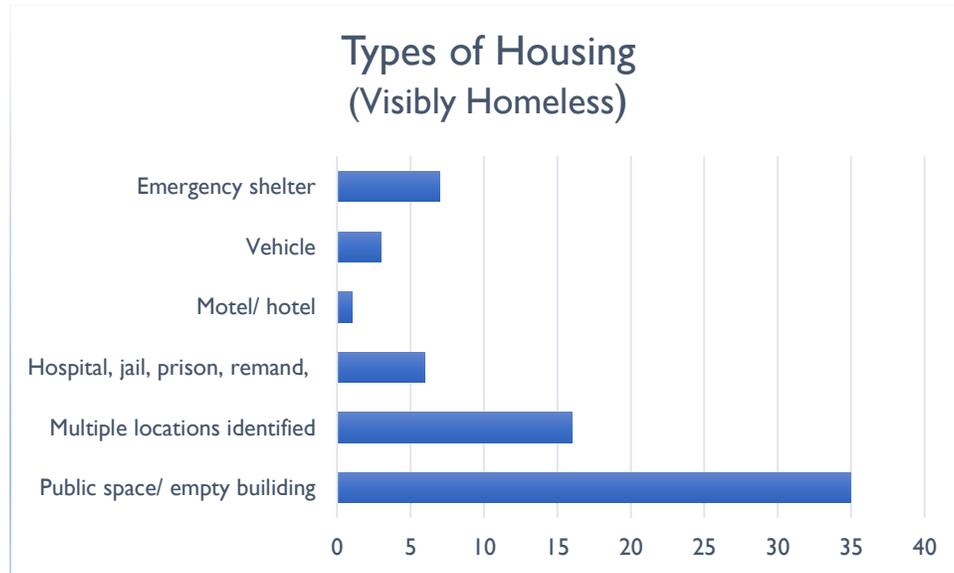
Youth Voice

“There is many more students coming. Foreign exchange students pay 3x the student costs”



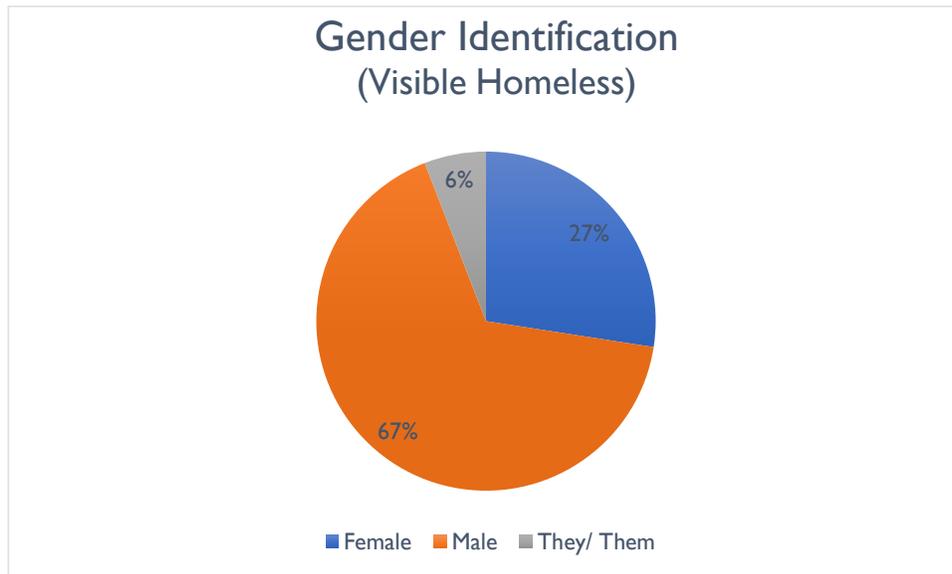
The majority of the youth (48%) experiencing homelessness identified as male, whereas 33% identified as female and 6% identified as “They/Them”. Without statistics on the total number of LGBTQ2S+ youth living within the community of Kamloops, we were unable to analyze the significance of these numbers. Regardless, having this information can be helpful in creating services and programs that meet the diverse needs of youth and remind service providers to take into account the additional barriers that LGBTQ2S+ youth may face when working to find safe and stable housing options.

56 Youth Currently & Visibly Homeless



Out of the survey respondents, 56 youth said they were currently experiencing visible homelessness. 35 of these youth (63%) identified they were living on the streets; for example, staying in a public space or in an empty building. This number has increased from 34% since the first Kamloops Youth Count in 2016,⁶ which highlights the need for responses to youth homelessness that address the complex needs of youth who are directly transitioning into housing from the streets. 16 of the youth identified they were staying in multiple locations such as staying in a public space, emergency shelter, and/or someone else's place. This emphasizes the fluid nature of youth homelessness, and although a young person may have a place to stay tonight, they may have nowhere to go tomorrow. Other youth were staying in public institutions such as hospitals or jails without housing to be discharged to.

⁶ McParland, K., & Baker, J.P. (2017). 2016 Youth Homelessness Count. *A Way Home Kamloops Society*. Retrieved from: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/ca955f_2be3d72b74e44d9a91dc4608403d32ff.pdf



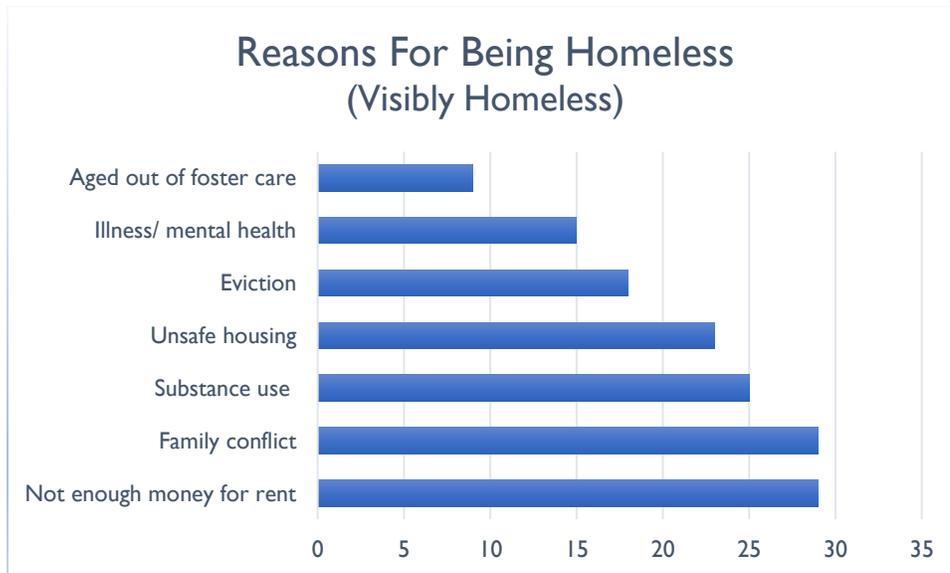
The majority of the youth (67%) experiencing visible homelessness identified as male, whereas 27% identified as female and 6% identified as “They/Them”. Without statistics on the total number of LGBTQ2S+ youth living within the community of Kamloops, we were unable to analyze the significance of these numbers. Regardless, having this information can be helpful in creating services and programs that meet the diverse needs of youth and remind service providers to take into account the additional barriers that LGBTQ2S+ youth may face when working to find safe and stable housing options.



The 2018 Youth Homelessness Count showed that there is an overrepresentation of Indigenous youth who are experiencing visible homelessness. 64% of youth identified as Indigenous, which echoes research reporting that urban Aboriginal peoples in Canada are estimated as 8 times more likely to be homeless than the non-Aboriginal population,⁷ and highlights the need for cultural services and supports for youth experiencing homelessness.

⁷ Belanger, Y. D., Awosoga, O., & Weasel Head, G. (2013). Homelessness, Urban Aboriginal People, and the Need for a National Enumeration. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2(2), 4-33.

Youth were asked the reasons they were experiencing homelessness, which provides valuable information on the pathways and “risk factors” that can impact this issue. Youth were able to choose more than one response as often multiple factors intersect, putting youth at risk of homelessness.



The majority of youth (29 of the 56 youth who expressed that they were currently visibly homeless) said they did not have enough money to afford rent. This speaks to the affordable housing crisis and the complexities youth face in accessing housing including discrimination and limited income to afford steadily rising house prices. 18 youth identified they experienced an eviction, which signifies the need for supports to help youth learn how to navigate the landlord/tenant relationship.

Youth Voice

“In my opinion, it would be helpful to have advocates that could talk to landlords in order to gain housing. Also more affordable housing option would be helpful for all”

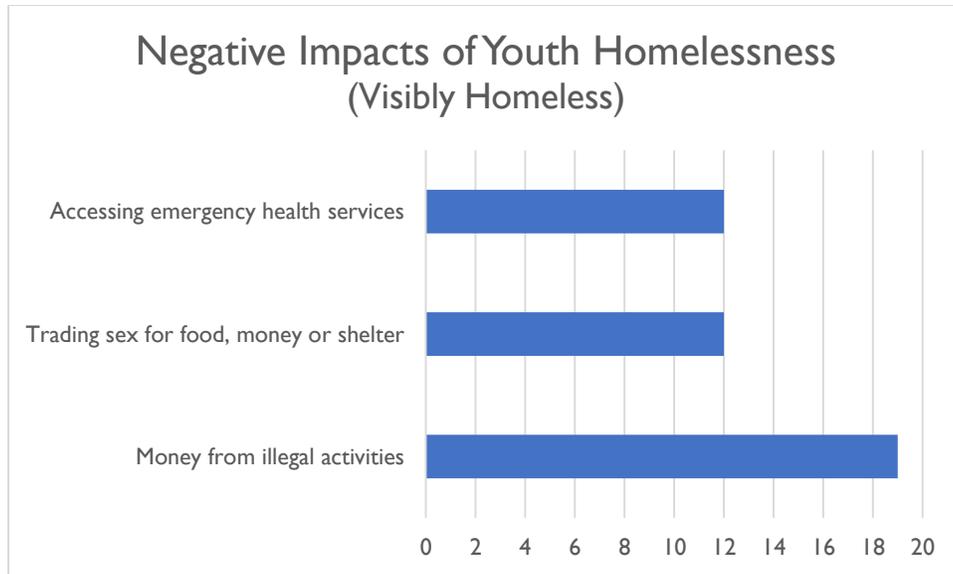
Another major factor that 29 youth identified was the reason for their experience of homelessness was related to family conflict. Youth need support with family mediation as a means of helping them reconnect back home when safe to do so. However, we must also recognize that in some cases, it may not be safe to return home, as 23 youth said they were leaving unsafe housing.

A third common pathway leading to youth homelessness, that youth identified, was substance use (25) and/or mental health. Youth need access to low-barrier services that will meet them where they are at. It is important to remember that many factors impacting mental health and substance use concerns are different for youth compared with adults. Factors to consider might include; brain development, readiness for change, peer influence, shame and guilt, and associated stigma.

Youth Voice|

“Mental illness you ain’t getting the best of me today!”

Additionally, 9 youth identified their reason for homelessness was their experience of aging out of ministry care. This demonstrates that there is still room for growth regarding life skills development, transition planning, and comprehensive support post nineteen for the most vulnerable youth in care. Many youth are not ready to be independent at age nineteen and need ongoing support to achieve developmental milestones and transition into adulthood.



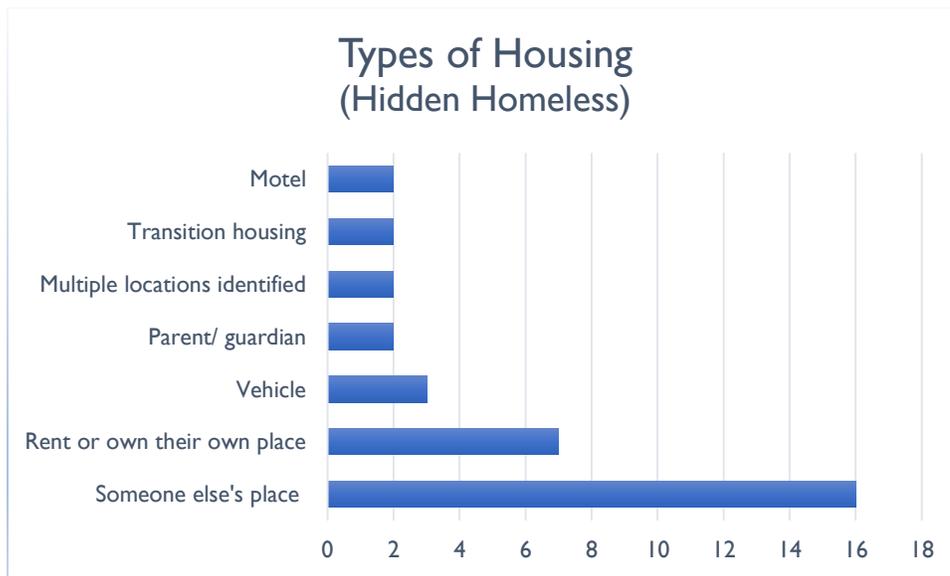
Research shows that the longer a young person is homeless, the more harm and trauma they may experience.⁸ Youth need a quick response and intervention to their first experience of homelessness to ensure its brief and a one-time occurrence in order to prevent any further harm.

