



UAKN
Urban Aboriginal
Knowledge Network

RCdU
Réseau de connaissances des
Autochtones en milieu urbain

RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY Prairie Research Centre

Name of Project:

Youth Homelessness: Including the voices of youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in northern Manitoba

Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:

Much attention has been directed toward the issue of homelessness in northern Manitoba. As a result, several new transitional facilities have opened their doors in 2014. A new supported facility opened in 2014 for 16 chronically homeless people at 95 Cree Road. There is also a new “treatment first” facility for men, MAPS (Men are Part of the Solution). Both of these new options are for adults who are homeless.

Based on a survey done in the summer of 2014, 72 youth (under the age of 24) were identified as living without a home (City of Thompson, 2014). Many of these youth remain invisible to the general population and to policy makers because they tend to move from apartment to apartment couch surfing and they tend to keep to themselves. There are currently few options for youth to find a safe and comfortable place to live. Rents are high in Thompson and apartments are difficult to get especially for Aboriginal youth.

This proposed research comes directly from knowledge gained from working with community partners for the past several years. Our intent is to conduct research that will create the space to collaboratively and respectfully work with youth so their knowledge and life experience can be heard by and taken into account by service providers and policy makers as well as the broader Thompson community. The applicants would act as co-researchers, along with the youth and those working directly with youth at risk. Ultimately this project will contribute to solutions for youth homelessness that will be beneficial not only for youth, but for northern Manitoba.

There is a knowledge deficit on this topic that perpetuates the invisibility of youth homelessness and limits the prioritizing of youth as a critical group in homelessness policy (City of Thompson CAB, 2014). This is particularly true for Aboriginal youth who are the majority of youth at risk. On a broader scale, we want to promote the process of participatory research to action with policy stakeholders with the end result being positive changes regarding social policies as they impact Aboriginal youth.

Research Questions

- I. What are the characteristics of youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in Thompson, Manitoba?
What are their pathways to homelessness? Where are they from and how old are they? What percentage of the population in Thompson are homeless youth?

- II. Which participatory research methodologies are culturally and age appropriate in order to include the voices of homeless youth in addressing homelessness in Thompson?
- III. From the perspective of youth at risk, what can be done to begin to address the problem of youth homelessness in Thompson?

Engagement objectives:

To develop a community-engaged qualitative and participatory action research project with homeless or at risk youth along with local organizations:

- To use participatory research methodologies to gather data in order to understand and identify the factors that put youth at risk of homelessness in Thompson.
- To conduct a needs assessment to identify the needs, supports, current services and gaps for youth at risk in Thompson.
- To develop a collaborative community action plan based on the findings of the three research questions.

Name of Co-Investigators:

Dr. Marleny M. Bonnycastle – University of Manitoba

Dr. Maureen Simpkins – University College of the North

Collaborating northern organizations:

- Boys and Girls Club of Thompson
- Keewatin Tribal Council – Youth Wellness and Education.
- Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre
- Macdonald Youth Services
- Northern Health Region – Aboriginal Health Services
- Pride North of 55
- R.D. Parker High School – Youth Aboriginal Council
- Thompson Youth Build

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