

QUESTIONING RESEARCH II:

HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH  
& ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES

MARCH 2008

# **Questioning Research II:**

## **Homelessness Research and Aboriginal Communities**

### **A Guide for Communities**

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# Introduction

The Second BC/Yukon Aboriginal Forum on Homelessness Research examined questions about research on homelessness from a variety of perspectives. Some participants enthusiastically embraced research processes as a means of empowerment, validation and expression of Aboriginal issues and concerns. Others expressed strong concerns that costly research projects did not produce results for pressing community issues such as homelessness.

This publication and its companion publications, *Questioning Research I: Forum Report (Second BC/Yukon Aboriginal Forum on Homelessness Research)*, which summarizes the discussions at the Forum, and *Questioning Research III: What do Aboriginal Community Members Say About Homelessness Research? (A Guide for Researchers)*, are intended to supplement the discussions at the forum by providing information on the ways in which research is and can be used in the growing number of communities that are experiencing increases in homelessness.

We start from the perspective that research can be a useful tool that can help in the resolution of community issues when applied in the right circumstances. Unfortunately, research is only one piece of the puzzle. A complex number of factors – including political will, public opinion, resources, opportunities, etc. – play an important part in developing solutions to community issues such as homelessness.

A number of contributors from diverse backgrounds provide an introduction to some of the ways in which research has been used to address community issues such as homelessness.

Research has had damaging consequences when researchers have ignored Aboriginal identity and experience in their research design and methods. **Kinwa Bluesky** examines the emerging discussion about Indigenous Methodologies – research methods that place indigenous experience at the centre of the research process. **Donna Hill** examines an approach to research, Community Based Research, which articulates principles and processes that supports involvement of community members in the research process.

To many people statistical information appears to be in another language that not everybody has been trained to understand. **Mary McNeill** argues that it is important to use statistics and provides information about how ordinary people can learn to understand how to use statistics to understand community issues and problems.

One important use of research is in the development of public policy process. Although research studies rarely change government policy on their own, research can produce information that can support the efforts of advocates. **Michael Goldberg** examines the Metro Vancouver homelessness count and how it generates information to stimulate public discussion about homelessness. **Donna Hill** summarizes how increased Aboriginal participation in the homelessness count resulted in improved understanding about Aboriginal homelessness.

Another common application of research is for the evaluation of programs and projects. **Donna Hill** outlines a unique evaluation project in Northern BC that is based on principles of participatory research. She also suggests alternative methods of project evaluation that can help stimulate what can be a difficult and complicated process.

Community indicator projects are growing in popularity as communities work to develop information that can help understand more about the strengths and challenges facing communities. **Kinwa Bluesky** outlines a project by the Centre for Native Policy and Research that developed a profile of Aboriginal people living in the Lower Mainland area of Vancouver and provides some context for the discussion about the interplay between traditional knowledge and the modern world.

Most research is conducted through a form of partnership. **Jim Sands** reports on the opportunities and pitfalls involved in developing research partnerships and **Eldon Yellowhorn** outlines some of the common sources of funding for research partnerships.

Also included are a list of funding sources, and resources on homelessness in Canada.

This publication will serve as a starting point to support communities in using research wisely to develop solutions to Aboriginal homelessness issues.



# Research Methodologies: Indigenous Approaches to Research

## Understanding Indigenous Methodologies

by Kinwa Bluesky

The term methodology refers to the many different ways information is collected, stored, analyzed and shared. Kinwa Bluesky, Research Coordinator for the Centre for Native Policy and Research (CNPR), discusses how indigenous methodologies are challenging traditional approaches to research.

Over the past decade, there have been major developments in the field of research by Indigenous people working as researchers within Indigenous communities around the world. These researchers have been seeking new and innovative ways to privilege Indigenous concerns, practices and participation from the standpoints of both the researchers and the researched.

In doing so, they are reflecting upon Indigenous research methodologies and further expanding on the theory and analysis of how research should be done within the Indigenous context. As a result, today's Indigenous research agenda is being driven with the key goal of attaining self-determination for Indigenous peoples and their communities.

In exploring Indigenous research methodologies, researchers are seeking ways to achieve social justice, to transform and decolonize, and to heal and mobilize through various research methods (Smith, 1999). For Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the Maori author of *Decolonizing Methodologies*, the decolonization, transformation, healing and mobilization of Indigenous peoples are not goals, but rather processes which are representative of the movement and changes occurring in their ideas, reflections and actions. These processes then can be incorporated into the practices and methodologies of the people.

Smith suggests that these processes are reflected in four states: survival, recovery, development, and self-determination. Indigenous peoples are continually in the process of decolonization, transformation, healing and mobilization while moving within these four states.

Lester-Irabinna Rigney, an Australian scholar from the Narungga Nation in Australia, has added that Indigenous research needs to be informed by three fundamental and interrelated principles:

1. Resistance as part of the struggle for recognition of self-determination;
2. Political integrity, that is setting the political agenda for liberation by Indigenous peoples within Indigenous research; and,
3. Privileging Indigenous voices by focusing on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles (Rigney, 1999).

A well-known Indigenous methodology is the Maori-centred research methodology of Kaupapa Maori. Graham Smith has summarized Kaupapa Maori research by stating:

1. Is related to "being Maori;"
2. Is connected to Maori philosophy and principles;
3. Takes for granted the validity and legitimacy of Maori, the importance of Maori language and culture; and,

4. Is concerned with 'the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well-being' (Smith, 1990).

As such, Kaupapa Maori approaches to research are based on the assumption that research involves Maori people and should make a positive difference for the researched. The research approach must also address the cultural ground rules of respect, community involvement, sharing processes and knowledge (Smith, 1999). In practice, researchers must negotiate with the communities on all of these elements, including the incorporation of processes of networking, community consultation, research groups, etc.

For instance, a Maori tribe may have a definitive sense of what constitutes ethical research. Researchers would need to be aware that ethical behaviour is not limited to living human subjects, but encompasses research related to the environment, archival research, or perhaps physical remains and DNA.

In effect, Kaupapa Maori research enables the community to have greater control of the research and seeks to maximize the participation and interest of Maori peoples. Other Indigenous peoples have learned from the Maori research experience. Currently, similar Indigenous research agendas are being developing to further explore these research approaches within their own circumstances and states of survival, recovery, development, and self-determination.

## Advancing Indigenous Research

The Indigenous research agenda is being advanced primarily in two ways:

1. Through community action projects, local initiatives and research based claims; and,
2. Through Indigenous research centres and study programs within institutions.

Both approaches are currently making headway. Community-based initiatives are being highly regarded for having greater community control and ownership, despite often being conceptualized, funded and directed by non-Indigenous researchers and/or research organizations. While within academia, researchers are gaining ground to innovatively explore and approach their research projects in spite of working within the protection and confines of University research policies and procedures.