In the 2018 Youth Count 21% of youth identified they were having to resort to the survival activity of trading sexual favors in order to have their basic needs met. This is usually known as “survival sex,” but some youth refer to this experience as “survival rape” as their experience is exploitation and there is no choice.

34% of youth, identified they were having to resort to survival activities that were illegal in order to meet their basic financial needs. These impacts of youth homelessness can result in a strain on emergency health care services, as 21% of youth identified accessing emergency health services.

⁸ Coates, J.; McKenzie-Mohr, S. (2010). Out of the frying pan, into the fire: Trauma in the lives of homeless youth prior to and during homelessness. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 37(4), 65-96.

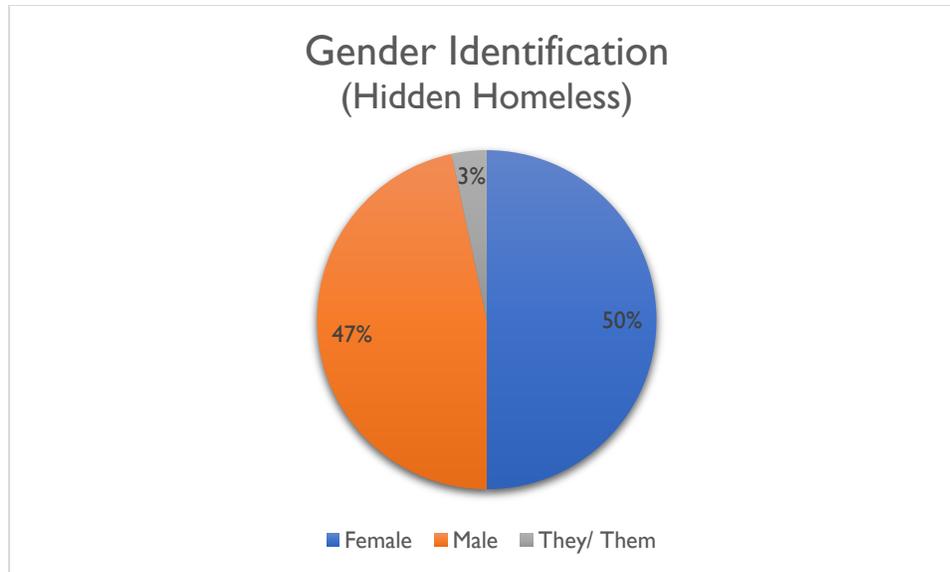
30 Youth Currently Hidden Homeless



Out of all survey respondents, 30 youth identified they were experiencing hidden homelessness. As hidden homelessness is characterized by experiences of couch surfing, the majority of youth in this category (53%) identified they were staying with friends, family, or unsafe people in order to have shelter. A small number of youth identified they were living in a vehicle, which the Youth Count group defined as ‘hidden’ without the knowledge of whether it was an RV (could be considered housing) or an actual vehicle (would be considered visible homelessness).

Youth Voice

“Housing for underage people is not available, causing me to be forced to live in an unhealthy environment”

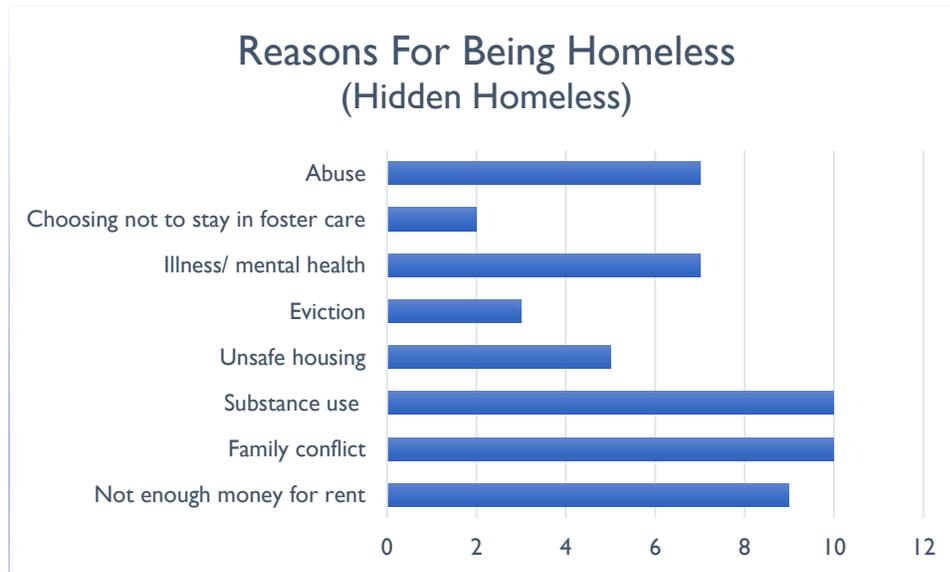


In the hidden homeless category, 50% of youth identified as female. This highlights the importance of Youth Count methodology in uncovering the hidden nature of homelessness as females are often undercounted in homelessness surveys as many females may be couch surfing or experiencing survival rape, which is not as visible as street homelessness. Many young men are also experiencing hidden homelessness, as 47% of survey respondents identified as male in this category. 3% of youth identified as “They/Them” in the hidden homeless category.



Out of the 30 youth who said they were experiencing hidden homelessness, 53% of youth identified as Non-Indigenous and 47% of youth identified as Indigenous. Although these numbers are not as discouraging as the findings within the ‘visibly homeless’ category, 47% is a shockingly high number of Indigenous youth to be considered as part of the ‘hidden homeless’ category. According to Statistics Canada Indigenous youth comprise only 6% of all Canadian Youth.⁹

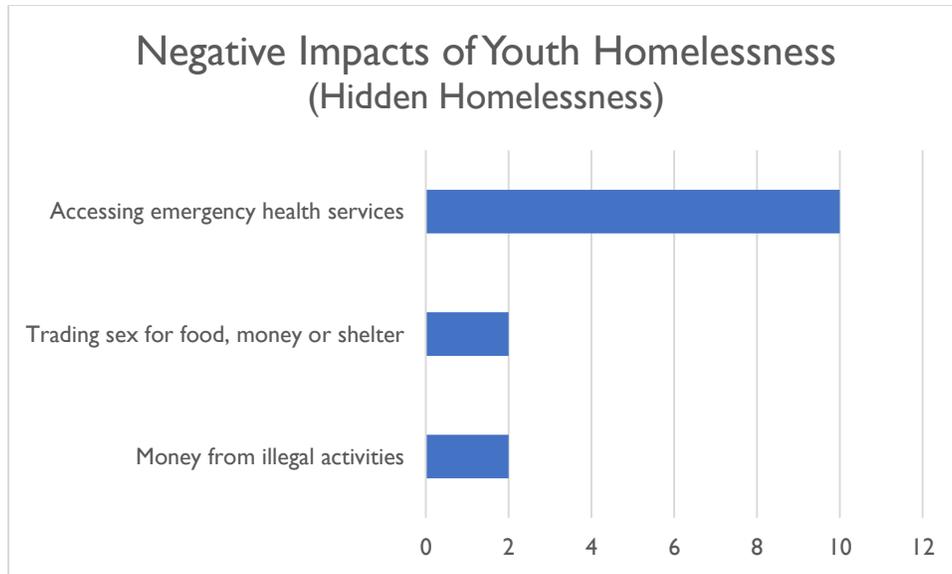
⁹ Statistics Canada. (2011). Aboriginal peoples in Canada: First Nations people, Metis, and Inuit. *National Household Survey, 2011*. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>



Many common themes regarding the reasons contributing to their homelessness were noticed within the responses of the 30 survey participants who were identified as part of the ‘hidden homeless’ category. The three most common pathways identified as having led to their homelessness were family conflict (10 youth), substance use (10 youth) and not enough income to afford rent (9 youth). That being said a number of other factors were also identified. Other pathways mentioned include: abuse, mental health or illness, unsafe housing, eviction, and choosing not to stay in ministry care (which could refer to situations where youth may have a placement in a foster home or other ministry resource but they are choosing not to access as it may not meet their needs).

Youth Voice

“Was previously couch-surfing and [staying at] motels. Need counseling for addiction and my mental health to address my issues to be able to change. Currently trying to go to treatment”

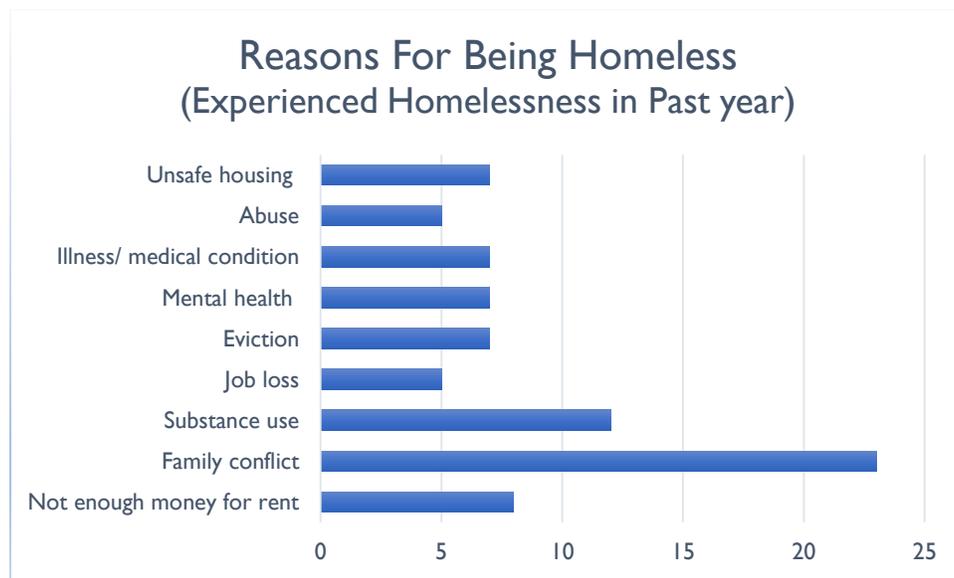


Many studies have shown that poverty and homelessness have a significant financial impact on Canadian societies through additional expenditures to treat malnutrition and other emergency medical needs, along with increased costs for policing and the judicial system.

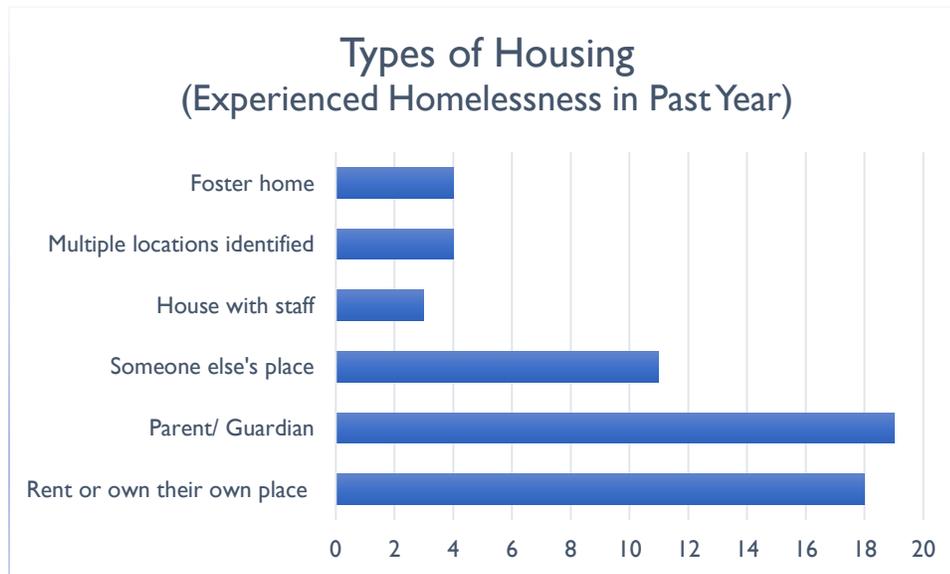
When exploring the overall negative impacts of youth homelessness within the hidden homeless category, the majority (33%) of youth identified that they use emergency health services for their medical needs. This indicates a high cost for emergency healthcare services associated with homelessness that could be re-directed to prevention initiatives. Additionally, 7% of youth identified engaging in survival sex to meet their basic needs, along with 7% identifying they engaged in illegal activities to survive. This speaks to the additional costs to society via policing and the justice system.

