

***What Works Learning Event:
Addressing Homelessness***

Toronto, March 19-20, 2002

Hosted by:

HRDC, Ontario Region



I. The Conference at a Glance

Some 125 individuals attended the “Addressing Homelessness” conference held in Toronto on March 19-20, 2002. This was the eighth conference in a series of What Works Learning Events held across Canada on a range of topics, sponsored by Evaluation and Data Development, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

The event marked the beginning of the final year of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). SCPI is the largest component of the three-year National Homelessness Initiative, and was a key focus of the conference. Participants, primarily from Ontario, included service providers and funders from all three levels of government.

Deborah Wallace, Director of Homelessness for the Province of Ontario, HRDC, emphasized the information-sharing goal of the event in her opening remarks. With the SCPI entering its final year, the opportunity to network, share information, and discuss next steps was timely. HRDC was particularly interested in hearing from service providers as the SCPI enters its final year.

A key challenge in the homelessness area is securing sufficient funding to meet needs. Recent statistics indicate the incidence of poverty is increasing, and more families are using shelters.

The conference included:

1. Panel Presentation on Government Perspectives

Deborah Wallace, HRDC, described the challenges of starting up, managing, and future planning for the National Homelessness Initiative within its three-year time frame.

Peggy MacKenzie, Government of Ontario, described the provincial role in addressing

homelessness as significant, though not well known.

Phil Brown, City of Toronto, described the benefits of SCPI to Toronto, and Toronto’s goal of ensuring a continuum of housing options is available. Homelessness can be affected by many factors, situations are likely to change, and responsiveness and adaptability are needed in providing service.

2. Panel Presentation, Perspectives on Homelessness

Rob O’Flanagan, a journalist from Sudbury who posed as a homeless person, described the hopelessness and lack of dignity that results from others’ perception of the homeless person; the generosity and saintliness of those who help the homeless; and how easy it is to become homeless.

Dr. Lindsey George, psychiatrist, suggested we are just beginning to understand the underlying problems that cause homelessness. Research shows that homelessness is increasing, and that the Aboriginal population is over-represented. Key underlying problems are sexual, physical, alcohol and drug abuse experienced early in life. A large number of single homeless people using shelters have some kind of mental health problem, frequently a mood disorder.

Simon McNicholl, a once homeless Aboriginal Canadian from northern Ontario, described the fear that characterized his early childhood, the violence he witnessed, and the seeming hopelessness of his life on the street. Aboriginal healing approaches and the patience of counselors helped end his 18 years of homelessness. Now in his work with homeless people, he builds relationships first to gain trust, helping people help themselves, one person at a time.

3. Workshops

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effect. Su Knorr, a family therapist, described what it is like to parent a child with fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects; symptoms and treatments; and the need for prevention and awareness programs. FAS/FAE is a prevalent and little understood affliction suffered by many children and adults who find themselves misunderstood, isolated, and often homeless.

Urban Aboriginal Youth. Peter Dinsdale, representing the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, described the high proportion of homeless youth that are Aboriginal (estimated to be 25% of the homeless youth population in Toronto). Solutions are found within the Aboriginal culture, and include the three pillars of education, employment, and recreation. It is estimated that over 70% of the Aboriginal population now live in urban centres, and with the high incidence of homelessness and social problems among this group, more funding is needed for Aboriginal-specific programming.

Community Evaluation. Shelley Young, Evaluation Researcher and Christine Pinto, Evaluation Assistant at the Regional Homelessness Directorate in Toronto, provided guidance on community evaluation. Challenges faced by communities and best practices were shared. Communities requested evaluation support in the form of clear expectations, tools, and funding.

Private-sector Partnerships. Jamey Burr and Barb Flint, Partnership Development Group, National Secretariat on Homelessness, shared examples of private sector partnerships from across Canada and how to engage the private sector. Research, a business-like approach, a strong organization, results orientation, and clear presentations are required. Many corporations across Canada have made significant donations to organizations working with the homeless. Successful partnerships are possible.

4. Paul Born, Community Developer: Seeking the Possibilities of Communities.

This recognized community developer inspired the audience by illustrating the power and importance of building strong communities. “Building communities requires raising passions, and moving hearts. To be a community builder, you have to take care of yourself, your organization, and your community. You yourself need an inner purpose and a strong sense of self to reach out to others. Embracing spirituality (inner focus) and your own personal journey are the bases for embracing the communities in your life.”

In working as an organization to build community, small steps, a positive culture, adapting to change are needed to address major problems. “We will solve the major problems facing us today but we must learn to live differently so these problems cannot exist.”