For example, the B.C. Aboriginal Capacity and Research Development Environment (BC ACADRE)<sup>8</sup> is housed within the Institute for Aboriginal Health at the University of British Columbia. The BC ACADRE is one of a number of research centres funded across Canada by the Institute of Aboriginal People's Health, a part of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

BC ACADRE has collaborated with interested parties in the Aboriginal community and other institutions in BC to improve the health of Aboriginal peoples. They have developed four research themes intended to guide the establishment of health research priorities. These research themes are as follows:

1. Respecting Aboriginal Community Health Strengths for Developing Health Assessments and Ethical Research Practices;
2. Enacting Responsibility Toward Aboriginal Traditional Cultural Knowledge;

3. Promoting Holistic Wellness in Mental Health and Addictions; and,

4. Supporting Community Motivated Emerging Research Themes.

In conducting research, these research priorities are determined by each Aboriginal community and are inclusive of Aboriginal traditional knowledge.

As more and more University Indigenous researchers lead progressive community-based research projects, such as those emerging from such academic initiatives, both community-based and academic approaches are making inspiring and thought-provoking developments. There are increasingly more programs, resources, structures and facilities that are supportive of an Indigenous research agenda.

## Current State of Indigenous Research

There are currently a variety of research projects pursuing an Indigenous research agenda. Not all of them however, claim to be entirely Indigenous, nor have they been created by Indigenous researchers. Therefore, in undertaking research projects, some research approaches are influenced by social science methodologies or have a multidisciplinary approach taking into account various different research methods or techniques for gathering evidence.

As a result, researchers are seeking ways to privilege the political and strategic goals of Indigenous research through their methodologies. Research projects dealing with cultural survival, healing, social justice and self-determination are being influenced to various degrees by Indigenous research methodologies and Indigenous practices.

### Key Questions for Indigenous Researchers

**Methodology is critical to a research project because it frames the question and determines the methods and instruments used to shape the analysis. In developing a methodology, Indigenous researchers should be asking the fundamental following questions:**

- Whose research is this?
- Who owns it?
- Whose interests does it serve?
- Who will benefit from it?
- Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?
- Who will carry it out?
- Who will write it up?
- How will the results be disseminated (Smith, 1999)

**From an Indigenous research methodology, the answers to these questions must lie within the healing, mobilization, transformation and decolonization of Indigenous peoples.**

8. BC ACADRE, University of British Columbia ([www.health-disciplines.ubc.ca/iah/acadre/](http://www.health-disciplines.ubc.ca/iah/acadre/)) BC ACADRE has amalgamated with the Network Environments for Aboriginal Research BC (NEAR BC). For more information see: [www.nearbc.ca](http://www.nearbc.ca)

Indigenous research methodologies are in various stages of development and use depending on the Indigenous people and/or community. However, the overall theory is beginning to be widely reflected upon by Indigenous peoples and how it theoretically relates to their respective Indigenous communities. Much more work is needed to further think about the practice of Indigenous research methodologies.

Many questions arise in considering the practice and application of Indigenous research methodologies within research projects, such as the following:

- How are researchers privileging and honouring the knowledge of the Indigenous people and their community in the pursuit of research?
- How are Indigenous communities engaged in research partnerships benefiting from research driven with an Indigenous agenda?
- How are collaborative projects being undertaken with non-Indigenous researchers and organizations influenced by Indigenous research methodologies?

## Conclusion

In seeking to answer these questions, the goal continues to be that Indigenous research be carried out in a more respectful, ethical, useful and beneficial way, as seen

from the point of view of the Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge must be at the centre of research methodologies and the construction of knowledge concerning Indigenous peoples and their communities. Moreover, such Indigenous knowledge must be protected against misrepresentation and misuse.

In time, there will be a greater understanding of the use of Indigenous research approaches and the development of Indigenous methodologies that are not only suitable for Indigenous researchers, but non-Indigenous researchers alike. In following Indigenous research methodologies, research will seek to strengthen and empower Indigenous peoples and their communities to become more self-determined in their efforts.

## RESOURCES

### Publications

*A Community Guide to Protecting Indigenous Knowledge* (Research and Analysis Directorate, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) Intended to empower communities to recognize, protect, preserve and share their knowledge in keeping with their goals and traditions. [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/ra/ind/gui\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/ra/ind/gui_e.pdf)

*Annotated Bibliography of Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing Research* (Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing Research Group) Provides an interdisciplinary overview of the Canadian research literature on issues respecting Aboriginal women, health and healing. [www.awhhr.ca/docs/annotated\\_bib\\_AWHHRG.pdf](http://www.awhhr.ca/docs/annotated_bib_AWHHRG.pdf)

*Interviewing Elders: Guidelines from the National Aboriginal Health Organization* Elders hold invaluable knowledge and skills. There are specific ways to share them with others. [www.naho.ca/english/documents/InterviewingElders-FINAL.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/english/documents/InterviewingElders-FINAL.pdf)

Pimatisiwin: A journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal community health - Promote the sharing of knowledge and research experience between researchers, health professionals, and Aboriginal leaders and community members. [www.pimatisiwin.com](http://www.pimatisiwin.com)

### Organizations

Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (Canadian Council on Learning) - Recognizes that Aboriginal learners have unique perspectives and diverse ways of knowing which must be considered in the evolution of educational systems. [www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/index.htm](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/index.htm)

Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing Research Group - A national network of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women researchers interested in community-based research focused on the health of Aboriginal women, their families and communities. [www.awhhr.ca/home.php](http://www.awhhr.ca/home.php)

BC Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environment (BC ACADRE) - Situated within the Institute for Aboriginal Health at the University of British Columbia BC ACADRE joins a unique network of ACADRE initiatives across Canada, which aim to improve the health of Aboriginal Peoples. [www.health-disciplines.ubc.ca/iah/acadre](http://www.health-disciplines.ubc.ca/iah/acadre)

Network Environments for Aboriginal Research BC (NEAR BC) - Supports the development of Aboriginal health research by building linkages that will cultivate province-wide communication and collaboration. [www.nearbc.ca](http://www.nearbc.ca)

National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (University of Northern British Columbia) - Seeks to reduce the health inequities that currently exist for Aboriginal peoples by supporting Aboriginal communities across Canada to realize their health goals. [www.unbc.ca/nccah/english/index.html](http://www.unbc.ca/nccah/english/index.html)

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Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Dunedin, NZ: University of Otago Press.

# Community-Based Research: Shifting the Western Gaze toward Aboriginality

by Donna Hill

## What is Community-Based Research?

CBR<sup>1</sup> is an approach to research that shifts ways of knowing, and ownership of knowledge, away from conventional university-led research. Traditionally, research has been organized by scholars presumed to be the holders of knowledge, and focused on those presumed to need the research. In the case of Aboriginal peoples, they were the subjects, or the object of study, and predominantly, research was done on them, and not always primarily for them. However, increasing numbers of community members and researchers are coming to understand the paradigm shift. Research needs to be not only about the people, but for the people and by the people.