50 Youth Experienced Homelessness in the Past Year

Out of the survey respondents, 50 youth identified that although they currently have housing, they had experienced homelessness within the past year. The majority of survey respondents under 18 years of age who identified as having experienced homelessness were currently housed and identified their housing situation as secure. For other youth, the housing they found was insecure and they face risks of rising rent prices and unsafe environments that could perpetuate future episodes of homelessness.



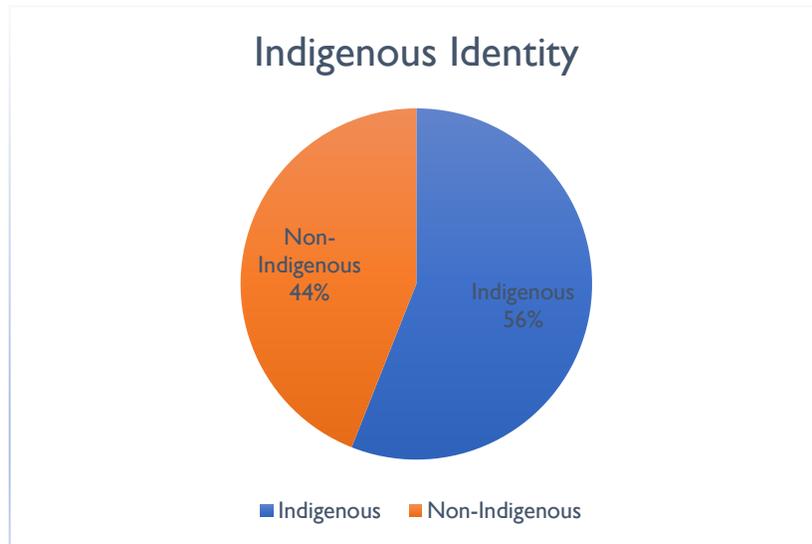
For the youth who had experienced homelessness, the most common reason was family conflict (23 youth). This may lead readers to wonder if youth were able to reconnect back home thus ending their episode of homelessness, and indicates a need for family support services aimed at reconnecting youth with their families when it is safe to do so. Substance use was another common reason that 12 youth cited as a reason for their past experience of homelessness.



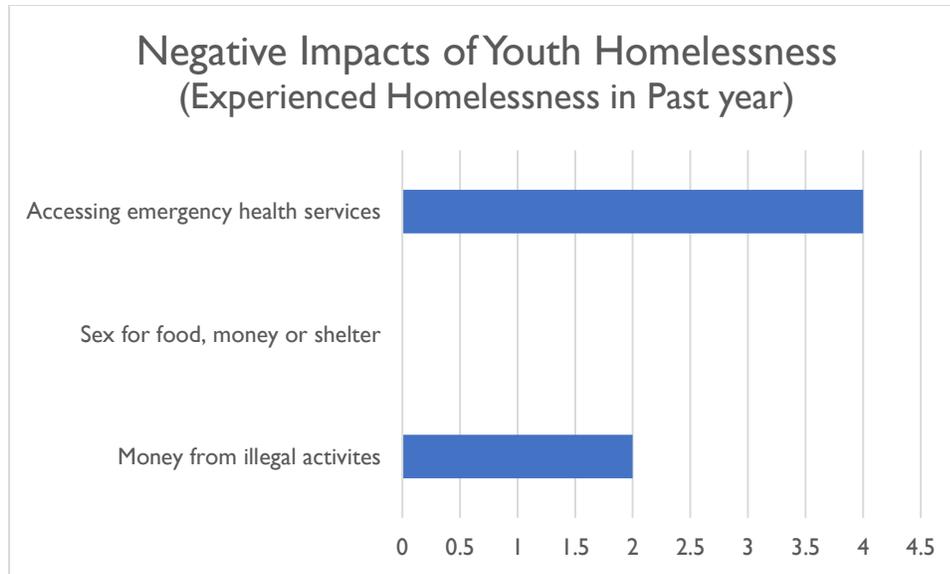
The majority of youth who said they were currently housed but had experienced homelessness within the past year expressed that they were now renting their own place. The second most common place they were now living was in their parent or guardians home, showing that nineteen (19) youth had reconnected back home. An additional eleven (11) youth stated that they were staying at someone else’s place, which shows the potential risk of future episodes of homelessness as this form of housing is often not consider long-term or stable. A small number of youth were also staying at multiple locations, which indicates the continued housing insecurity these youth were facing.

Youth Voice

“I was homeless, but now I have a good home and access to money and healthcare”



As with both the visible and hidden homeless categories, the number of Indigenous youth identifying as having experienced homelessness within the last year, is disproportionate to the number of Indigenous youth living within the city of Kamloops. The survey showed that 56% of Indigenous survey respondents were homeless within the past year but were currently housed. This demonstrates a particular need to address the socio-economic concerns facing First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities.



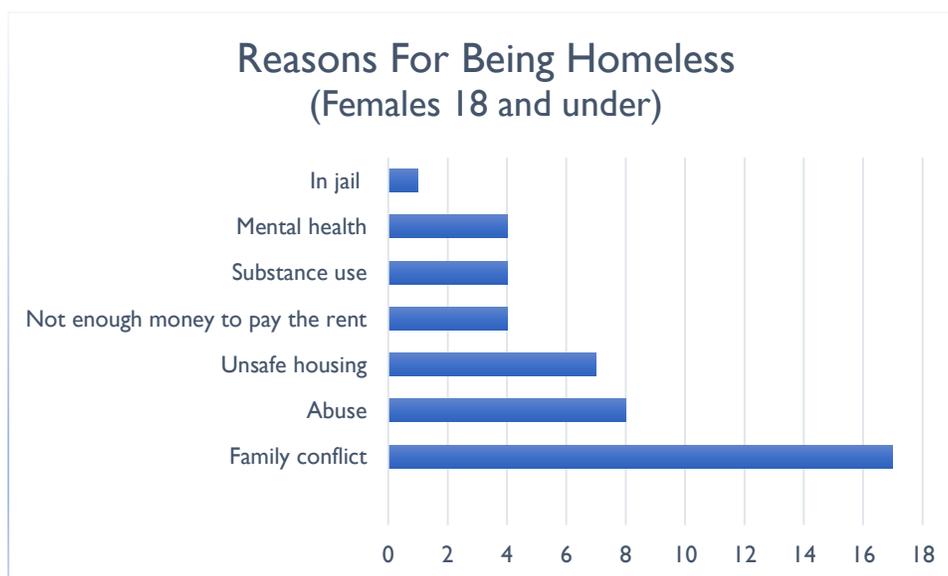
As a result of this survey, it was apparent that even with temporary and insecure housing, youth’s reliance on “illegal activities” and “survival sex” drops significantly, and becomes almost non-existent with secure housing. The likelihood of youth having a job increased for youth who had obtained secure housing. In general, the use of emergency services to address healthcare needs decreases significantly when youth are securely housed. These statistics provide a cost-benefit rationale for the government to invest in services and housing that supports youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness, as we know the cost of emergency health care services, policing, and the judicial system is much more costly than preventative measures.

Profiles of Youth Sub-Populations

This section of the report will focus on specific profiles of youth sub-populations to provide valuable information on the most common pathways into homelessness and the greatest supports that youth identified would aid them to obtain safe, stable, and secure housing.

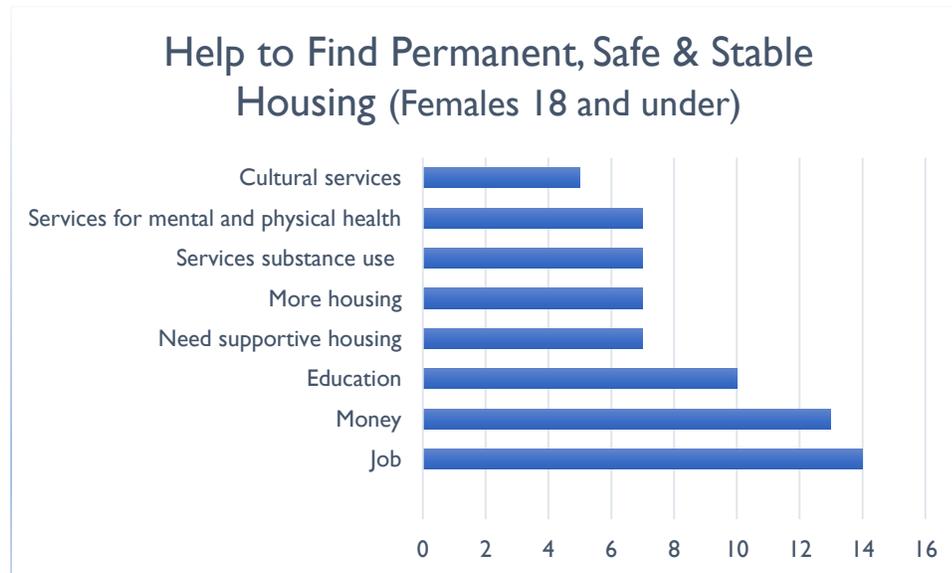
Females Under Age 18

There were 23 female youth under age eighteen who identified they were experiencing or had experienced homelessness in the past year. The most common pathway that youth cited for this experience of homelessness was conflict with parents.



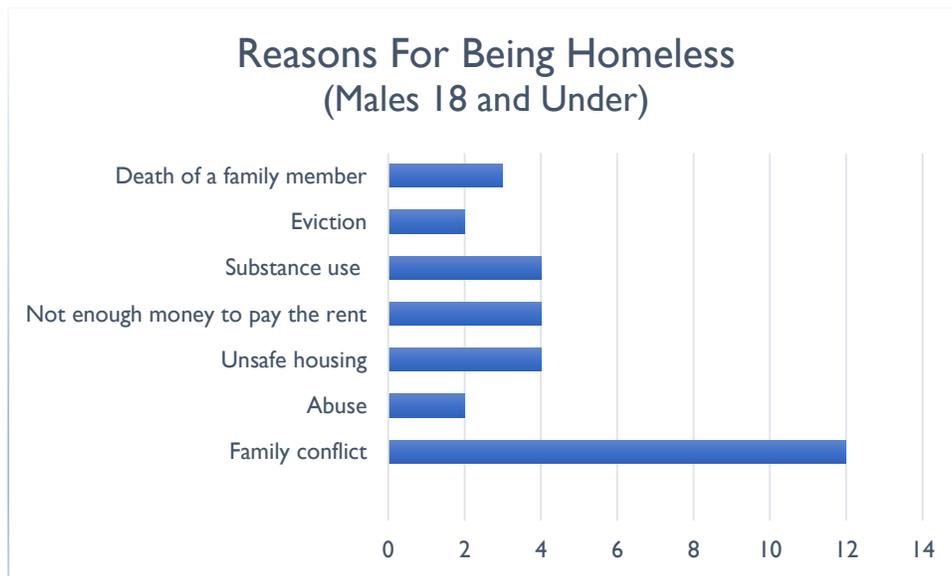
When female youth were asked what supports would help them achieve permanent, safe, stable housing, a variety of solutions were indicated. The top three included; employment, money, and education. Income via employment was the most important need fourteen (14) female youth under 18 years of age identified as crucial to helping them secure and maintain housing. An additional thirteen (13) youth noted that money in general would help them obtain and preserve housing. These statistics speak to the need to provide youth friendly programs and policies that create employment opportunities for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Education was also identified as a crucial support to help youth transition out of homelessness. Poverty and homelessness are significant barriers to achieving a post-secondary

education. Furthermore, a person’s ability to follow through with educational programming can be severely limited by the daily struggles inherent in living below the poverty line such as transportation needs, accessing nutritious foods for mental and physical health, and the constant need to assess the stability of housing.

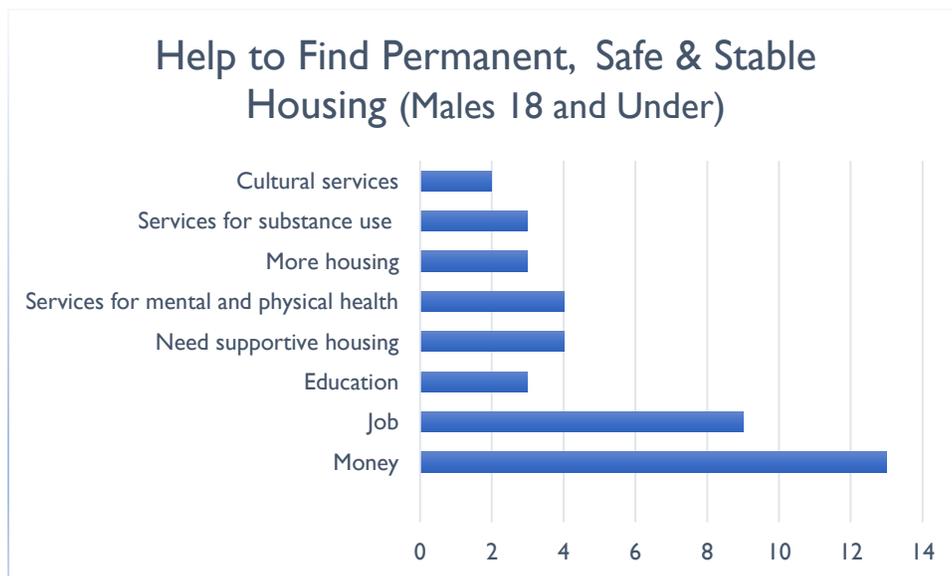


Housing was also identified as a significant need as 14 female youth identified that they desired a combination of market housing and supportive housing opportunities. This speaks to the need for the Kamloops community to develop a continuum of housing options to support youth.