5. Jennifer Parnell, Executive Director, Raising the Roof.

Jennifer described how to recruit a corporate partner. Shared objectives, clear strategies, and a well-researched plan were key to securing Royal Bank of Canada Financial Group’s support for the Raising the Roof organization and its national “Toque Tuesday” campaign. Celebrating and sharing success, measuring results, and focusing on mutual benefit has resulted in a great partnership. She encouraged others to make the investment in securing corporate partners, as the benefits are far-reaching.

6. Showcasing Ontario’s SCPI Projects

Approximately a dozen projects were showcased in a marketplace format. The passion and dedication of people who work with the homeless were well demonstrated.

Key themes were the need to provide multi-faceted services, including health services, services based on Aboriginal culture, and services for rural and small communities. The need for social and housing policies to address the root problems of homelessness was also identified.

Key messages from the conference included:

- The important role played by front-line service providers, who demonstrate passion, commitment, faith, and patience in their work with those who live on the street.
- The need to take small steps, and to develop long-term and sustainable strategies that deal with root problems.
- The need for low-cost housing, and for health-related services for the homeless.
- The complexity of the problem, and yet the hopefulness that individuals and programs can make a difference.
- Concern about the sustainability of funding and about communities and individuals being over-taxed.

- New findings and insights, including about fetal alcohol syndrome and effects, and what works for addressing problems in the Aboriginal community.

The Conference participants identified many benefits of attending. Participants learned specific strategies and ideas that could be applied immediately in their settings. The Conference also provided an opportunity for service providers and funders to develop a greater understanding of common challenges and perspectives. Lastly, the Conference clearly demonstrated the benefits of listening to people who are or who have been homeless, for their insights provide the deepest and clearest understanding of the issues and the solutions.

What Participants Had to Say About What They Learned

The Conference was a well-organized and coordinated effort that has provided an even, fair ground for communication, networking and learning.

Communities don't know what each other are doing and there doesn't seem to be mechanisms to share, but they are doing lots of innovative, creative things and communities can learn from each other's best practices and mistakes.

Networking was very important not only to learn "what works" but also to hear what hasn't! The questions and the answers have been both thought-provoking and inspiring.

I am encouraged that different levels of government are working together.

The conference generated ideas to take to my community!

The sharing of personal experiences of homelessness illustrates needs and how to best meet those needs.

II. Session Highlights

A. Federal/Provincial/Municipal Perspectives on Homelessness

1. Federal Perspective

Deborah Wallace, Director of Homelessness, Province of Ontario, Human Resources Development Canada, gave an overview of the Homelessness Initiative.

Ontario received approximately \$134 million (including SCPI youth, aboriginal, and surplus property components) over three years through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). This represents part of the \$753 million National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) announced by the Honourable Claudette Bradshaw, Canada's Federal Co-ordinator on Homelessness, in the summer of 1999. Twenty-two communities have developed plans with commitments of approximately \$105 million to date.

Challenges with SCPI have included the following:

Initial fund allocation. The start-up was challenging for communities as they worked to develop their plans. Funding allocation levels considered incidence of low income, vacancy rates and the size of population in the community.

Short timeframes. Even though the deadline for expenditure of SCPI funds has been extended to Sept. 2003 for all projects approved by 31 March 2003, communities require more time. All funds must be approved by March 31, 2003 and expended by September 30, 2003.

Issue of affordable housing The involvement of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in NHI has been critical, as the stock of affordable housing declines. Communities do not have enough low-rental units available for the homeless.

Evaluation and analysis. Evaluation and analysis are key for determining the future direction of NHI. The impact of the initiative needs to be assessed and demonstrated, including qualitative and quantitative information and analysis.

Sustainability and future direction. Planning for post March 31, 2003 (with follow-on work to Sept 30, 2003) is underway. All funds must be accounted for, and monitoring and analysis must be completed. New directions need to be identified, including the issue surrounding rural and urban homelessness.

2. Provincial Perspective

Peggy MacKenzie, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Province of Ontario, described the Province's work in addressing homelessness.

In March 1999 the Provincial Homelessness Strategy was announced in response to a Provincial Task Force on Homelessness. The Strategy included emphasis on prevention programs and initiatives from Ministries including Community and Social Services, Health and Long Term Care, and Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Initiatives of the Ministry of Community and Social Services are largely allocated to, and administered by, municipal governments. They include:

- The Provincial Homelessness Initiative which allocates \$10.4 million annually to municipalities for innovative local approaches.
- The Ex-offender Program allocates \$1 million annually to divert ex-offenders from the emergency hostel system.
- The Community Partners and Supports for Daily Living Programs transfer \$9.4 million to municipalities to provide support to individuals with special needs.
- Four programs are cost shared with municipal partners:
 - Off the Street Into Shelter (OSIS) Fund.
 - Redirection of Emergency Hostel Fund.
 - Emergency Hostel programs.
 - Domiciliary Hostel programs.
- Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has been responsible for the Mental Health Homelessness Initiative. This supplied 962 housing units and supports for people with serious mental illness. An additional 2600 units are planned for across the province.
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has introduced: a provincial sales tax incentive for builders of affordable housing; provincial lands transfer using available provincial land to assist in creating affordable housing; and provincial rent supplement programs.