Aboriginal and community driven research provides alternatives to scientific, researcher-centered studies. Instead, it provides a platform for community members and marginalized voices to be heard. This kind of research situates the gaze of the research, not from the outside looking in, but from those conducting necessary explorations about their own community. In other words, community-based Aboriginal research should be completely about the Aboriginal experience.

## A Case Study: "A Place to Call My Own"

Jody Stuart was the Primary Investigator and a researcher for the project, "A Place to Call My Own." This project examined the connections between homelessness and sexual exploitation in Prince George, BC. The research team strongly supported participation by who were experiencing or who had experienced sexual exploitation.

Stuart implores researchers to approach projects with humility as the learner rather than as the knower, or the traditional research "expert." Within the CBR framework, it is assumed that it is from the community that the greatest wealth of knowledge is gained about the issues and concerns that most affect them.

"Homelessness is not only about an absence of shelter, but the absence of home, a place where people belong and are cared for," says Stuart. She considers the work she did not strictly about creating new housing, but also about creating the tools necessary for community empowerment and advocating, such as capacity building among partnering agencies and individuals.

CBR is not about the collection of knowledge for simply the sake of knowledge. It is about much more. It is about true collaboration. The value and the validity of that collected knowledge stems from the inclusion of those community participants who originally shared it, that they also have a voice in the processes of reporting and of presenting gathered information.

## Key Considerations: A Discussion about Community-Based Research

While commenting on the effectiveness of this project's Aboriginal community involvement, Stuart also admitted she has seen both the good and the bad aspects of CBR. On the one hand, it empowers people to take control of the issues which most affect them and motivates the community to advocate for social change and justice.

Conversely, the same kind of research is still fraught with an historical sense of mistrust. The experiential stories of participants were recorded, if not exploited; reports were created, presented, and then shelved. For too long, research has been conducted on participants and primarily for the gain of the academic researchers with little benefit being received by the community. Some research does not accomplish much beyond its initial motivation.

It seems to be a matter of common sense that research should benefit the community, but in practice the community is often exploited by research processes that are poorly conceived and executed. Janice Ab-

### Ethical Considerations: OCAP and the 4 R's of Aboriginal Research

The principles of OCAP—Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession—represent one framework for the ethics of CBR. Guidelines such as this offer a community the decision-making processes about for whom their research is intended, why it is to take place, evaluation purposes, and for whose benefit. However, within the context of Aboriginal research, some of these concepts are still not culturally appropriate. For example, traditionally, Aboriginal people are less concerned with "ownership," "control," and "possession," than are Western researchers.

Another slightly more culturally appropriate ethical consideration may be the "4 R's" of Aboriginal Research: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility. This is a framework coined by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) and now used by the B.C. Aboriginal Capacity and Research Development Environment (BC ACADRE) housed within the Institute for Aboriginal Health at UBC, Vancouver.

1. There are many different models and types of Community-Based Research. Some common terms include CBR, Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR), Action Research, and Participatory Action Research (PAR). For the sake of simplicity within this article, the term CBR has been used.

bot of the Atira Women's Resource Society notes that as a representative of a front-line service provider she has yet to see a research project that translated into essential matters for the women affected – issues such as more detox beds, shelters, housing, or fewer women being harmed.

Sustainability and reciprocity means giving back to the community more than what has been taken. All too often the collection of knowledge is inherently exploitive. What is most important in CBR is the translation of the knowledge by the whole community who gave and collected it. It is also important to create the space for community members to speak about this knowledge, not only the research "experts," since it belongs to the community.

## Striving for Effectiveness

CBR has the power to protect, to advocate for, and to transform lives for the better. Ultimately, its goals are about emancipation rather than about the researcher and his or her own agenda. Stuart cautions that research should be carried out with an end in mind. "If you cannot foresee some improvement in the lives of the people you are working with, then the research is not useful." CBR that is led by the people, for who the benefits of the research are intended, can transform overwhelming subject matters into tangible ways of addressing problems.

CBR is important not only because the people most affected are involved are conducting the research. The entire community benefits from both the research process and outcomes because the process of exploration, interpretation, and communication is rooted in the lived experience of community members.

CBR is also about history. Not only were many erroneous research projects done on people, but so called facts were written about people from outsider perspectives, often with intentional or unintentional slants

to them, or with simply wrong and harmful information. CBR is a chance to rewrite history. It is a chance for community members to correct misleading information from the past about Aboriginal peoples, and to be in control of the processes and outcomes of research within their communities.

## What is Community-Based Research?

CBR done by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people, is about decolonization and self-determination. Aboriginal ways of knowing are incorporated and validated within research. Culturally appropriate protocols are followed, such as ongoing consultation with community Elders for guidance. Research within Aboriginal communities is about empowerment of the people to effect wise decision-making and policy changes. Within the diversity of community voices and input from local agencies and organizations, all members of a CBR venture may not initially agree on the same angle of action or specific solution. However, in the end, all involved do agree on the concerns and ultimate purpose and goal of a particular project.

## Implementing Community-Based Research

National governing bodies of research, such as the Canadian Institute for Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council are now recognizing the importance and effectiveness of CBR. The impacts that Aboriginal communities can have on research questions, project design, implementation, and outcomes are becoming more established. The goals of CBR, including the integral involvement and leadership of Aboriginal peoples about issues which most affect them, are becoming increasingly shared by many. Ultimately, they are to give voice to the lived experiences, perceptions, and expertise of Aboriginal peoples for the betterment of their own lives.

### Key Principles that support Community- Based Research

- Recognizes community as an unit of identity
- Builds on strengths and resources within the community
- Facilitates collaborative, equitable involvement of all partners in all phases of the research
- Integrates knowledge and intervention for mutual benefit of all partners
  - Promotes a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities
  - Involves a cyclical and iterative process
- Addresses health from both positive and ecological perspectives
  - Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners
  - Involves long-term commitment by all partners.