Males Under Age 18



Out of survey respondents who identified they had or were currently experiencing homelessness, 19 youth stated they were males under age 18. As with females within the same category, family conflict, was again cited as the most frequent reason for their experience of homelessness.



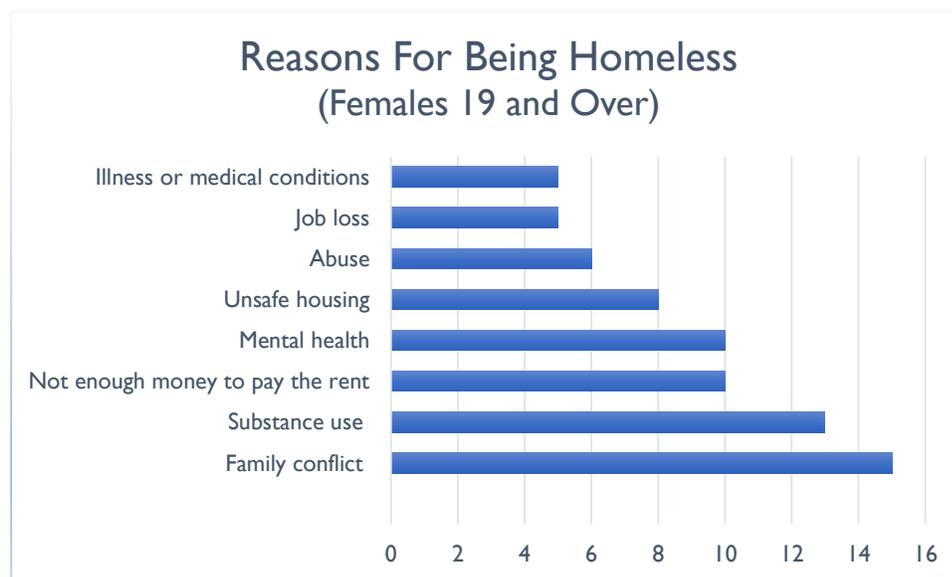
Males under eighteen (18) identified a multitude of supports that would help them secure permanent, safe, stable housing. The most frequently stated factor to support their housing was income. Males eighteen (18) and under also expressed a desire for opportunities to gain

employment as nine (9) said this support was crucial to their housing stability. Male youth also identified supportive housing and services for mental health and physical health would help end their experience of homelessness.

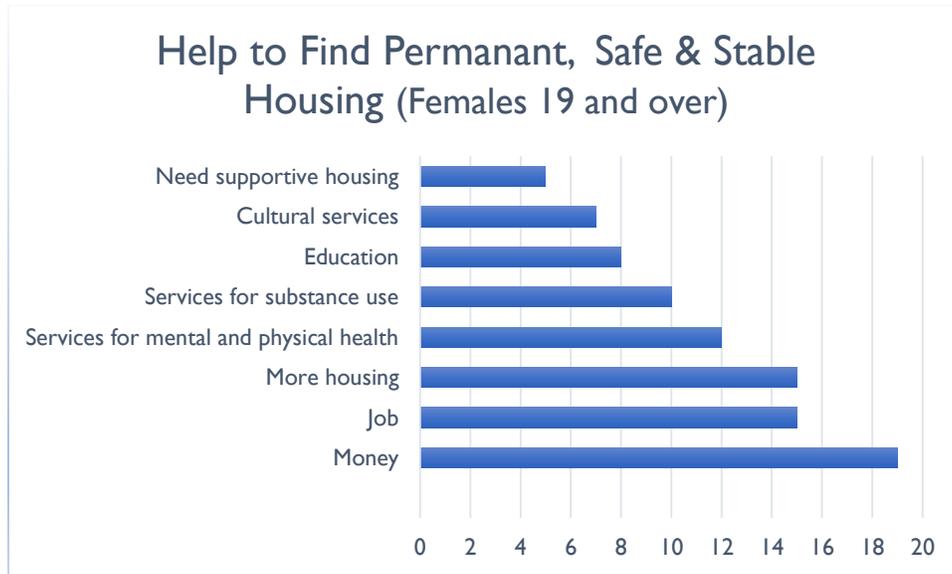
Youth Voice

“There should be more housing options and job availability. Since the demand did not meet the supply, existing landlords are charging higher rent as they try to take advantage of the situation”

Female Youth Over 19

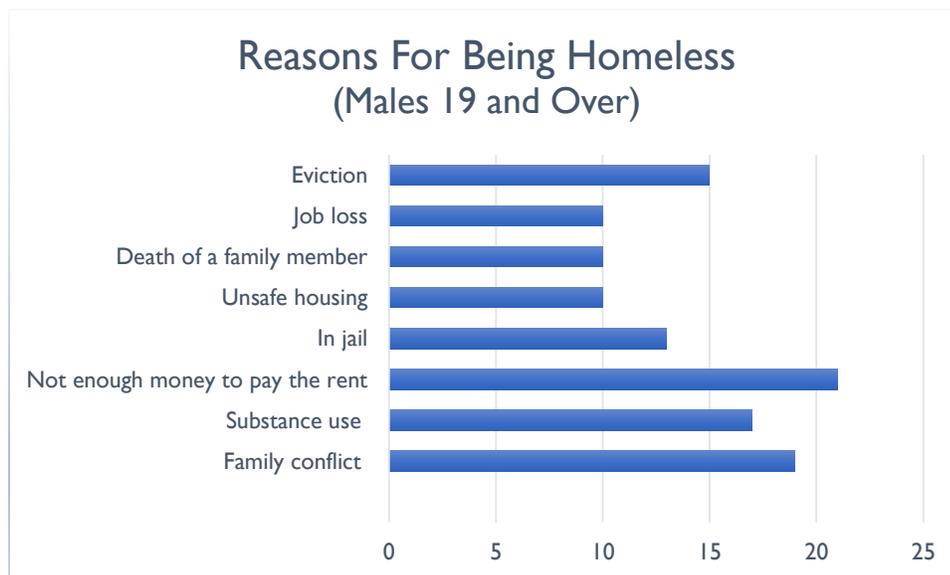


Out of the total 136 youth who experienced homelessness, 26 identified as females over nineteen (19) years of age. Family conflict was cited as the major reason for their homelessness, while many others identified substance use as one of their pathways into homelessness.



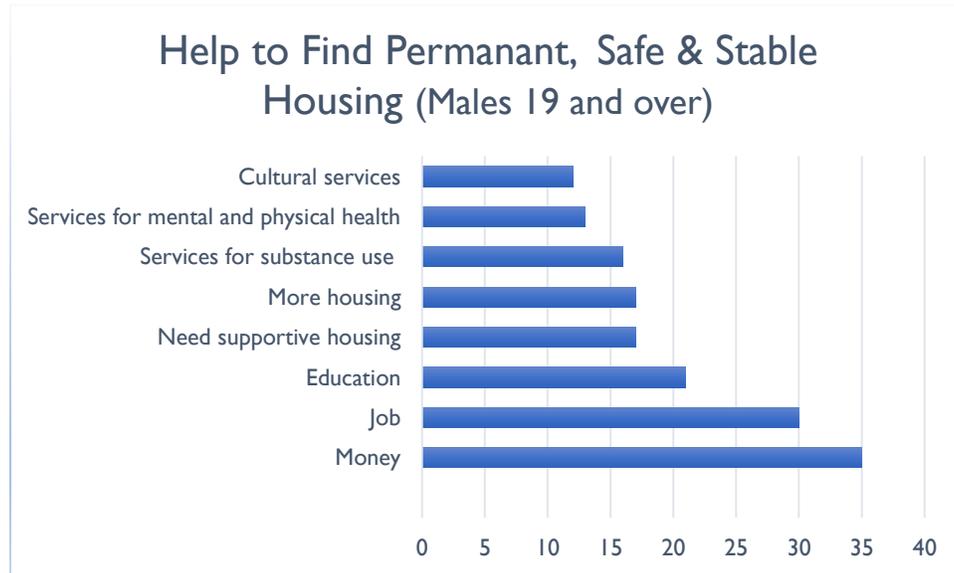
Income, employment, and housing were cited as the most important supports to help youth secure permanent and safe housing. Additionally, many of these youth noted a need for mental and physical health services, along with services for substance use as important factors in getting their housing needs met.

Male Youth Over 19



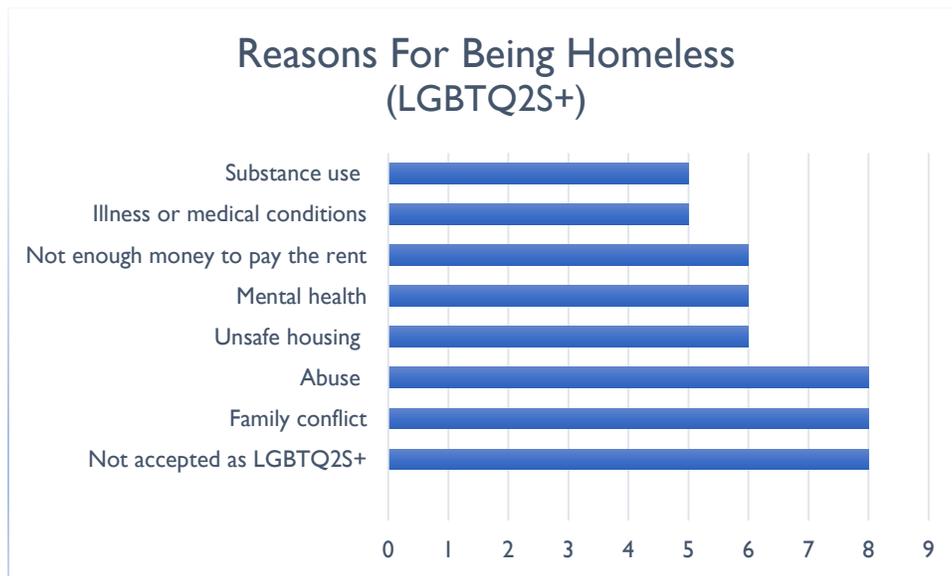
Out of survey respondents, 47 identified as being male youth over the age of nineteen. Many respondents cited they did not have enough money to pay rent resulting in their experience of homelessness. Other primary factors for youth within this age category included family

conflict, substance use, and eviction as impacting their experience of homelessness. Thirteen males also cited that jail impacted their ability to secure housing, which highlights the importance of transitional supports for youth who committed criminal offences reintegrating back into community.

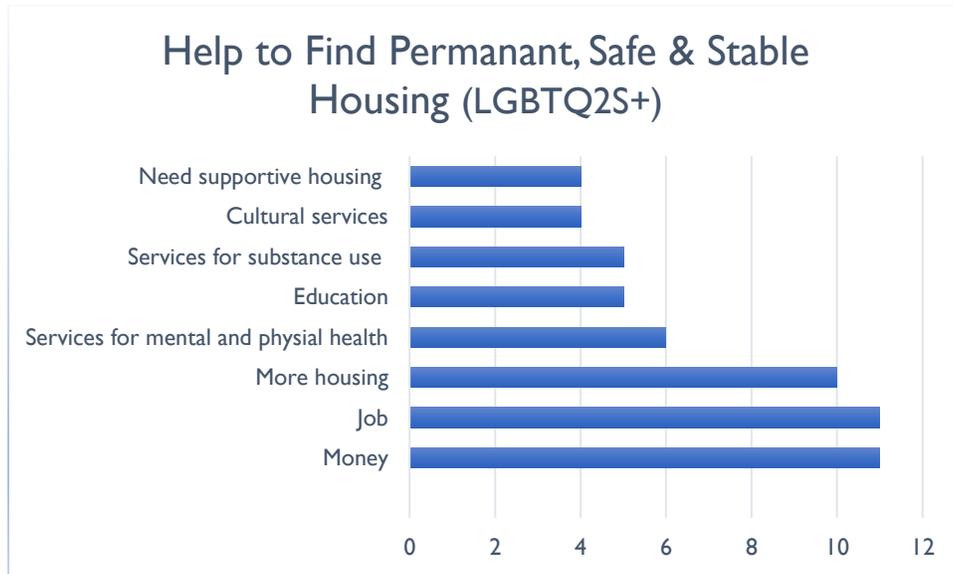


For males over nineteen (19), income and employment, followed by education, were again identified as key elements that would support their ability to acquire safe stable housing. Moving away from a reaction based, crisis driven response to poverty and homelessness towards a more preventative strategy that encourages youth friendly education and employment programs and policies has the potential to save lives and decrease unnecessary crisis-response spending.