The Provincial government works closely on an ongoing basis with federal and municipal counterparts in designing and delivering policy, programs, and special projects to reduce homelessness in Ontario's communities.

3. The City of Toronto, Municipal Perspective.

Phil Brown, General Manager, Shelter, Housing and Support Division, City of Toronto, described the homelessness challenge in Toronto.

Following the transfer of provincial social housing funding and administration to the City, the Shelter Housing and Support Division is now the third largest service in the City of Toronto after police and fire, with a net budget of \$270 million. Some 80% of this goes toward social housing.

In spite of this large effort in terms of taxpayer dollars (an estimated \$174 per household per year in property taxes), evidence that programs are effective has not been well documented. Assessing performance and measuring effectiveness is increasingly important for programming, including SCPI—its impact must be demonstrated to federal decision-makers.

This year has seen progress in addressing housing and homelessness. It appears that a National Housing Policy will soon be in place. We are beginning to manage the interdependent components more as a whole, and our decisions are getting better as a result. An important building block will be working with the private sector in delivering affordable housing. Next month Toronto's City Council will consider a new by-law allowing shelters anywhere in the city, adding options other than downtown locations.

Toronto benefited from the SCPI initiative, receiving \$53 million. Some \$45 million of this has been approved by Council for programming. SCPI encouraged cooperative and collaborative approaches, which has been important for the City of Toronto. It has also been flexible allowing us to adapt to the needs of a

range of communities and to be responsive to community input. Funds have been used for upgrading and maintenance, as well as for new capital projects.

Toronto is working toward providing a continuum of housing options—emergency shelter, transitional and supportive housing, social housing, and affordable private housing.

This is an area where change happens quickly. Budgets are extremely tight. A sense of responsiveness is required. Last fall, for example, the City of Toronto ran out of space for families needing shelter, to the extent that motels outside the city limits were used. Since September 11, the housing requirements of refugee families have decreased, and family shelter space is more readily available.

Finally, the important role of CMHC in addressing affordable housing needs to be recognized, as an important partner of the municipality.

4. Discussion Following the Panel Presentation

The discussion included the following points:

- SCPI funds appear to favour capital grants. Operating funds are also needed.
- In spite of the many programs available from the province, budgets have been reduced in recent years, with a significant impact on service levels.
- Smaller centres also have homelessness problems, but do not receive adequate funding relative to Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton. Smaller centres are under-funded; in particular, the Emergency Hostel Program per diem rate at \$35 a day is too low. More funding is needed to address homelessness in more than a piecemeal fashion.
- Service providers are not able to provide the financial support that individuals need to stay in their homes—families who cannot pay their utility bills are evicted. A national housing strategy is critical. Until that happens, approaches are piecemeal and we are spinning our wheels.
- The federal government is working on a National Housing Strategy. HRDC is aiming to stimulate community involvement in the homelessness challenge through the community planning process. Municipalities are facing tremendous budget cuts along with increasing demand for municipal services. Federal and provincial support is crucial.
- The real issue is affordable housing. CMHC is an important player in ensuring affordable rental options are available in communities. Developers cannot be expected to support units that are not profitable; subsidies are required.
- SCPI has addressed Aboriginal homelessness. The province has not included the Aboriginal population in consultations, nor in the recommendations of the 1998 provincial task force. The province assumes that municipalities will include the Aboriginal populations in local consultation. Dollars held in trust for Aboriginal people need to be applied to address the very serious problem of Aboriginal homelessness.
- The underlying issues around Aboriginal homelessness require long-term strategies and funding. It will take time to remedy the social problems that result in homelessness, including abuse and addiction. Time is needed, and a step-by-step approach.
- Government recognizes that more time is needed. Information is needed to demonstrate the short-term and expected long-term benefits of SCPI, so that a longer-term approach can be developed. The

Minister will need solid proof that the initiative has worked, where it has not worked well, and what more needs to be done.

- Denial of the homelessness issue is a problem. London, Ontario was identified as the second worst city in Ontario for accessing affordable housing.

B. Perspectives on Homelessness: Panel Presentation.

1. Rob O’Flanagan, journalist, Sudbury Star

Rob spent forty-eight hours posing as a homeless person in Sudbury, and wrote a series of articles about the experience. He described Sudbury as one of the most economically depressed cities in Ontario, with pronounced poverty and homelessness problems.

