ALL WE NEED IS COMMUNITY: URBAN ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS SURVEY

On February 18 2015, over 50 volunteers participated in All We Need is Community: Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Survey. These volunteers interviewed 362 people in downtown Hamilton, on city streets and at a community event. Persons surveyed included people experiencing homelessness and people who have housing, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This report provides a summary of important results from this survey.

Among 76 people experiencing homelessness, surveyed on downtown streets only:

- 47% Aboriginal

This is a higher proportion of Aboriginals among people experiencing homelessness than the City of Hamilton found in its recent 20,000 Homes survey in April 2015 (26% Aboriginal among people experiencing homelessness).

There is reason to believe the higher figure is more accurate (47% from this survey). The legacy of hundreds of years of negative effects of Canadian government intrusion into Aboriginal peoples lives has led to significant mistrust among Aboriginal people to reveal their status to government agencies. In addition, the City of Hamilton’s survey required people to disclose their name and other personal information, which would further deter Aboriginal people from participating in the City’s survey.

What is certain is that Aboriginals, who represent approximately 3% of Hamilton’s residents, are vastly over-represented among persons experiencing homelessness. The SPRC’s recent report, Profile of Hamilton’s Aboriginal Residents, features discussion of intergenerational trauma caused by harmful government policies that have led high rates of homelessness among Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples.

Among 69 Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness, surveyed on streets and at community event:

- 40 years old
- 70% Men
- Shelter (48%)
- Couch surfing/hidden homles… (37%)
- Outside (8%)
- Transitional housing (5%)
- Don’t know (2%)

Among 124 Aboriginal people who have housing, surveyed on streets and at community event:

- 56% Experienced homelessness in the past 3 years
- 91% Have helped a homeless friend or family member, by letting them stay at their place

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