Source: Israel B, Schulz A, Parker E and Becker A. (1998). Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 19, pp. 173-202

## RESOURCES

*A snapshot of community-based research in Canada: Who? What? Why? How?* (Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University) This study shows that Community Based Research (CBR) practitioners are engaged in research on a wide array of Canadian health and social issues. Survey respondents reported a number of positive outcomes as a result of their research endeavors, including changes in both agency and government policies and programs. [depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/Community-based-research-overview-Canada-2007.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Community-based-research-overview-Canada-2007.pdf)

*Research Tool Kit* (First Nations Centre of the National Aboriginal Health Organization) Provides a basic introduction to the research process so communities will be familiar with the issues and can make informed decisions. Although some of the information would apply to research of any type, the kit focuses specifically on health research. [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_ResearchToolkit.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_ResearchToolkit.pdf)

*An Overview of Models for Community Based Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Research* (Healing Our Spirit BC Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Society) The paper provides an overview of Aboriginal health research in Canada, a vision of a model for community based research that can be implemented as Aboriginal institutional development continues; and point form discussion of models that are currently being used to conduct Aboriginal HIV/AIDS research. [www.healingourspirit.org/pdfs/research/cboverview2002.pdf](http://www.healingourspirit.org/pdfs/research/cboverview2002.pdf)

*Community Based Participatory Research Relationships with Aboriginal Communities in Canada: An Overview of Context and Process* (Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal Community Health, University of Alberta) Presents a broad overview of the conditions in which CBPR methods have developed, a framework for implementing this approach and some practical considerations for conducting research in Aboriginal communities. [www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/1.1C\\_ParticipatoryResearch.pdf](http://www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/1.1C_ParticipatoryResearch.pdf)

*Developing and Sustaining Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships: A skill building curriculum* (Community Campus Partnerships for Health) Evidence based curriculum intended as a tool for community-institutional partnerships that are using or planning to use a CBPR approach to improving health. It can be used by partnerships that are just forming as well as mature partnerships. [www.cbprcurriculum.info](http://www.cbprcurriculum.info)

Ethics Tool Kit (First Nations Centre of the National Aboriginal Health Organization) Provides an overview of research ethics to help communities that are planning to do their own research, and to help communities that are engaged in research with outside organizations to understand what aspects of research ethics they may need to negotiate. [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_EthicsToolkit.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_EthicsToolkit.pdf)

*Just the Facts, Ma'm. . . A Women's guide to understanding evidence about health and health care* (National Coordinating Group on Health Care Reform and Women) Intended to provide women with tools to assess arguments and evidence about women, health and health care reforms. [www.cewh-cesf.ca/PDF/health\\_reform/evidenceEN.pdf](http://www.cewh-cesf.ca/PDF/health_reform/evidenceEN.pdf)

*OCAP: Ownership, control, access, and possession* (National Aboriginal Health Organization) Explains the principles of OCAP and how they apply to the collection, storage and use of data. It also provides some useful models in the form of policies, protocols, or strategies that reflect OCAP and have been adopted by First Nations to regulate research activities that affect their peoples and communities. [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_OCAPInformationResource.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_OCAPInformationResource.pdf)

*Office of Community Based Research* (University of Victoria) A community–university partnership which supports community engagement and research to create vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities. <http://www.uvic.ca/research/ocbr/>

*Research Ethics: A guide for community organizations* (Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education Society (PACE)) The research enterprise is a major contributor to social policy and our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. This document aims to share our knowledge around research ethics, to empower us in our work, and to reduce the potential harms that participation in research/evaluation has had on some impoverished and/or criminalized client populations. [24.85.225.7/PACE2/docs/pdf/Community\\_Research\\_Guidelines\\_final\\_Draft\\_](http://24.85.225.7/PACE2/docs/pdf/Community_Research_Guidelines_final_Draft_)

# Statistics: Counting What Counts Indigenous Approaches to Research

## Finding and Using Aboriginal Statistics

by Mary McNeill

Statistical information is an important part of discussions and decision making around public issues such as homelessness. Mary McNeill, Aboriginal Communications Office for Statistics Canada, outlines how statistical information can be used and abused

Statistics are everywhere. It is difficult to read the newspaper, turn on the radio or television, or even have a discussion without coming across statistics. Statistics are meant to help us better understand the world, to organize our observations, and to communicate these observations to others. The better equipped people are to use statistics, the better able they are to make use of statistics to promote awareness and understanding of an issue and to go about improving it. In my work in Aboriginal Communications with Statistics Canada, I see Aboriginal communities increasingly use statistics for their own empowerment, whether in evaluating housing needs, planning health care services, establishing businesses, etc.

### Why Use Statistics?

Some people have negative associations with statistics; however, it is important to recognize that statistics can be used as a tool for empowerment. If there are problems or inequities, which obviously there are, statistics can be used to help understand the issue and to seek solutions.

And of course, statistics are not all bad news. There are many statistics which show positive change among Aboriginal people. For example, the 2001 Census results show that the percentage of Aboriginal people in non-reserve areas who lived in overcrowded conditions decreased from 22% in 1996 to 17% in 2001. However, while the situation improved, the statistics also show where the gaps were as in 2001, Aboriginal children

were nearly twice as likely as all Canadian children to live in overcrowded conditions, with 25% of Aboriginal children living in overcrowded conditions compared to 13% of all Canadian children.

### Statistics can be used to:

- Raise awareness of strengths and challenges
- Provide a more powerful way to help understand a circumstance
- Assist in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs
- Inform decision-making
- Support credibility
- Strengthen research and development
- Influence policy

### Challenges with Statistics

Using statistics can involve many challenges. One challenge which researchers may face is that the data that they want may not exist. Other challenges may be that the data from different sources are not comparable, or the data that are available are dated or of questionable quality. In all cases, the researcher will have to assess whether the data are usable. Sometimes, researchers may have to gather their own data directly from their target population through surveys or other methods (e.g. focus groups).

Another concern with using statistics is misinterpretation, whether through error or the

deliberate misuse of statistics. An example of misinterpretation through error is if someone were to misinterpret the statistics and then present incorrect information. An example of misuse of statistics is if an individual or an organization were to distort statistics or present false information to sway public opinion.

It is a sad fact that people and organizations do manipulate information such as statistics to suit their own agendas. For this reason, data users are advised to be very critical about the information they are provided and to ask questions such as: where does this information come from? Is the source credible? What methods were used to collect and process this data?

## Suggested Steps for Data Analysis

### First steps: Draft an analysis plan.

A plan can guide you and keep you on track

• Write down your research questions and objectives.

What main stories do you want to tell and why?

• Write an outline of what you'd like to include in your report

• Keep your audience in mind. Make sure you present what's important to them in a way they'll understand. Consider how you might combine with statistics with other information such as stories to provide context and to make the information easier for your audience to relate to.

• What sources of data will you use? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the data that you need to consider?

• What visual aids will help tell the story? You can sketch out some charts or tables that might be useful. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words. A simple graph or chart can communicate a great deal of information, especially when showing trends or comparisons.

• Drafting a timeline of activities can help you meet your deadlines.

Adapted from Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Statistics Training Program Module One: Introduction to Basic Statistical Techniques*, 2007

## Sources of Information

Statistics Canada's website ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)) has a wealth of information on every aspect of life in Canada including a good deal of free data and information on Aboriginal people. There are community profiles, thematic maps, data tables, reports, and other information on a wide range of topics, such as housing, families, income, and health. Please contact Mary McNeill for a guide to finding Aboriginal data at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca).