His short time on the streets allowed him to live the experience, and to write about it.

His “homelessness costume” caused other people to see him as destitute. He very quickly felt worthless as a result of how others perceived him. “Time passes slowly on the street; you have nothing; you search for public places to stay warm. You meet kind people who give you meals and treat you with respect. The Catholic soup kitchen and Salvation Army had incredible, saintly people working to help the homeless.” He admired these helpful individuals.

Homeless people he met were not what he expected—various kinds of people were on the streets, including college students and entire families. Aboriginal people were disproportionately represented. A former stockbroker had been in an accident, resulting in his mental illness, and homelessness.

Mental illness is just a step away for all of us. It can happen as a result of an accident, the loss of a loved one, or stress, for example.

Rob’s series on homelessness in the Sudbury newspaper created a huge public reaction. People responded with an eagerness to help others who were less fortunate.

2. Dr. Lindsey George, Psychiatrist

Dr. Lindsey George is a faculty member of the Department of Psychiatry, McMaster University, and the consulting psychiatrist with the HOMES Program, Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes, in Hamilton.

Studies on homelessness in Hamilton have shown that over the last 5 years, shelter rates have doubled, homeless family rates have tripled, and that 20% of the homeless are Aboriginal people

“We are just starting to make a dent in identifying the real problems that cause homelessness.”

A recent research project, “Pathways to Homelessness”, identified underlying problems, based on interviews with 300 homeless people in Toronto:

- Illness—people become homeless when they are acutely ill. Because of their symptoms, they cannot maintain housing. Mood disorders comprise approximately 50% of the illnesses. Many of these relate to events in early life. If the ill do not have support around them, homelessness is the result.
- Young adults leave abusive family situations and become homeless. 44% had experienced homelessness before age 18. Older adults are also vulnerable to homelessness because of early life experiences.

- 48% had grown up in homes where alcohol and abuse were problems; 37% lived in poverty; 18% had been in foster care.
- 51% had experienced physical abuse.
- 38% had been physically abused as children, which is highly correlated with depression in adult life.
- 48% did not ask for help when they were in a crisis.
- 35% had been cut off social assistance in the previous year.

The most important message, however, is the need for available affordable housing and income supports for people with mental illness.

The Homes Program in Hamilton provides support to homeless individuals 24 hours/day in renovated housing units and mobile supports to scattered units.

Solutions include:

- A national housing policy that ensures affordable rental housing is available. This could be done through rental subsidies, or by creating new units. The current waiting time for social housing is 5 years in Hamilton.
- Integrated approaches that consider the many aspects of an individual's situation—health needs, transportation, earnings, and work opportunities.

These challenges require an overarching, comprehensive, coordinated social policy involving all three levels of government.

3. *Simon McNicoll*

Simon is an Aboriginal Canadian who grew up in a small community north of Sudbury. He spent 18 years as a homeless person. His work with homeless individuals was recognized when he was awarded the International Volunteer Award.

His home life as a child was devoid of love, and full of fear and violence that resulted from alcoholism. As he grew up, he had difficulty managing his anger. He became homeless and lived on the street, moving across the country. He carried grief with him for many years.

In 1992 he went to the Native Men's Residence in Toronto (Na Me Res), and was helped by an Aboriginal counselor. He told his story in the presence of others, in a circle. He received teachings in a Smudging Ceremony, and later in the Sweetgrass Ceremony. When he received his teachings, he began to heal. The counselors there had patience, and worked with him. He completed a treatment program, and began a new life.

Simon now takes those teachings and helps people on the streets with their healing. He takes the time to build relationships. He approaches people in a casual way, talking about his life, and sharing his experiences. This encourages others to share their experiences and their pain. He speaks of the elders and their wisdom, and the Aboriginal culture. He becomes an inspiration to others, giving them hope and a pathway to getting off the streets.

Many people on the street suffer from mental illness, yet cannot get into the mental health hospital for treatment. Mentally ill people can be difficult to deal with, and they need people who understand their illness. Building relationships with people can help change their lives.

In developing strategies and programs, we need to talk to the people on the street, and ask them what they need.

C. Workshop: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FES)

Su Knorr is a family therapist who became directly familiar with fetal alcohol syndrome when she became the foster parent of a FAS child.