LGBTQ2S+ Youth



Eighteen (18) youth identified as belonging to the LGBTQ2S+ community and/or as transgender. Research shows that LGBTQ2S+ youth are at risk of homelessness as a result of not being accepted at home for their sexual identity. In our survey, 44% of LGBTQ2S+ youth identified this as their reason for homelessness. The same percentage of youth cited abuse and family conflict as their pathway into homelessness. Youth belonging to this community are at risk for violence and homelessness, which shows the need for services that meet the distinct needs of this sub-population experiencing homelessness.



LGBTQ2S+ youth under eighteen (18) identified money and employment as crucial supports that will help end their experience of homelessness. Housing was also a key recommendation with 78% of youth identifying the need for a combination of supportive housing and housing in general.

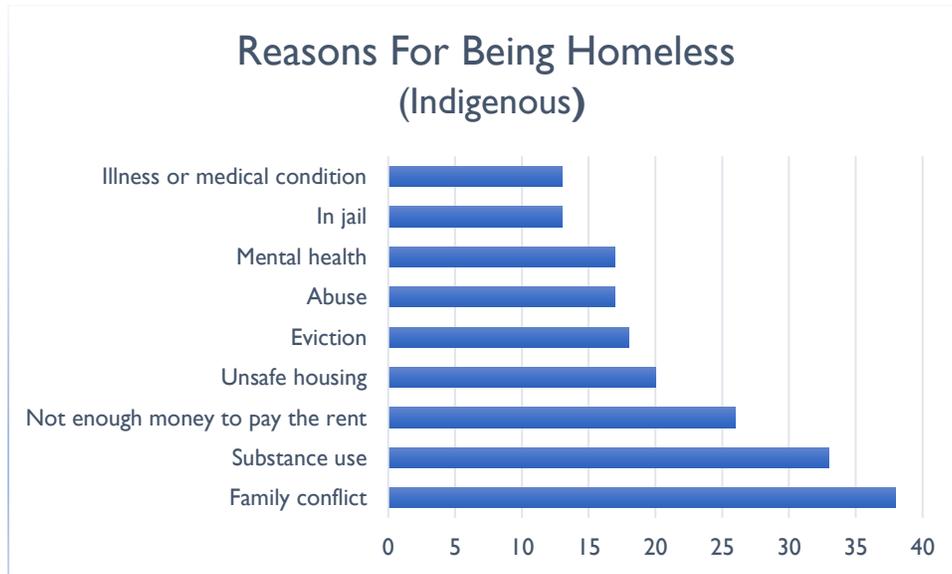
Indigenous Youth

Within the Youth Homelessness Count, Indigenous youth were overrepresented, making up 55% of the young people who had experienced homelessness in Kamloops in the past year. This report has spoken to this overrepresentation across all three categories of youth (visible homeless, hidden homeless, and past experiences of homelessness) who have or are experiencing homelessness, and within involvement with the child welfare system. Research shows that although Indigenous youth makeup 6% of the total population of Canadian youth,¹⁰ they are overrepresented in our government systems including foster-care, corrections, and within the experience of homelessness. Jesse Thistle created the Indigenous definition of homelessness that looks beyond the actual physical experience of having a home and highlights the inter-generational trauma impacting their experience of homelessness¹¹. The twelve dimensions of Indigenous homelessness that Jesse speaks to include (p.10):

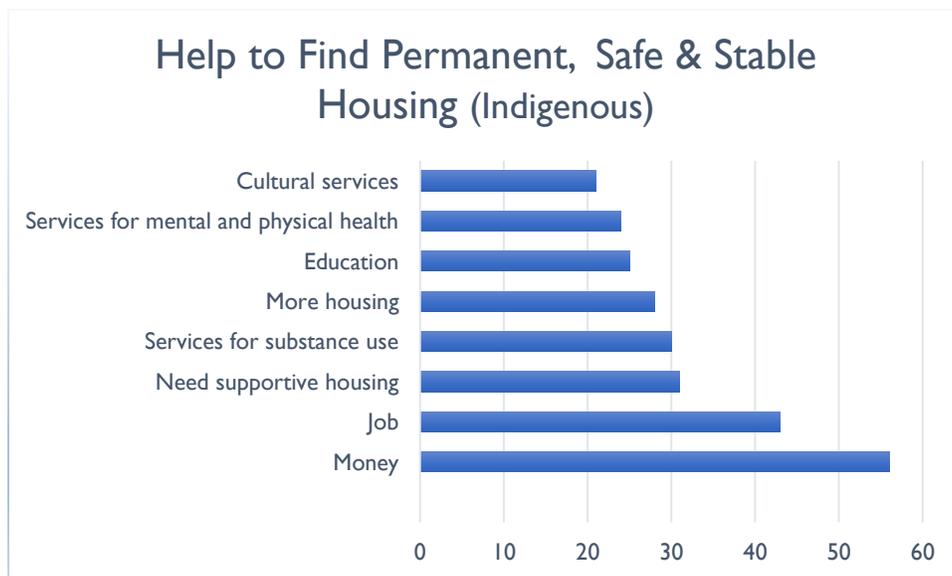
- historic displacement of homelessness (the colonial experience of being separated from the land and the loss of language and culture)
- geographic separation
- spiritual disconnection
- cultural disconnection and loss (not being connected through relationships)
- overcrowding leading to homelessness
- going home homelessness (where you are seen as an outsider in your home community)
- nowhere to go
- escaping harm homelessness
- emergency crisis
- climate refugee homelessness

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. (2011). Aboriginal peoples in Canada: First Nations people, Metis, and Inuit. *National Household Survey, 2011*. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

¹¹ Thistle, J. (2017). *Reframing the discussion: an indigenous definition of homelessness*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness: York University.



In the Kamloops Youth Homelessness Count, Indigenous youth identified the main pathways that lead them into their experience of homelessness. The most significant factors being substance use, family conflict, and not having enough money to pay rent. The identification of family conflict as a factor highlights the relational supports that are needed to support and care for families so that they can heal together. When recognizing substance use as a pathway to homelessness it is also important to look at the number of youth who indicated mental health as these pathways are often interconnected. It is also imperative that to reflect upon and acknowledge the role of colonization and intergenerational trauma on Indigenous people.



When Indigenous youth were asked what supports would meet their needs for permanent, safe, stable housing, they identified many different supports. This speaks to the need for holistic support systems throughout the journey out of homelessness.

Alongside other forms of support, youth need financial assistance to transcend poverty and homelessness. A high percentage of Indigenous youth identified the need for money and financial support in securing housing.

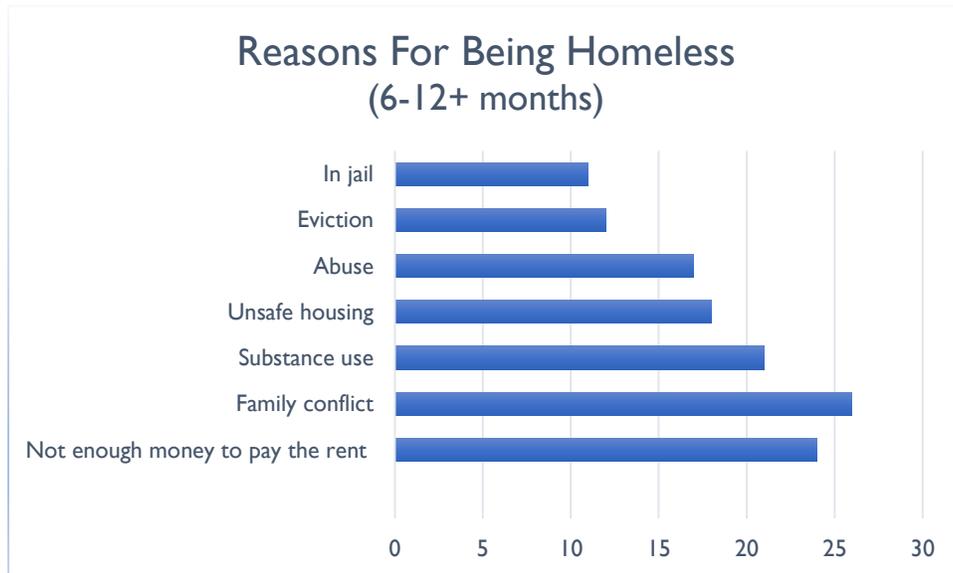
Secondly, Indigenous youth wanted support to secure employment, which would boost their financial situation in order to afford housing and provide young people with a sense of purpose. This is similar to other sub-populations of youth who consistently expressed a need for more money and a desire to find employment, which shows the reality that Kamloops is experiencing an affordable housing crisis and the need for innovative youth friendly employment opportunities.

Distinct from other categories, Twenty-one (21) Indigenous youth cited the need for cultural services to support their ability to acquire permanent, safe, stable housing. Jesse Thistle (2017) highlighted that the “Indigenous concept of home is a metaphysical understanding of emplacement rather than a built-in environment” (p.15).¹² The young people in Kamloops identified a need for cultural services that research shows can help create this sense of connection to community. There are many Indigenous organizations in the Kamloops community who are doing amazing work to support Indigenous youth, and to connect them with their culture and community. These agencies and individuals should be supported to deliver these critical services to Kamloops youth and families.

¹² Thistle, J. (2017). *Reframing the discussion: an indigenous definition of homelessness*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness: York University.

“Chronic” Homeless Youth (6 months- 1 year)

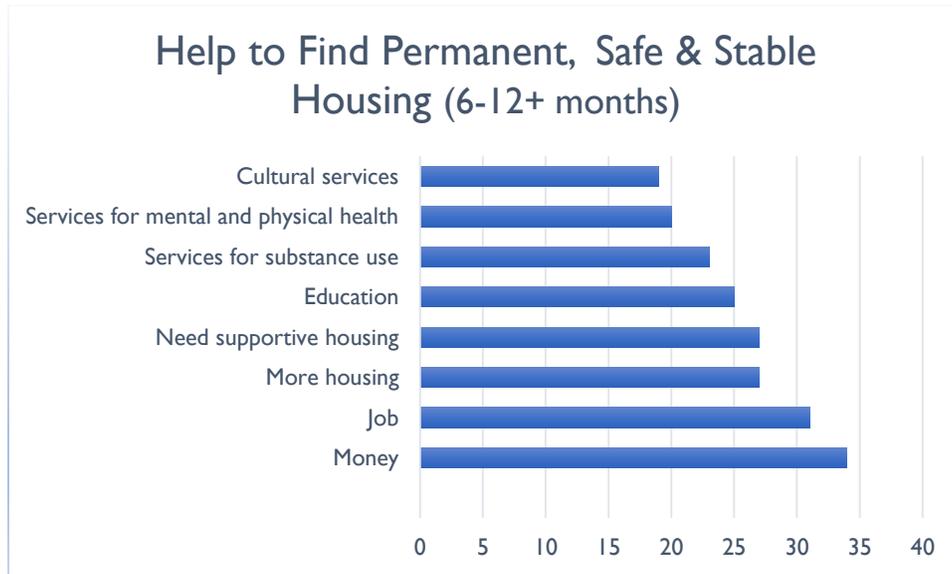
Out of the 136 youth who identified as being homeless, 41 youth identified they had been homeless for six months to a year. For the purposes of this report, this group will be referred to as “chronic” homeless.



The most common reason for being homeless, given by 26 of the “chronic” homeless youth was family conflict. The next most responded to pathway expressed by 24 of the youth was not enough income to afford rent. Substance use was identified as a contributing factor by 21 of the youth. The survey also showed a significant number of chronically homeless youth experiencing homelessness due to abuse and unsafe housing options.