Other possible data sources are Aboriginal organizations (e.g. the First Nations Chiefs' Health Committee), non-governmental organizations (e.g. the National Council on Poverty), provincial governments (e.g. BC Stats), federal departments (e.g. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada), and universities and colleges.

2008 is an important year for Aboriginal data from Statistics Canada. New data are being released from the 2006 Census, the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, the 2006 Aboriginal Child Survey, and the Labour Force Survey, beginning with the Aboriginal census release on January 15, 2008.

## More Suggested Steps for Data Analysis

### Next Steps: Do the background work

- Gather your data and information
- Find other documents and articles that will give you ideas, back up your work and make your report stronger

Analyze your information

- Use the information you've gathered to answer your research questions. What statistical techniques will you use to answer them – percentage, growth rates, averages, something else?

Interpret your results

- What are your main findings? Are they what you expected? If not, why? Don't jump to conclusions – look carefully at your data

Write your report

- Focus on your main findings, their explanations and implications. Ensure that your information is clear and can be understood by your audience.

Share your results with others who are interested

- Sharing your information informs others and allows for feedback to improve your report.

Adapted from Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Statistical Training Program Module One: Introduction to Basic Statistical Techniques*, 2007.

## RESOURCES

*Statistics: Power from Data!* (Statistics Canada) - Published primarily for secondary students of Mathematics and Information Studies, although it is expected that the product will find a wider use among other students, teachers and the general population  
[www.statcan.ca/english/edu/power/toc/contents.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/edu/power/toc/contents.htm)

*Aboriginal Statistical Training Program* (Statistics Canada) - This training consists of two one-week modules. The main thrust is to teach Aboriginal people about how to define their data needs when they have to address a variety of issues that their organizations may confront.  
[www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/workshop/wst2.cgi?workshop=25](http://www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/workshop/wst2.cgi?workshop=25)

Statistics Canada - To learn more about the various data and statistical training opportunities that are available, through Statistics Canada please contact Mary McNeill, Aboriginal Communications Officer, Statistics Canada, by email at [mary.mcneill@statcan.ca](mailto:mary.mcneill@statcan.ca) or by telephone at 604-666-4996.

First Nations Statistical Institute - The First Nations Statistical Institute (FNSI) is a not-for-profit statistical service organization dedicated to putting First Nations information to use. [www.firststats.ca](http://www.firststats.ca)

# Using Research to Influence Government Policy

by Michael Goldberg

Using the 2005 Homeless count in Metro Vancouver as an example, Michael Goldberg argues that research does not change policy by itself, but can help to support and validate the work of advocates and community groups but providing accurate information on community issues.

One often hears from many in the community that spending on research is not a good use of limited funds. People argue that research rarely results directly in changes to government policies or in the development of new programs and services. Others argue that research can be a useful tool to influence government policy. What would account for these differing views on the value of research?

First, it must be remembered that the vast majority of research is not intended to influence government policy. Academic research, mostly research conducted by professors at the universities, is primarily to enhance knowledge. This research tends to focus on theory and argument and, as such, it tends to follow a set of procedures that make that research less interesting to most people in the community, let alone to most politicians. Even most applied research,<sup>1</sup> or research conducted by or on behalf of a community organization, is not intended to influence government policy. Most applied research such as needs assessments or program and project evaluations are designed to influence practices at a very local level.

A second possible explanation for the current disenchantment with research, even where its primary purpose was to influence government policy, is that it has usually been seen as “expert” driven. This expert driven approach can be described as the triangle of influence.

As the triangle shows (Fig.1), the topic and design of the research is decided either by a

senior government official or a researcher, or most likely in collaboration. The researcher and senior official then present the results to the decision maker who can influence policy. Critical in this simplistic presentation is that there is no influencing role for the community. The community or its members are seen as the subjects of the research without voice in deciding what is important to research let alone interpreting and presenting the results to those in decision-making roles.

A more comprehensive approach of using research to influence government policy could be described as the diamond of influence (Fig. 2).

The diamond approach explicitly includes the community as an essential part of the research process. In an ideal sense, the funders of research would build community engagement into both the research design and methodology, and would ensure funding for mobilization and applied knowledge transfer for some period of time after the actual research has been completed. The diamond approach recognizes that research is a useful but insufficient tool to influence government policy.

While funders are beginning to acknowledge the importance of community involvement, there is seldom sufficient funding dedicated to building the capacity in the community for effective partnerships.

## Metro Vancouver Homeless Count 2005

The 2005 count of homeless persons in the 21 municipalities is an interesting example of how research can be used as a tool to influence government policy. It needs to be noted however, that influencing government policy was neither the purpose nor a goal of the count. The count was intended to provide quality information about the current size and nature of the homeless population in Metro Vancouver and to identify trends since the 2002 count. None the less, there were a number of critical elements that helped set the stage where the information from the count could contribute to influencing government policy.

1. Organizational / community involvement - Having the community stakeholders involved in the count was critical. The community organizations that work with the homeless identified the places in their respective communities where the street homeless might be found, recruited the large number of volunteers that would be needed, and were active participants in the ‘daytime’ count. Most importantly, there was incredible involvement of Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal volunteers in the count

2. Surprise findings - There was a great deal of speculation on the extent to which the homeless population had increased. The 2005 count reported that the population had doubled since 2002. While it was anti-

1. Applied research is defined as “Research designed for the purpose of producing results that may be applied to real world situations.” (Source: Centre for Program Evaluation (Bureau of Justice Assistance))