FAS/FAE is a significant issue. Consider:

- The leading preventable cause of birth defects is drinking while pregnant.
- Some 30% of individuals in the justice system are affected by FAE.
- The estimate of the cost of a FAS/FAE child over a lifetime is \$1.4 million in the U.S.
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- More than 50% of those in the justice system are afflicted with some form of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

The life of a parent of a FAS child is difficult, and characterized by:

- A feeling of loss – loss of the child that could have been.
- The need to provide 24 hour supervision. Leaving a FAS child with strangers is difficult, since during a tantrum, the child can be very aggressive and may try to run away.
- Loneliness—others view the child’s behavior as unacceptable; the child and the family become isolated.
- Restrictions—Normal activities, such as shopping, are difficult because the child may ‘tantrum’ from over-stimulation. Tantrums can last for as long as 5 hours.

FAS/FAE is characterized by:

- Specific facial features, small body size or small growth.
- Inability to foresee consequences; to remember instructions.
- Misunderstanding. Families and children with FAS/FAE tend to be misunderstood. Overall, awareness of FAS/FAE is low. Teachers many have very little knowledge of FAS.
- Average or above average IQ, along with delayed learning.
- Lack of response to behavior modification techniques, although they may appear to have behavior problems.
- Hypersensitivity to the environment.
- Possible development of symptoms later in life, after an apparently healthy childhood.

Interventions feature simplicity, structure, low stimulation, concrete methods, and repetitive instruction.

To prevent secondary problems such as addictions, school drop-out, mental health issues, and crime, children need to be given coping skills. Parents need to deal with their guilt of having hurt their in vitro child.

The best solution is prevention. Prevention needs to consider that many pregnant women drink who are unaware that they are pregnant. The second largest group of women who have FAS babies are over 35, well-educated, married, with careers. College women are also a large parent group, as are other groups of women who take part in social drinking. Doctors need to emphasize no drinking during pregnancy, with no safe time or safe amount of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

Community agencies need to become aware of the needs of FAS/FAE children and families, and provide concrete assistance as well as advocacy.

Early identification, assessment and diagnosis are also critical. Professionals may misdiagnose the illness and offer inappropriate suggestions. Teachers need to be trained in understanding and dealing with FAS/FAE children.

Many FAS/FAE parents are now strong advocates for their children. Research is increasing, and pilot projects are underway.

D. Workshop: Private Sector Partnerships

Jamey Burr and Barb Flint, Partnership Development Group, HRDC National Secretariat on Homelessness, spoke on how communities are looking to the private sector to expand their funding-base to create a more sustainable approach to addressing homelessness.

Many community organizations working on homelessness have been successful in engaging businesses as part of their fund-raising strategy. Private sector contributions range from long term funding to donations of services and gifts in kind. Jamey Burr presented the following examples:

- Ottawa's Shepherds of Good Hope raises \$1.12 million annually
- Moncton's Headstart program raises 40% of its annual budget and holds the largest annual garage sale in Canada.
- In Calgary, employees from the Hyatt Hotel twinned with a local agency serving the homeless to provide charitable funds and volunteer labour.
- The Saskatchewan Home Builders Association works with the community to provide affordable housing for low-income families.

- In Fredericton the Women’s Shelter learned how to use local media to gain community support, reduce “NIMBYism” and create a new facility.
- Rotary Clubs donated \$600,000 in Edmonton for the Millennium House Project.
- In Vancouver, B.C. Hydro employees created a video about their proposal to build a new apartment building for people with schizophrenia. It was shown to employees across the province and helped raise more donations and worker support.

Barb Flint spoke on the subject of creating effective community and corporate partnerships and emphasized the fact that these require time and resources to develop and nurture. Private corporations look for organizations that have clear purpose and vision, meaningful results, accountability, responsiveness and innovation, and a culture of collaboration.

Strategies included:

- Dedicate a staff person and committee to fundraising. Or, hire a consultant to develop a Fundraising Strategy.
- Research the community to identify needs and current activities of agencies such as United Way and Community Foundations.
- Research corporations and find out which are actively funding organizations or initiatives.
- Clearly articulate a funding/partnership request, especially how the funds will be used, and how the corporation will be recognized.
- Connect with the corporation’s interests and culture.
- Show how the donation is a good investment.
- Be prepared to give a short history of your nonprofit organization, statistics that demonstrate success and impact, clear outcomes, and what is needed to better serve the community and achieve better results. Take a volunteer with you, and leave a package behind. Be businesslike, ask questions, and listen. Send a thank you note.
- Follow up on all meetings.

Corporations offer sponsorship, in kind donations, employee participation, volunteers, expertise, and access to other organizations.

E. Workshop: Urban Aboriginal Youth and Homelessness

Peter Dinsdale, representing the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, presented an adapted version of a presentation to the federal Standing Senate Committee on Urban Aboriginal issues.