Youth Voice

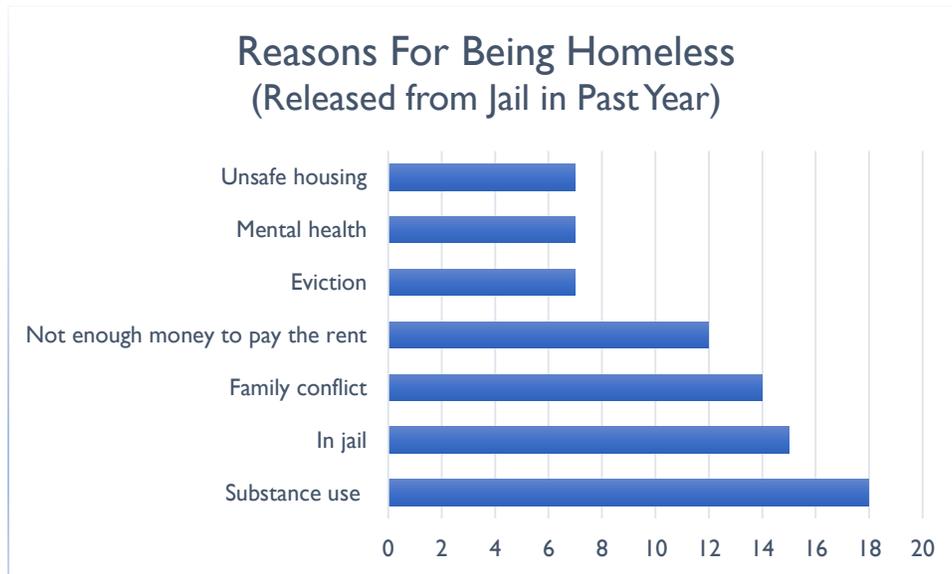
“I was physically hit... I was also emotionally, mentally, spiritually neglected. I was bullied and called names”



The youth experiencing “chronic” homelessness were open to a wide variety of supports to help their transition out of homelessness. Income, employment and housing were again identified as the most important supports needed. A high number of the youth experiencing chronic homelessness in the Kamloops’ community identified the need for supportive housing. It is essential that distinct supportive housing options for youth in Kamloops are designed to eliminate the distinct barriers youth are facing. Working from a youth friendly, housing first, model will help youth transcend homelessness, and act as a bridge into housing. A Way Home Kamloops is currently working towards providing, Safe Suites, a low barrier supportive housing option for youth experiencing chronic homelessness with complex needs. Safe Suites will support youth to stabilize and transition into permanent, safe, stable housing.

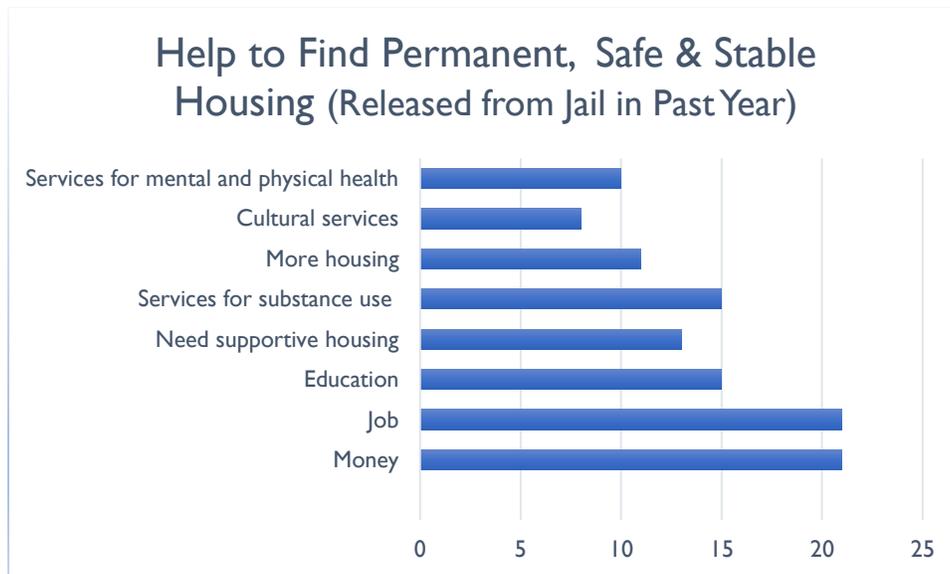
Youth Who Had Been Released From Corrections in Past Year

There were thirty-one (31) youth that had experienced homelessness within the past year and identified they had been released from jail during that time period. Out of these 31 youth, 20 of them identified as Indigenous which is a clear overrepresentation.



The most predominant reasons youth identified for their experience of homelessness was substance use, being in jail, and family conflict. This highlights the need for distinct housing and services that support youth who are transitioning from corrections back into community.

Some youth speak of using corrections as being a form of housing when it gets too cold. This can become a vicious cycle where youth transition between homelessness on the streets and time in custody. This cycle is an extensive cost to the judicial system, which speaks to the cost-benefit analysis of creating services that provide housing and re-integration programs to this population. By breaking this cycle and creating services that are responsive to these needs, youth would have the opportunity to become contributing members of the community.



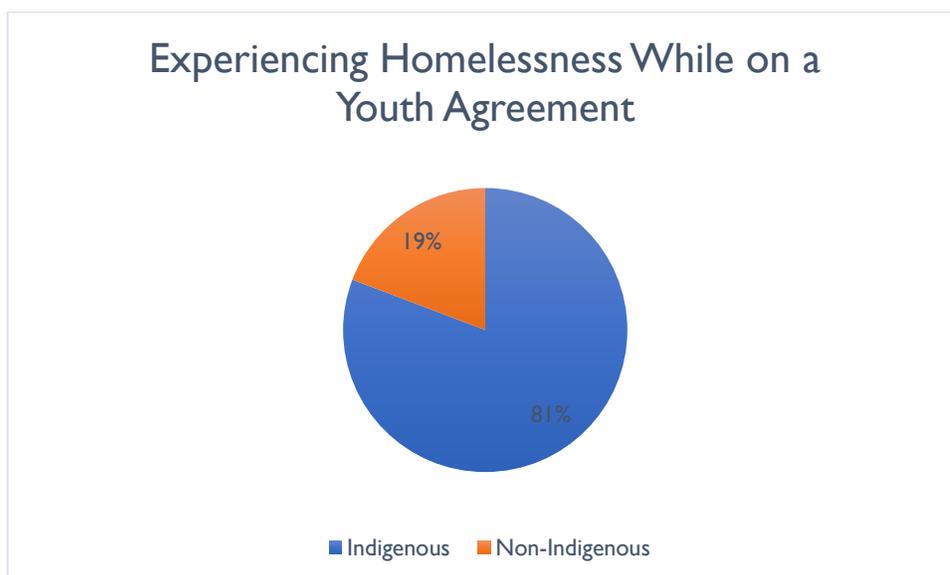
Youth who were released from corrections in the past year identified many different supports that would help them to achieve permanent, safe, and stable housing. The key supports were: securing employment, financial assistance, education, and services for substance use. As they are facing many barriers to employment such as a criminal record, many young people transitioning from corrections are placed on income assistance as their sole means of income. The shelter portion of income assistance allocated to recipients is insufficient to secure market housing. This speaks to the need to support youth with securing stable employment and/or a rental subsidy to avoid homelessness. Additionally, youth identified the need for substance use services and supportive housing to assist their transition back into community.

Youth In and From the Child Welfare System Experiencing Homelessness

The 2018 Youth Count Survey asked youth who were or had experienced homelessness about their experience within the child welfare system. A few themes began to emerge for this category. The first was youth who experienced homelessness while on a Youth Agreement, and the second theme was around youth who aged out of the foster care system.

Youth Agreements

Youth who are under the age of nineteen (19) can receive Youth Agreement services through the Ministry of Children and Family Development if eligible. A Youth Agreement provides financial and complementary supports to assist a youth in living independently. A Youth Agreement can be a powerful tool to prevent and respond to homelessness, but at times youth who are on a Youth Agreement can face housing insecurity or homelessness.



Twenty-six (26) youth identified they experienced homelessness at some point while on a Youth Agreement through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. This speaks to the need for increased support services to help youth secure safe and developmentally appropriate housing. This has been acknowledged within other communities, as a recent study conducted in Vancouver on youth housing options advocated for dedicated units of housing to youth in and

from Ministry care.¹³ Youth are also facing barriers of discrimination such as ageism and a lack of affordable housing that is accessible to their unique needs, which speaks to the need for partnerships with community organizations that can provide housing and support services to youth accessing the Youth Agreement.

26 youth identified as experiencing homelessness while on a Youth Agreement

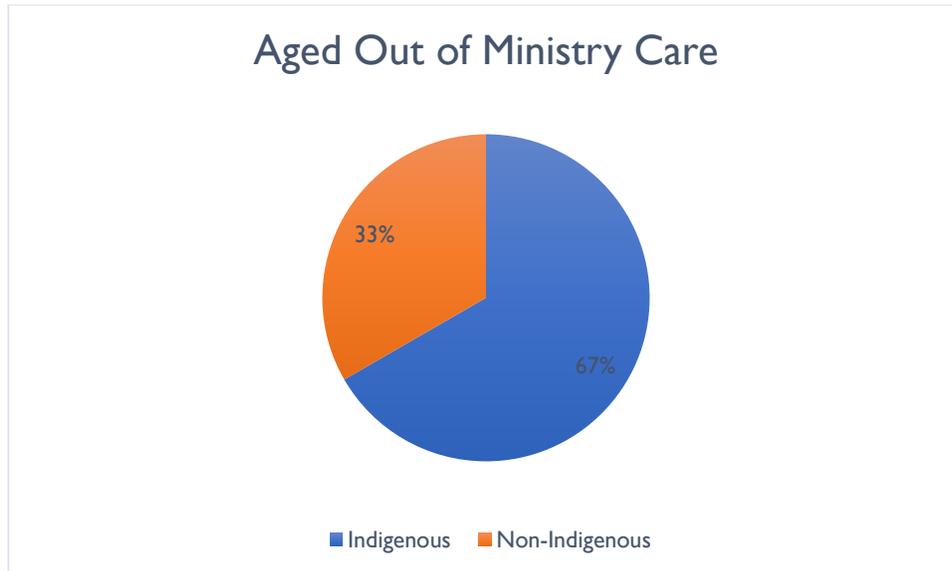
Reasons stated by the youth for their homelessness while on a Youth Agreement: “in jail”, “runaway,” “mentor program,” “abuse,” “parent passed away,” “did not care or feed me,” “my own choice,” “moved,” “bad living situation,” “circumstances,” “couldn’t afford home,” “kicked out,” “was wanted,” “drug use,” “stayed in a tent”

Youth Voice

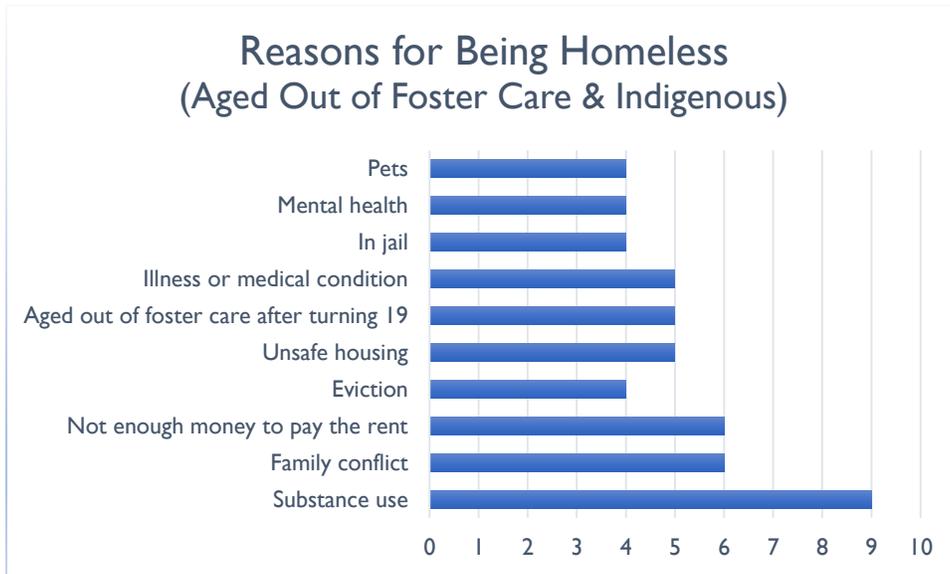
“A lot of people don’t like renting to youths and [its] hard to find a place to live. Youth buildings are age 17 and up”

¹³ Collective Impact TRRUST. (2018). *Surviving or Thriving: Avoiding youth transitioning from care to homelessness in Vancouver*. Retrieved from http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/ci_surviving_or_thriving.pdf