Figure 1: Traditional Policy Process

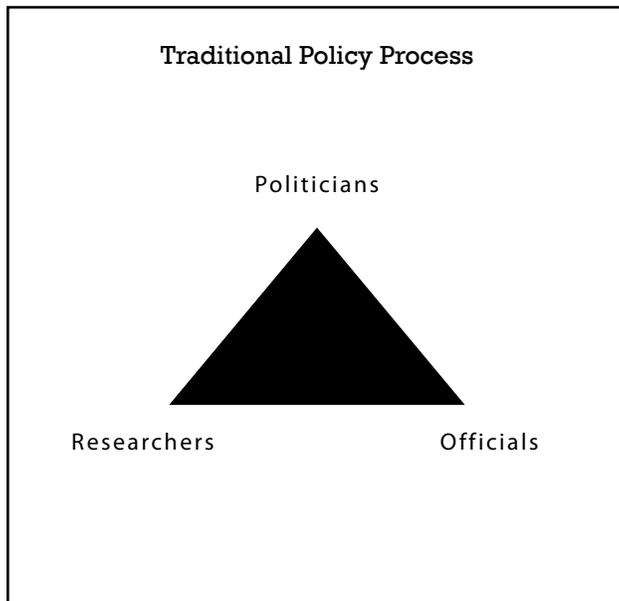
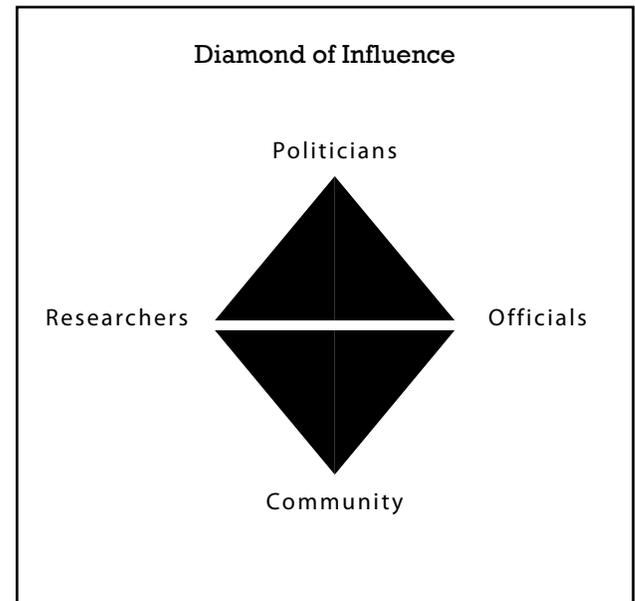


Figure 2: Diamond of Influence



pated that there would be a larger number of homeless, the “doubling” of the population was a surprise. Other surprising results included: the greatest increase was among the street homeless ; over 1 in 3 homeless self identified as being Aboriginal; almost half of the street homeless had been homeless for a year or more. Contrary to popular myth, less than half of the homeless had a ‘secure’ source of income such as income assistance, pension benefits or disability benefits. Most of the homeless, especially the street homeless, survived with no income; income from binning or bottle collecting, panhandling, part-time and casual employment; or illegal activities.

3. Media - There was intense media interest once it was announced in November 2004 that a homeless count would be undertaken March 2005. This may have been due to the increased visibility of homelessness in Greater Vancouver, the debate over the provincial legislation on aggressive panhandling, and/or the ongoing focus on Vancouver in the run-up to the 2010 winter Olym-

pics. This interest was also helpful in letting organizations serving the homeless and the homeless themselves know that date for the count. Media interest continued through the count day and culminated in two media releases, one where the preliminary findings were presented and the second was the presentation of the final report.

4. Ongoing Capacity - There was ongoing capacity to act on the findings from the count via the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) and the Aboriginal Homeless Steering Committee (AHSC). Both Steering Committees and the stakeholder organizations were able to apply on-going ‘pressure’ on the planning and funding of services to persons who are homeless. Having champions (individuals and organizations) in place that know how to use the research to influence policy is critical.

### Conclusion

While the results of the homeless count were well publicized, and the provincial and

municipal governments were asked a ‘lot’ of questions by the media, the research itself did not change government policy. However, the results from the research were useful to the steering committees on homeless and other stakeholders to advocate for additional services. Some examples include:

The findings from the count were seen to be an impetus for the establishment of the pilot income assistance outreach project first in downtown Vancouver and then in the Downtown Eastside. The outreach program has since expanded to over 15 additional communities in the province

Through the ongoing advocacy by community groups and coalition such as Raise the Rates, there have been improvements in basic welfare rates (basic welfare rates increased for the first time since they were cut in 1996); the province has announced new social housing projects and six are being fast tracked by the city of Vancouver; additional funding is being provided to shelters to enable them to stay open during the day time. While these changes were not the direct

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## Representing Aboriginal People in the 2005 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count

By Donna Hill

Community-based research is about representing the people that matter most, those within the community for which the research is intended. Traditional frameworks of research are inclined to involve researchers from outside the community at hand, who, well intentioned for the most part, aim to collect information from a community about which they know little.

Homeless counts have been conducted in Metro Vancouver in 2002, 2005 and 2008. The first Metro Vancouver Homeless Count of 2002 is an example of the blind spots that exist in traditional research practices. In this count Aboriginal people were grossly under represented. According to Suzanne Noel, a researcher for the second Metro Vancouver Homeless Count in 2005, "Members of the Steering Committee agreed the numbers hadn't been very reflective" so they asked, "What can we do to make a change?"

She advocated for a more inclusive Aboriginal component to the 2005 Count. "We wanted the results of the count to be used by service-care providers and the funders (and for them to know) the breadth of the issues for Aboriginal people in Metro Vancouver."

Two key considerations were identified. First, in the earlier count, Aboriginal people were not involved in the process, nor were they consulted. Non-Aboriginal volunteers did not know where in the community to seek out homeless Aboriginals for the count. Second, the volunteers were not aware of culturally sensitive protocols needed in approaching Aboriginal people to participate in the study. "So [they] were unable, even if they did find them, to get responses to the questionnaire," reports Noel.

Noel sought to break down some of these cultural and community barriers with the implementation of community-based research (CBR). CBR has the power to protect, to advocate for, and to transform lives for the better. Some of the reasons CBR resonates with Aboriginal communities is because it challenges colonial models of research, it serves to empower participants, and it addresses barriers like those mentioned above. CBR is inclusionary; it focuses on research done from within the community, rather than by outsiders. This evolving research framework seeks to empower community members who have the most to gain from social justice and policy changes related to issues important to them.

To more accurately reflect the realities of Aboriginal homelessness, Aboriginal community members were asked to volunteer in the 2005 study. Some of the Aboriginal street youth further along on their continuum of healing and service-care clients were invited into the project. Noel says they helped craft the questions "so that they were relevant and respectful of those we wished to count." Volunteers were given an honorarium to respect their time. They went out with "a renewed sense of purpose," Noel notes. They explained why this count was necessary, "I know this is a pain, but I need you to help us get things answered so we can effect change for us and make all the difference in the world."

Twenty teams of two counted from 5 am until Midnight on March 15th [[Note: More than 40 additional Aboriginal interviewers volunteered in other parts of Metro Vancouver during the day of the count]]. The community members knew where to look for their own people, such as in more obscured neighbourhoods and gathering places. They used existing trust relationships to gain access to places others could not go like Native Housing complexes. To respect Aboriginal protocol, volunteers gave traditional gifts to all who contributed to the study as they counted their friends, relatives, community members, and each other.

As a result of recognizing the need for CBR, double the numbers of Aboriginal homeless people were recorded in 2005 as compared to the previous count. "I raise my hands to those youth and I'm still astounded by the amount of effort and heart put into that activity," says Noel. According to the results of the count, "there was a significant growth in the number of homeless counted region-wide, almost doubling from 1,121 persons in 2002 to 2,174 persons in 2005.