Challenges facing service providers attending the session were identified as:

- Developing local capability to meet the needs of Aboriginal youth.
- Providing Aboriginal-specific service to homeless Aboriginals.
- Improving consultation with Aboriginal groups.

- Engaging community groups to work together in partnership; developing interest from Aboriginal groups in the community plan.

The context surrounding Aboriginal groups was described as an unhappy landscape that has resulted from assimilation, dispossession of land, failed policies, residential education, and racism.

Statistics show high levels of youth suicide, child poverty, teen pregnancy, sexual assault, intergenerational abuse, incarceration, child protection, school drop-out, and unemployment. While Aboriginal people make up 2.8% of the Canadian population, they are 34% of young offenders. Addictions and sexual, physical, spiritual and mental abuse are all issues for urban Aboriginal youth.

The Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force of 1999 estimated that 25% of the youth street population was Aboriginal, while they are 1.6% of the general population in Toronto.

What is needed to address these problems?

Education, employment, and recreation are the pillars. Services need to be provided in culturally sensitive ways. This includes involvement of elders, extended families and teachings. Aboriginal youth need to be given a sense of belonging that goes beyond negative stereotypes. They need a sense of pride in their Aboriginal heritage. They also need to be involved in the design, delivery and governance of programs.

Culture needs to be included in youth programming because it provides opportunities to develop extended families, a sense of belonging, a sense of Nation, coping skills, and a sense of past and future direction.

The problems have been hundreds of years in the making, and solutions will take place over time. The issues are much greater than a three-year SCPI program can hope to resolve. The focus must be on empowerment and support, in the three pillar areas.

Funding is needed for off-reserve Aboriginals. It is estimated that 70% of Aboriginals are in urban areas. In some communities, the Aboriginal population was very involved in the development of the SCPI plan, and the result has been very good programming. In Barrie for example, Aboriginal people took part on an equal footing with others in the planning process.

F. Workshop: Community Evaluation

. Shelley Young, Evaluation Researcher and Christine Pinto, Evaluation Assistant at the Regional Homelessness Directorate in Toronto, described different levels of evaluation and reporting.

At the project level, results reporting and financial and progress audits are required. At the community level, assessment of progress towards achieving homelessness goals and objectives are needed. At the national level, an external consultant will evaluate the implementation and process aspects of the overall National Homelessness Initiative.

Shelley and Christine provided guidance to communities “The sooner the evaluation is planned, the more likely it is to provide useful information at a reasonable cost.”

Challenges associated with evaluating the SCPI initiatives have been identified as:

- Planning for evaluation at an early stage in the initiative.
- Understanding the nature and extent of the requirements for evaluation.
- Sharing information about evaluation approaches among communities.

Following focus groups, email questionnaires and file reviews, the Regional Homelessness Directorate found that many communities are not well prepared for SCPI evaluations. Communities require:

- Clear and timely direction for undertaking evaluation activities, including clarified expectations.
- Evaluation tools, including evaluation books and web sites, sample questionnaires, interviews, and reports, as well as models.
- More time and resources, including funding, to undertake evaluation activities at the local level.
- Less bureaucracy and paperwork.
- Review of best practices used in other communities.

Best practices in SCPI community evaluation were identified as:

- Clearly identifying homelessness objectives in relation to community assets and gaps.
- Developing logic models with linkages between activities, outputs and outcomes.
- Including questions on research tools that address the impact of initiatives; the extent to which outcomes are achieved; tenant and stakeholder perspectives; feedback from homeless people; and the need to document case stories.
- Allocating funds for program evaluation, including hiring a full time evaluator; and the establishment of a foundation to augment funding of evaluation activities.
- Developing a guide for evaluating initiatives, with strategies for evaluating all activities.
- Involving both experts and people who are familiar with homelessness in the evaluation.
- Establishing partnerships where services and expertise are donated.

G. Seeking the Possibilities of Communities: Paul Born, Community Developer.

Paul Born, recipient of the United Nations Best Practices Award for Opportunities Planning, and the Ontario Caring Communities Award, is President of Tamarack: An Institute for Community Engagement.

Paul recognized the work done by the participants at the conference as “some of the most important work that needs to be done in this country today. The issue of homelessness can leave one breathless in terms of the issue; it is often hidden; in Toronto, today, it is not hidden-- the streets have become home to many people.”

His sense of community was developed in his early years in Abbotsford, British Columbia, where he lived in a community of 400 people, Mennonites displaced from Russia after the Second World War. The church was the focal point of the farming community.

As he endeavors to create a sense of community for his children, it becomes obvious that times have changed, and communities are not as easily developed as they once were. Even so, the importance and value of creating that sense of community remains. Community provides a sense of identity, safety, and a larger family. It shapes the child and their future; provides positive role models, visions of what is possible, values for what is important, and support when needed. “If we all think back, we can think of examples where we have been supported by community, and where the goodwill and power of a community has been demonstrated.”