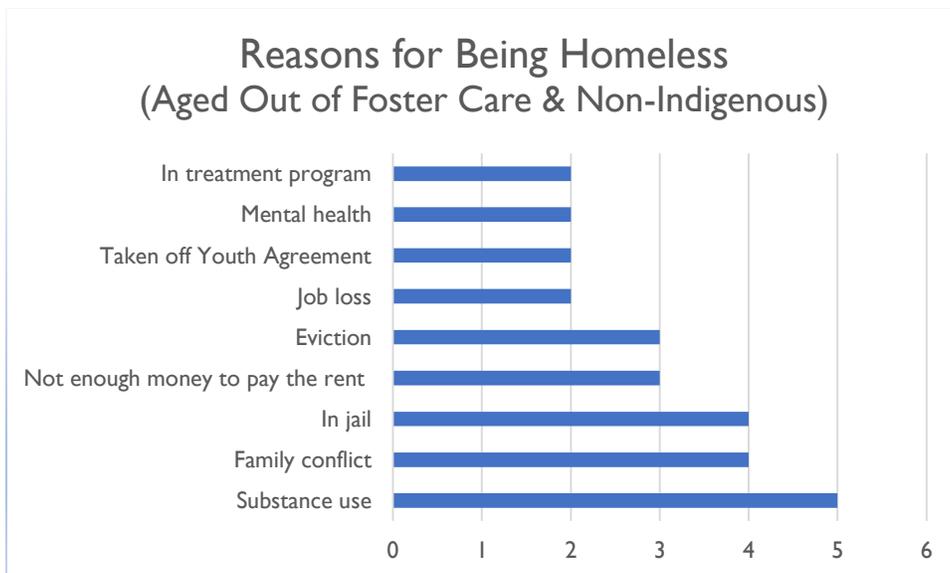
Aged Out of Ministry Care



Twenty-four (24) youth identified they had aged out of the child welfare system leading to their experience of homelessness. There was an overrepresentation of Indigenous youth with sixteen (16) out of the twenty-four (24) youth stating they were Indigenous. This shows a significant pathway into homelessness that requires distinct responses and services to support youth as they transition to independence after leaving the child welfare system. Research shows that this generation is the boomerang generation and on average youth with family privilege leave home at 28. Youth from the foster care system do not have this privilege and may not have the natural support system to safeguard against future episodes or experiences of homelessness. Additionally, many of the life-skills that young people learn are passed down to them through family members. Youth in care need a planned way to learn life-skills that will support their housing sustainability and prevent future episodes of homelessness.



There was an overrepresentation of Indigenous youth who aged out of care and experienced homelessness as a result. The primary reason nine (9) of these youth identified for their experience of homelessness was substance use. Other youth identified experiences of unsafe housing, eviction, and not being able to afford the rent as influencing their experience of homelessness. In other cases, youth identified time in jail or family conflict as influencing their experience of homelessness.



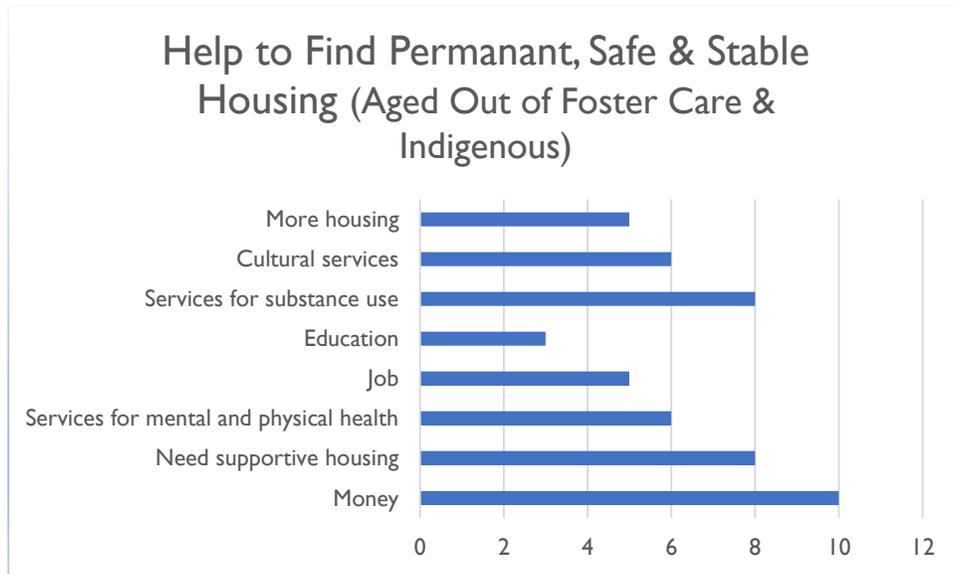
The main reason non-Indigenous youth who had aged out of ministry care had experienced homelessness, was identified as substance use by five (5) young people. The research shows that youth from the child welfare system are at an increased risk of substance use as a coping mechanism to deal with the trauma they may have experienced.¹⁴ This was followed closely by family conflict and incarceration with four (4) youth in each category identifying this as one of their main pathways.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) offers some supports to youth who have aged out of their care such as the Agreement with Young Adults (AYA) which provides financial support to youth between the ages of 19-26 who meet criteria such as attending education or treatment. Although AYA includes life-skills programs that could benefit youth aging out, these are limited and only available in a few communities and must be designated and approved by MCFD. There is currently no designated life-skills program in Kamloops, so youth are not able to access AYA if they are not ready for education or residential drug and alcohol treatment.

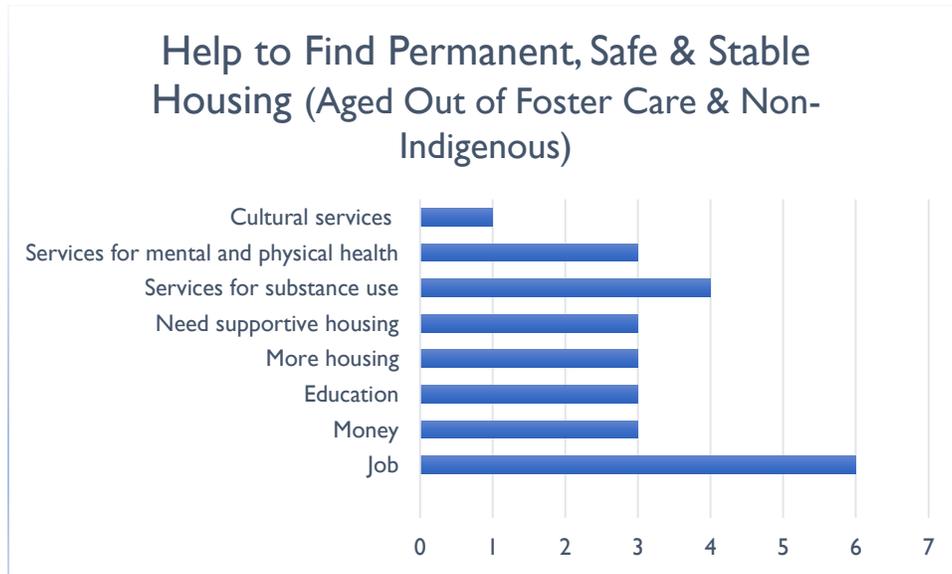
As substance use is a common theme among the youth who stated that they had experienced homelessness in Kamloops, this may speak to the need to develop programming to address the varied needs of youth who have aged out of ministry care. Some youth may not be ready to access treatment for their substance use and are not able to access the current AYA program, which is lacking support for youth with complex needs.

The other pathways non-indigenous youth identified were similar to Indigenous youth, which included experiences in correctional facilities, unsafe housing, eviction, family conflict or not enough money to pay the rent.

¹⁴ Representative for Children and Youth. (2018). Time to listen: youth voices on substance use. *RCY.BC.CA* Retrieved from: https://rcybc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/reports_publications/timetolisten-youthvoicesonsubstanceuse-2018-web-final.pdf



When Indigenous youth who had aged out of the child welfare system were asked what would support them to secure permanent, safe, stable housing, the majority cited financial barriers and a need for financial assistance to secure housing. This speaks to the affordable housing crisis and structural causes of homelessness such as poverty. A high percentage identified the need for supportive housing or housing in general that would support them through the transition to independence. Other youth identified the need for mental health and physical health services to support their housing sustainability. Six (6) of these youth recommended distinct cultural services to support the sustainability of their housing.

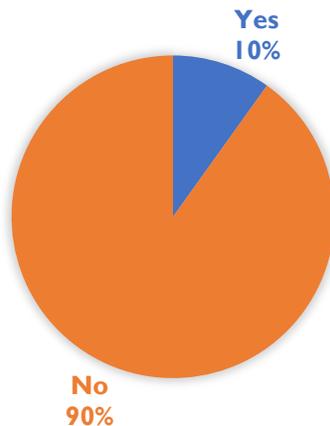


For non-Indigenous youth that aged out of foster-care, they cited the top support that would help them achieve permanent, safe, and stable housing was the need for employment opportunities. As many of employment opportunities are supported through family networks, youth from the foster care system, may not have this privilege and need support to achieve this developmental milestone. A combination of housing and supportive housing was again identified as a key solution, as well as substance use services.

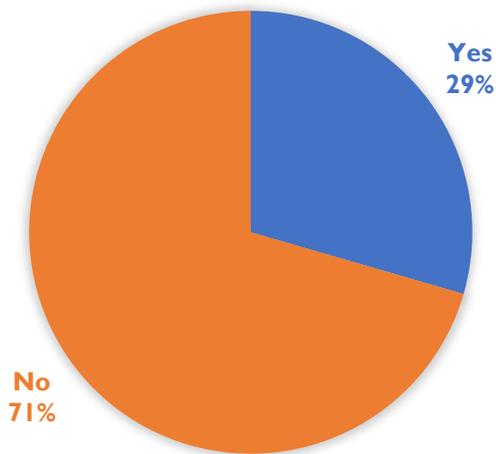
Grade 10 School Survey for the Youth Homelessness Count

A Way Home Kamloops Society partnered with School District 73 to survey each grade ten class in the entire district to get a baseline of what youth homelessness looked like within the school district. 617 surveys were completed by grade ten students during May 8th-10th. Only seven (7) youth identified experiencing homelessness, although this number may be higher as youth attending alternative schools participated in the Count through magnet events and were not included here.

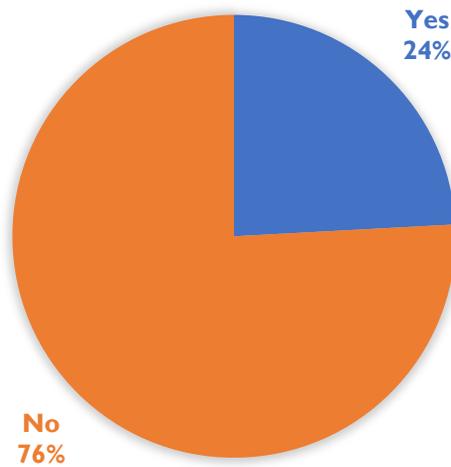
617 School Surveys



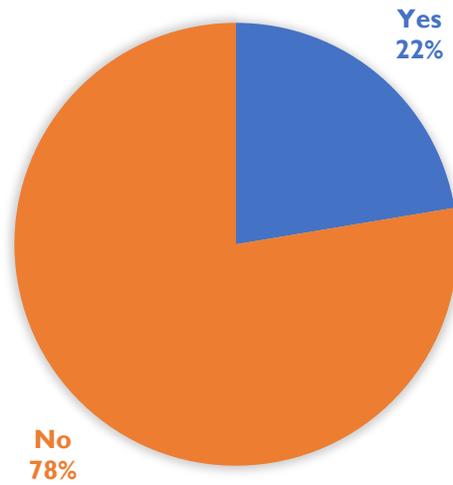
61 of the 617 youth (10%) identified they had talked to a supportive adult about where they were living or their home situations. Youth reached out to a variety of different adult supports, with the most common being their school counselor by eleven (11) youth. An additional eight (8) youth spoke to their teacher and five (5) spoke to a youth advocate.



182 youth (29 %) identified they knew of a friend (or friends) who are in an unsafe housing situation or have been homeless.



149 youth (24%) identified they had provided a temporary safe space to stay (like a couch or a bed) for friends who said they felt unsafe in their home or were without housing.



Only 138 youth (22%) identified they knew where to get help for a friend who was experiencing homelessness. This may speak to a need for community organizations to have an increased presence at schools to raise awareness of available services they can access.

Recommendations for Action:

The Youth Count Committee identified recommendations based on the voices of youth:

1) Provide youth with a continuum of housing that provides choice and meets their distinct developmental needs as young people

Youth reported that they need a variety of housing options that meet their needs as they transition to independence. This includes a combination of supportive housing with 24/7 staffing and market housing that provides youth with permanence. Housing should include complementary supports from community and break down barriers to sustainability. As there is an affordable housing crisis, youth face many barriers to accessing market rentals such as age discrimination, belief they are not able to sign a lease, lack of references, and rental history. This speaks to the need to have distinct rental options that are designated to youth.