More homeless people were found on the street than in shelters and the number of street homeless had grown by 235% or 800 persons since the last count in 2002." Noel attributes "a good portion of that to the involvement of Aboriginal agencies and the gathering of their volunteers."

She notes the most important lesson learned was that people "in the know" should be doing the research. The addition of an Aboriginal-specific component to the Homeless Count resulted in a huge increase in overall numbers. "Metro Vancouver has a 2% population of Aboriginal people, and between 35 and 37% of the homeless are Aboriginal. That is hugely disproportionate," Noel comments.

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result of the homeless count, the findings, especially that doubling of the homeless, was a figure frequently quoted in arguments to improve welfare rates, creating more social housing (especially supportive housing), and to providing daytime services for the street homeless.

Even when the critical conditions in the diamond of influence are in place (clear evidence from research and active ongoing community involvement), government policy still may not be influenced in a way that the evidence and involvement suggest should happen. Governments (politicians) are in the business of getting re-elected. Too often, as Peter McKnight noted in the Vancouver Sun, politicians often shy away from the “uncertain and uneasy task of translating the best research into policy” and more often “ignore the research and hoodwink the public into believing they’re actually doing something by achieving certain and easy answers.”

## RESOURCES

*A Methodology to Obtain First Person Qualitative Information from People Who are Homeless and Formerly Homeless* (Research Project on Homelessness (2002), Vol. 3) – Presents a methodology to gather first person qualitative information from people who are currently and formerly homeless. This work was undertaken as a component of regional research on the incidence and nature of homelessness in the Greater Vancouver region, carried out during 2001-2002.  
[www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness/pdfs/Volume3.pdf](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness/pdfs/Volume3.pdf)

*Homelessness in the Upper Fraser Valley: Age, Gender, Community of Origin, Health, Income, Employment and Services in Relation to Homelessness* (Employment & Community Development department of Mennonite Central Committee of British Columbia (MCC-ECD)) – Documents the process and findings of research conducted during the spring and summer of 2004. See appendix “Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Research Involving Homeless People, January, 2004.”  
[www.mcccd.bc.ca/homeless/Upper%20Fraser%20Valley%20Homelessness%20Report.pdf](http://www.mcccd.bc.ca/homeless/Upper%20Fraser%20Valley%20Homelessness%20Report.pdf)

*Knowledge Translation for Indigenous Communities: Policy Making Toolkit* (Indigenous KT Summit Steering Committee) – Provides practical assistance to communities planning to develop policy to guide their decisions about knowledge development, translation and use in and with their communities. Also intended to recognize that Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge and ways of translating knowledge are fully respected, side-by-side, in knowledge translation processes.  
[www.iphrc.ca/resources/KT\\_Policy\\_Toolkit\\_Sept26%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.iphrc.ca/resources/KT_Policy_Toolkit_Sept26%5B1%5D.pdf)

*On our streets and in our shelters... Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count* (Metro Vancouver – Regional Homelessness) – Important findings regarding Aboriginal homelessness include people with Aboriginal identity were highly over-represented among the region’s homeless population, proportionally more women are among the Aboriginal homeless population than the non-Aboriginal homeless population, and the number and share of Aboriginal people was highest among the street homeless and smallest among the sheltered homeless.  
[www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness/research.htm](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness/research.htm)

*Scholarship in Action: Applied Research and Community Change* (The US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of University Partnerships) – Academic research that takes place outside the laboratory is becoming an increasingly important force in addressing and helping communities solve local problems. Academic researchers use different terms to describe this kind of inquiry, including applied research, engaged research, community-based research, and applied research partnerships. Despite the variety of labels, however, all of this research has a common focus on the application of academic knowledge to specific community-based issues.  
[www.chesp.org.za/conference/Research/Scholarship%20in%20Action%20-%20Nyden.pdf](http://www.chesp.org.za/conference/Research/Scholarship%20in%20Action%20-%20Nyden.pdf)

*Speaking Truth, Creating Power: A Guide to Policy Work for Community-Based Participatory Research Practitioners* – This tool-kit is designed for community-based participatory research (CBPR) institutional and community partners who want to create or change policies that affect health in their communities. For community members to invest in research, the process must have tangible results. For this reason, development of knowledge not linked to action, change, or advocacy does not fall into the realm of CBPR.  
[depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/ritas.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/ritas.pdf)

# Crossing Barriers: Participatory Action Research and Evaluation

Evaluation has taken on increasing importance in recent years. Donna Hill investigates an approach to evaluation developed in Northern BC that is based on the unique needs of community members and recognizes both tangible and intangible outcomes.

Funding proposals depend on outcomes. Funders want to clearly see what the results of the project will be before granting funds. Evaluation can help clarify if goals have been met, what has changed as a result of the project, and identify important lessons learned.

There are many standard models of the evaluation process of a project, which generally involve defining objectives, input or implementation, activities, and the output and efficiency of a project. This article discusses one particular integrative approach to community research used by Theresa Healy and a team of Northern BC researchers.

Healy's work starts with the assumption that the community group undertaking a project is the group best able to design and implement research that will address community needs. One project she is working with looks at homelessness in Northern BC. For reasons of participant confidentiality and anonymity, specifics that might identify the community of this project cannot be given at this time. "Our communities are so small, it is easy to identify people even from details you might think are vague enough to protect identity." However, she does say, "I do have permission to share the learning." Healy identifies that tenuous position of a researcher "straddling two worlds," one of ethical consideration for participants, the other of reporting research findings.

## Addressing competing demands

Healy is clear about the difficulties encountered while writing funding proposals that

require a project's design and measurements of success at the beginning, rather than as a process of discovery by the community members involved. Measuring success becomes indicative of pre-designing a program for the people, before they as a community, have had a chance for input and to design it themselves as a process. Healy believes in community-based research, which is done by the people, for the people. "Participatory Action Methodology becomes part of the work; it is a process of effectiveness within itself."

A second concern with regard to effective evaluation process is the issue of tangible versus intangible outcomes of a project. Funders require tangible evidence such as quantitative statistics. For example, for who is the research implemented and for what reasons? How many were served? What are the measurable successes and outcomes? However, often projects have intangible, qualitative outcomes that cannot be measured. For example, the self-esteem and confidence of participants, community networking, lasting relationships, and life-skills learned as a result of the project. The challenge, Healy thinks, is how to make the intangibles visible and respected as genuine markers of success for outside bodies such as funders and policy makers.

Standards set up by funding bodies outside the project "set the community and their researchers up for failure," Healy says. "The categories of success have to be defined by the people." Healy has learned effective ways of writing grants for community research projects. "I've learned to write funding pro-

posals as a skeleton on which the Aboriginal people in the room get to dress."