Our society creates a tension between self and community. Relationships with others have become secondary to what is happening to oneself. Our culture emphasizes self-identity, self-promotion and self-support. To a large extent, people no longer have a sense of place.

Community can shape our identity more broadly, creating a sense of belonging, contributing to our health, our spirit, and our economic prospects. Studies show that the more people involved in our lives when we are ill, the better our recovery.

We can choose communities that are diverse and open, or that are conforming and isolated. Not all community is good community. Gangs which build fear and hatred are not good. Good communities engage the passion and dreams of people.

Working together is a large part of a community. Other aspects of community identified in research include mutual support, similar geographic area, common good, and a sense of belonging. Community breakdown represents isolation, lack of caring and support, conflict and hostility, and poverty.

“Building communities requires raising passions, and moving hearts. To be a community builder, you have to take care of yourself, your organization, and your community. You yourself need an inner purpose and a strong sense of self to reach out to others. Spirituality and your own personal journey are the base for embracing the communities in your life.”

For an organization working to build community, small steps, positive culture, and adapting to change are needed to address major problems. “We will solve the major problems facing us today but we must learn to live differently so these problems cannot exist.”

In Ontario, HRDC and its provincial, municipal, and funded organization partners have invested over \$100 million dollars since 1999 to help over 300,000 people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

By developing the sense of community within ourselves, we can attend to building organizations and communities that are more spiritual, less mechanical, and more divine.

H. Raising the Roof, Jennifer Parnell

Jennifer Parnell, the Executive Director of Raising the Roof, described her organization's successful partnership with the Royal Bank Financial Group.

The Raising the Roof organization began five years ago after the need for a national charitable organization for homelessness was identified. A national survey exposed the challenge at hand: Canadians were concerned about the problem, but were pessimistic—it was too large and complex to resolve.

This troublesome finding became the opportunity for Raising the Roof. They set out to change Canadian pessimism into an upbeat and positive attitude. They set out to prove that something could be done about homelessness.

Three objectives were identified: to raise funds for community groups that work with the homeless to build public awareness and understanding of the issue; and to develop partnerships to address and prevent homelessness. To date, Raising the Roof has granted \$547,000 to 41 organizations to address homelessness in their communities.

Upbeat and positive messaging has been a key part of Raising the Roof's strategy and success. Helping to alleviate homelessness can be fun for corporations, communities, and individuals.

Securing the Royal Bank of Canada Financial Group as the national partner took significant time and effort on the part of both parties.

Understanding RBC's situation was key—the company was looking for a more strategic approach to supporting communities in order to have a bigger impact nationally and at the community level. They wanted recognition, employee involvement, and results. They were looking for a partnership with an organization that understood their corporate culture.

After hearing presentations from several organizations, Raising the Roof was one of two organizations selected for the nation-wide support of RBC and its staff.

The partnership with RBC has provided Raising the Roof with recognition and credibility, creative and innovative suggestions, business expertise and connections (through Board involvement), a nation-wide network of employees involved in local programming and promotion (for homelessness), opportunities for media advertising; and financial support.

The "Toque Campaign" was developed with RBC as a national fund-raising event. The first Tuesday of every February is "Toque Tuesday", where toques are sold nation-wide, with proceeds going to address homelessness. A key part of the campaign is media advertising, which is used to promote the toques and to increase awareness and understanding of the issue. After selling 400 toques the first year in 1999, sales increased to over 70,000 in 2000. Global News became the national media partner, contributing over

\$500,000 in airtime each year. Ads featured upbeat and fun messages, with local celebrities donating their time for ads.

Raising the Roof made it a positive and highly rewarding experience for RBC and its employees to become involved in the issue of homelessness. The two organizations share a common vision of reducing and preventing homelessness, and work as partners in sharing ideas and successes. Raising the Roof nurtures its relationship with RBC, showing appreciation, and demonstrating the difference that RBC is making to communities and individuals.

It takes time, effort and resources to research and recruit a new corporate partner. It is definitely worthwhile. Together you can make a significant difference; in this case, a difference in the lives of Canadians who are homeless.