The Kamloops Youth Housing First Wrapforce provides a combination of housing options including communal and independent housing options that support youth as they transition. Youth who do not have any prior experience of living alone may start out in a more supportive environment with peers and as they gain life-skills are supported by A Way Home to access the Youth Housing First program that provides youth with an independent scattered site unit. The Wrapforce has a long waiting list and does not have enough housing options to provide all youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness with housing and supports.

2) Provide youth with financial assistance to bridge the housing affordability gap

Many youth spoke about the experience of poverty and not being able to afford the increasingly high rental costs in Kamloops. Youth who are on basic income assistance only receive \$475 towards shelter, which is often insufficient even for less expensive housing options such as shared accommodations. Other youth may face precarious employment such as seasonal, part-time and casual work that does not provide the solid financial foundation to secure housing.

To bridge this gap, A Way Home Kamloops works with the business sector to provide youth in the Wrapforce Youth Housing First program with a year-long rental subsidy. This helps youth as they transition off of income assistance to employment or education. Also, the Elizabeth Fry Society provides a rental assistance bank where youth over nineteen can access a loan for

financial support to secure housing. These types of initiatives need to be built on and supported by government so that all youth have access to the income they need to be stably housed.

3) Invest in prevention initiatives that support family mediation and quick responses to episodic experiences of youth homelessness

Family conflict was identified as a main pathway into youth homelessness. Additionally, many youth reported that their first experience of homelessness was at a very young age. This speaks to the need for upstream initiatives that prevent youth homelessness from occurring in the first place. Youth reported they need support with family mediation and to reconnect home if it is safe to do so. For other youth, they may require safe housing independent of family and support to develop healthy boundaries with family. There is a cost benefit analysis to providing prevention supports, as it relieves the stress on emergency services.

4) Provide support services and housing that meets the distinct needs of Indigenous youth

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) has already identified, and called for the elimination of, the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the child welfare and criminal justice systems due to the impacts colonization.¹⁵ The results of this Youth Count Report provide evidence that these systems are continuing to contribute to Indigenous youth's experiences of systemic discrimination and homelessness. Indigenous youth are overrepresented in all categories of the youth homelessness population, and face discrimination and intergenerational trauma that increases their likelihood of experiencing homelessness.

To address these issues and prevent the incidence of Indigenous youth homelessness, we must look beyond the individual and make the large-scale system changes which have already been outlined in the TRC Calls to Action. Mental health, substance use, criminality, and abuse are issues tightly entwined with the trauma of colonization in Canada, and these factors are also pathways to homelessness. Holistic support for Indigenous families and communities is needed to provide healing, socioeconomic equity, and development of healthy home environments for Indigenous youth.

¹⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Calls to action. Retrieved from: http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

In addition to the other supports identified in the report, Indigenous youth with experiences of homelessness reported that they need cultural supports that support them to sustain housing by providing a community connection and sense of belonging. Indigenous organizations providing cultural services are doing critical work in the Kamloops community and should be further supported.

5) Provide support services and housing that meets the diverse needs of LGBTQ2S+ youth.

LGBTQ2S+ youth reported that not being accepted for their sexual or gender identity at home was a pathway into homelessness. These youth also face discrimination based on sexual identity when trying to secure housing. When youth were asked how to address this, they spoke about creating inclusive spaces where all youth can be. LGBTQ2S+ youth should be connected to specific services that meet their needs. Youth said it is not helpful to segregate populations, but instead to create safe spaces where allies and youth can be together to create change. Youth also said that workers should be educated by youth around LGBTQ2S+ and updated on a regular basis to maintain competence.

6) Provide housing to youth accessing the Youth Agreement and providing transitional supports to youth who are aging out of foster-care.

Youth who are accessing the Youth Agreement program spoke about the need to have housing provided alongside financial assistance from the Ministry. Youth under nineteen face complex barriers to securing housing and may experience discrimination from being a youth in care. The province should develop dedicated units of housing for youth in or from the care system. Youth aging out foster care are at risk of homelessness and require ongoing supports, especially if they are facing complex issues such as substance use or mental health challenges. The Agreements with Young Adults program needs to be re-imagined to be inclusive of all youth who have aged out. Approximately 87% of youth who have aged out of care are not accessing the Agreements with Young Adults program.¹⁶ This shows that many youth who have aged out of care may not be able access any after-care support resulting in housing insecurity or homelessness.

¹⁶ First Call: Fostering Change. (2018). A comprehensive action plan. Retrieved from <https://www.fosteringchange.ca/fosteringchange>

7) Provide employment and education support.

Research shows that employment is a key indicator to support youth with sustaining housing. Unfortunately, youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness face many barriers to accessing employment. When viewing this through a “housing first” lens, it is clear that youth need stable housing in order to move towards achieving a sense of purpose through employment. Programs that provide employment supports and supportive opportunities for youth to gain job skills are critical for the housing success.

A Way Home Kamloops provides a Peer Navigation program that was developed for youth, by youth. Businesses such as Home Depot have stepped up to provide access to employment for youth who may not have the networks to access these opportunities.

8) Listen to the youth!!!

Honouring lived expertise and elevating youth voice is crucial in developing or implementing any policy, procedure, or program designed to prevent and end youth homelessness. Youth advocate that Youth First Voices (youth with lived experience) should come first! So often, youth voices are silenced and there is a paternalistic view that the voices of adults are more credible. This experience perpetuates homelessness and further marginalizes our young people who should have a say in anything that impacts their life! This is their right under the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, so listen!

Youth Against Youth Homelessness is an incredible group of youth with lived expertise who are creating change in our community to prevent and end youth homelessness. They will be launching a web-book on their lived experiences of homelessness to raise awareness and create change. Most of all, so people can listen and understand!

9) Implement another Youth Homelessness Count in 2020:

A Way Home Kamloops will continue to implement a bi-annual Youth Homelessness Count that provides a platform for youth to share their experiences to shed a light on the realities of youth homelessness. A Youth Count provides an opportunity to elevate the voice of youth and develop programs that will meet the gaps in services within our community. The *A Way Home Plan to End Youth Homelessness* requires a regular youth homelessness count to establish a

bench-mark and to hopefully show a reduction in the number of youth experiencing housing insecurity through our collective efforts to eradicate homelessness. A Way Home Kamloops and our community partners will review our lessons learned on an annual basis and to integrate our learnings into future counts to further refine this new, emerging area of practice across Canada.

Conclusion

A Way Home Kamloops is thankful to be the first community to conduct a Youth Homelessness Count in Canada. We hope our experience helps other communities to conduct their own youth counts and demonstrates that Youth Specific Counts are required to measure a reduction in youth homelessness. Our Youth Homelessness Count provided many lessons that will inform our methodology in subsequent years. We would like to thank all the partners who made this Youth Count possible and who together are rooted in action to prevent and end youth homelessness in our community. Our hope is that this Youth Count report will elevate the voices of youth and provides a platform where the solutions that youth identify that will help end their experience of homelessness is heard. Youth voice is critical to making the necessary changes in community to ensure every youth has access to safe housing. Together we will ensure that every young person has a way home!

A Special Recognition of Funding Partners for the 2018 Youth Homelessness Count:

Community members who donated goods and funding for honorariums

Interior Savings

Kamloops Food Bank

McDonalds

North Shore Safeway

Rotary Clubs- many different clubs and members

United Way Thompson Nicola Caribou- Youth Initiatives.

Valleyview Overlanders Lions Club

Many others.....

For more information about this report, please contact:

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Appendix 1: Survey Instrument

Share Your Voice to Create Change

Kamloops Youth Housing Survey

Location _____

Your Age _____

Birthdate: _____

Have you completed this survey elsewhere? _____

YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

<p>1.) Where do you stay most nights?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> At a motel or hotel<input type="checkbox"/> I rent or own my own place<input type="checkbox"/> Someone else's place (with a friend or other family member)<input type="checkbox"/> In a foster home<input type="checkbox"/> A house with staff<input type="checkbox"/> In the hospital, jail, prison, or a remand centre<input type="checkbox"/> At an emergency shelter or domestic violence shelter<input type="checkbox"/> In transition housing<input type="checkbox"/> A public street space (such as sidewalks, parks, forests, bus shelter, tent, square)<input type="checkbox"/> In a vehicle (car, van, RV, truck)<input type="checkbox"/> In an empty building or shed<input type="checkbox"/> With parent(s) or a guardian	<p>2.) Who do you live with? (you may check more than one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister+<input type="checkbox"/> Friends<input type="checkbox"/> Dating (or in relationship)<input type="checkbox"/> Extended family (such as an aunt, uncle, cousins, grandparents)<input type="checkbox"/> Alone<input type="checkbox"/> Pet<input type="checkbox"/> Foster family<input type="checkbox"/> Host family (exchange student)<input type="checkbox"/> Parent or Guardian<input type="checkbox"/> Roommate<input type="checkbox"/> Mentor<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
--	--

3.) How long have you lived there?

- Always been there
- Many years
- Months
- Weeks
- Days

4.) How long can you stay there?

- As long as I want
- I will have to leave soon (only temporary)

5.) Do you have your own room?

- Yes
- No

6.) Do you pay rent?

- Yes
- No

7.) Did you come to Canada as an immigrant or refugee within the past 5 years?

- Yes
- No

8.) Did you move to Kamloops in the past year?

- Yes No

9.) Have you been released from jail within the last year?

- Yes No

10.) Have you been released from a treatment centre within the last year?

- Yes No

11.) Have you ever been in foster care or in a group home?

- Yes No

If you answered yes - a) at what age _____

b) for how long _____

12.) Were you in foster care until you aged out at 19 years old?

- Yes No

13.) Were you under a youth agreement when you turned 19?

- Yes No Do not know

14.) Have you ever been homeless while on a youth agreement?

- Yes No

If you answered yes – what was the reason _____

15.) Have you ever had a youth agreement cancelled?

- Yes No

If you answered yes – what was the reason _____

16.) How many times have you stayed in a shelter in the past year?

- One time Two times Three times
 Four times (or more) None

17.) In the past year, how many times were you homeless?

- Zero times One to two times Three to four times
 Five to six times More than six times This does not apply to me

18.) How old were you when you were first homeless? _____

19.) In the past year, how long were you homeless? (Best estimate)

- 1-2 months 3-5 months 6-12 months
 This does not apply to me

20.) Since age 13, what is the longest time you have been homeless?

- Zero
_____ days _____ weeks _____ months _____ years

21.) Why were you, or why are you homeless? (you may check more than one box)

- Unsafe housing Family conflict

- Death of a family member
- In a treatment program
- Addiction or drug use
- Eviction
- In jail
- Illness or medical condition
- Job loss
- Not enough money to pay the rent

List continues below

- Physical disability
- Natural disaster (fire, flood)
- Choosing not to stay in foster care
- Taken off of Youth Agreement (YAG)
- Aged out of foster care after turning 19
- Forced out as my housing was taken over by other individuals
- Pet(s)
- Military discharge
- Mental health
- Abuse
- Not accepted as LGBTQ2S+
- This does not apply to me

22.) Have you talked to a supportive adult about where you are living or your home situation?

- Yes
- No

23.) If you answered yes, please select the individual(s) you asked for help:

- Teacher(s)
- Principal
- School Counselor
- Youth Advocate
- Others – such as _____

24.) What kind of housing would be best for you?

- Peer-housing (staying with other young people my own age)
- My own place (for independent living)
- Reconnecting with family home
- This does not apply to me

25.) What would help you find permanent, safe, stable housing (you may check more than one box)?

- Job
- Education
- More housing
- Services for mental health and physical health
- Services for drug or alcohol addiction
- This does not apply to me
- Money
- Cultural services
- Need supportive housing

26.) Do you go to school?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

27.) What school grade or level of education have you completed?

- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- Post-secondary

28.) Where do you get your money from (you may check more than one box)?

- Have a job
- Income Assistance
- Youth Agreement (YAG)
- Money from family
- Money from friends
- Other – such as _____
- Employment Insurance
- Disability benefit (PWD)
- Illegal activities (such as selling drugs or shoplifting)
- Trade sexual favours for money, food or a place to stay
- Self-employed

29.) Do you identify as Indigenous?

- Yes → First Nations Inuit Métis
- No Do not know

30.) What gender do you identify as?

31.) How do you access health services?

- Walk-in Clinic Doctor Community organization
- Street Nurse Emergency Services I am not using any health services

32.) Do you know of a friend (or friends) who are in an unsafe housing situation or have been homeless?

- Yes No

33.) Have you provided a temporary safe space to stay (like a couch or a bed) for any friends because they felt unsafe in their home or were without housing?

- Yes No

34.) If yes, do you know where to get help for your friend?

- Yes No

Please feel free to offer any additional thoughts, comments, or art:

Thank you for sharing your voice. Your responses will remain private and the information collected will help shape community services and improve housing for all youth.