I. Service Provider Showcase

More than a dozen service providers set up demonstration booths and gave short project descriptions in a marketplace format, as the final component of the conference. Examples included:

- The Halton YMCA “Know Your Options” Project—Provides youth outreach services to homeless youth. Informs youth about their services so they have somewhere to go if they do become homeless. Educates youth about the reality of life away from home, including the costs of living and the trials of getting an apartment.
- Middlesex County Services—Meets the needs of 10-25 families each year who are homeless in this small town rural area.
- Hamilton’s Tri-Rock Youth Project—Provided by the Living Rock Ministries, the project includes a 10-week full-time program with art expressions, self-discovery, practical skills (tool time), cleanliness, home management, financial management, individualized plans, job shadow, work experience, subsidized employment opportunities and retraining
- VHA Health and Home Support Service , Homelessness Intervention Program—Provides transitional housing in a seniors’ complex to older adults at risk of homelessness due to health or social breakdown or eviction. This program is part of a range of programs provided by VHA Community Link. McMaster University is involved in an evaluation of the project which includes a control group of seniors who are not receiving service.
- Cornerstone Community Association of Oshawa, “Experience the Homeless Maze”—This project is an award-winning, interactive, simulated event that supports and employs 12-15 once homeless individuals. In a 2.5 hour event, audience members go through a maze, and the once homeless people play the parts of service providers/agencies/government programs. This provides employment support to homeless individuals, increases community awareness of homelessness, and illustrates how “the system” both helps and hinders individuals.
- East York/East Toronto Family Resources Project—Provides family supports for at risk parents of young children, or pregnant mothers-to-be in four “Families Together” locations. Programming includes parenting programs and early childhood development, food and clothing, and interest free loans.
- Sun Housing Inc., the Barrie Homelessness Coalition—This urban native housing group has purchased property for a transition house for homeless Aboriginal people. They also provide a food service program and a food bank. This project brings together agencies to provide services in a cultural framework for First Nations individuals.
- Ottawa Inner City Health Project—Support for the homeless is provided by a range of professionals (client care workers, nurses, doctors, and therapists) at three locations in Ottawa (Home Hospice, Management of Alcohol Program, and the Special Care Unit at the Salvation Army). A range of multiple and complex problems are addressed, including addictions and mental illness. Nurses are available 24 hours a day at the hospice, palliative care is provided, and doctors visit daily. The project has strong research and evaluation components through sponsorship by the University of Ottawa, and benefits from strong community involvement (including VON Ottawa) and private sector support.
- Kitchener-Waterloo Working Centre for the Unemployed, —The building is multi-functional, providing a kitchen, resource centre, employment services, employment opportunities, a recycling operation, and apartments on the third floor. Through SCPI, major renovations and revitalization were completed.

- Peel Youth Village—Houses built by youth provide supports that aim to stabilize, “abilize”, and mobilize homeless individuals. Building the houses provided youth with opportunity for personal development and growth that they had not experienced previously.
- R.O.O.F Program (Reaching Our Outdoor Friends)—Helps homeless youth age 12-25 with their basic needs and safety, as well as anger management, life skills, substance abuse, treatment referral, and preparation for clinical settings. The R.O.O.F Program (Reaching Our Outdoor Friends) includes many services: a 12-week return-to-school program, substance abuse prevention program, group sessions, lifeline programs, and others. SCPI funds supported facility upgrades.
- Low Income People’s Involvement Inc, (LIPI) Nipissing District, North Bay—Provides a range of supports to the homeless whether it is a family at risk of being evicted, or a mentally ill patient recently discharged from the hospital. A Community Housing Guarantee program provides loans for housing, and a “Share the Warmth” program pays utility bills for at risk clients.
- Overcomers Group of Sudbury —Provides service and support to homeless people in a multi-faith context. Includes a kitchen, furniture warehouse, post-institution support program, ex-offender program (Reintegration Project, 12-Step Program), and addictions support services (Restorative Farm for youth with addictions, behavioural problems, or in conflict with the law). People help people. Many volunteers are involved providing love, support and service.

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Key points made by the marketplace service provider presenters included:

- Rural areas have homeless issues, though they may not be as apparent. Families and youth may go from couch to couch in the community. They may hide in secluded areas. Many individuals will not go to nearby cities where they have access to emergency shelters.
- Seniors face special issues. They may not be able to look after their own homes, and cannot afford housekeeping. They may need health supports.
- Youth need multi-faceted approaches that include teaching them how to look after themselves, self-discovery, and employment opportunities.
- Aboriginal people benefit from services provided within Aboriginal cultural framework.
- For people with mental illness and physical problems, accessing mainstream services may be difficult. Their problems are multiple and require intensive and multi-faceted help.
- Current social policy and programming is part of the problem, and contributes to homelessness. This is the change that is ultimately needed. Health care dollars need to provide the health supports that are needed. The systems don’t fit the reality.
- Organizations supporting the homeless rely heavily on volunteers, and are under-funded. (They many not have working computers, for example). These organizations tire of research studies, data collection, and other administrative approaches to problems they see as clear, serious, and preventable.