## Defining ethics

Within this Northern BC homeless project, Healy and her community group are designing an effective model of research and evaluation. While they are using the OCAP ethical guidelines—Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession—they take this framework a step further, and allow research ethics to be defined by the group of community participants. "The astuteness and relevance of the research ethics decided by the group is of utmost importance to the project," reports Healy. They prove both the research and the researchers are worthy of trust. They show the "research will come last," and that the project puts the well-being of its community first, and "starts where the people are."

Healy believes Aboriginal people have a world view and cultural imperatives that must be acknowledged and respected. Imposing, and working solely from, mainstream models of research not only silences voices, but also distorts valuable information. It requires a huge shift in thinking and a great deal of patience to figure out research as a force for positive change can be brought into this world view without causing more harm than good.

She supports the importance of the 'right people' -- those with passion for their piece of the puzzle at the table. In typical research, the unknown person is seen as unbiased and therefore able to access the objective truth — reality — the trusted person becomes

an ambassador who enables people, usually marginalized and highly distrustful of research, to be able to speak the truth of their experiences. "It's about being there, and being seen, outside of the life of the project," confirms Healy.

A Participatory Action approach to research design and evaluation planning provides ongoing tools the research team can learn from. It also provides training and relationship building among participants, who ultimately, become the researchers. It provides planning and organizational skills to the research team and to the project. And it enables researchers to build trusting relationships that provide benefits beyond the timeline of a single project. In addition, the strong relationships constructed through this kind of research represent a form of harm reduction and crime prevention.

The model demonstrates pragmatically how to put participation into Participatory Action research. Too often what is called participatory action research only actively engages community members in the data collection stage—that is, community members' participation is restricted to being a source of information. In this model, everyone is meaningfully engaged at all stages of research (identification of the problem, construction of the research question, identification of appropriate research tools, collection of the data, analysis of the data, and presentation of the findings).

## A four stage model

Healy's model of Participatory Action evaluation includes four key stages that follow after the initial skeleton of a project has been accepted by funders.

*Stage one* is about training community peer researchers. Participants are trained in research skills as a foundation on which relationship-building emerges. Their trust is built through experience and they learn how to support one other when they go out

into the community as researchers. Trust-building is also necessary for the validity of the project to be recognized. This is critical given that "the process of colonization not only taught Aboriginal people not to trust non-Aboriginal people but also not to trust each other," Healy reminds.

*Stage two* is about supporting the researchers in designing their own qualitative research. It is about genuinely letting the group design and implement their own project that best reflects the needs of their community. They are given the right to speak for themselves and the legitimacy to know what is best for their community. This is the stage at which the research questions are collaboratively defined: What is the problem? For what purposes is the research needed? Who is this for? How will the process be implemented and data gathered? How will the results be interpreted and presented, and by who? The group then collaborates in designing the research, combining their new knowledge of research techniques with their expertise in their communities and with the issue.

*Stage three* is described by Healy as the "test" phase. The group of community researchers share information amongst themselves. There is power in hearing one's own voice; it is about validation and empowerment. Once they have shared many of their own perspectives and issues, they can now go out into the community and genuinely listen to others. The group then implements, with ongoing support, debriefing and learning, their design. Data is collected.

*Stage four* is about storytelling and about integrating further, the evaluation process as an ongoing process within the research stages. Sharing the data, the stories, helps people make meaning of their experiences. They help to clarify concepts and to illustrate what is working and not working. Storytelling, at this stage, is about sharing knowledge and building wisdom. It can also inspire action. A cycle of Plan-Act-Reflect translates evaluation work into a research tool and a

project support tool.

Community researchers in Healy's project gather for bi-monthly meetings. Their circle of discussion respects the power of dialogue. It begins with a turn-taking check-in, and ends with one as well. Here researchers are able to share community members' stories. They discuss what the issues are, for whom they matter, and how the project goals (needs of the people) are going to be effectively met. This has been one of the integral evaluation tools. Healy confirms that in Participatory Action research, "Evaluation pieces do not look like evaluation as we know it."

This article has introduced one particular framework of evaluation, as integrated within a Northern BC community's model of Participatory Action Research. What remains vital to any evaluation process is that it is ongoing and embedded within the work. Effective evaluation is cyclical in nature. Researchers must constantly revisit a project's objectives, design, implementation, ways of data collection, and interpretation of findings. Healy's model illustrates this notion, most specifically in stage four, with the researcher/participants' ongoing meetings and recognition of the power of dialogue, of storytelling, and of integrating the evaluation process holistically into the community-based research project.

Evaluation as an ongoing, subject of enquiry embedded in the work and shared by all not only reveals deep seated truths it ripples into all levels of work undertaken by the team producing useful and effective and timely change as part of the research work. Healy confirms, "We can't afford to wait on the results of research. The issues for Aboriginal people in Northern BC are at a critical stage. We need research that works in the moments we are together because that—in the end—is all we ever have."

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## Five Alternative Methods of Project Evaluation

by Donna Hill

There are many reasons to evaluate projects and programs. For example, those involved (including participants, staff, volunteers, funders and other community members) may want to know what is different as a result of the project, if resources have been used effectively, and what lessons have been learned that can guide future activities. An important first step in developing an evaluation is to understand what the purpose of the evaluation is and how it will be used by various groups including participants, community organizations, funders, etc. This article briefly discusses five alternative methods of evaluation, all of which could be considered an integral part of Participatory Action Research (PAR). In any community-based research, the questions and answers are designed and sought by the people and for the people. PAR strives to involve all relevant parties in actively examining together the current situation that affects their community in order to improve and to change it.

1. **Storytelling:** In PAR, community researchers gather in focus group discussions to share their experiences as researchers. They also share with the group the stories they have collected from other community members. The role of storytelling can emphasize wisdom, clarify concepts, overcome resistance, illustrate what is working or not working, empower people to speak for themselves and for others, and enact social change. Stories are about making meaning; they assist people to listen and to understand.

2. **Community Timelines:** This evaluation can be done individually or as a group. Community researchers draw a timeline of their individual experiences within a project. They can include significant events, moments that stand out, humorous incidences, important people, networks they made. The timeline gathers insights and reflects the history of the project and the researchers' perceptions during their participation in it.

3. **Journaling and Poetry:** Field notes are a standard form of reflecting on any research. However, this method also goes beyond the standard. Researchers can explore their meaning-making and experiential observations through the use and the inclusion of journal entries and storied poems. Researchers can place themselves in the midst of their community involvement and reflect in prose or poetic form, rather than the usual brevity of field notes.

4. **PhotoVoice:** This method blends photography with social action. It can effectively engage policy makers. PhotoVoice allows a project to be perceived through the eyes of the researcher, and this view to be represented through photographs. Through photography, people can identify, represent, and analyze their communities and their associated strengths and needs. The visual images are accompanied by stories shared by the photographer. The photographs also promote dialogue about important issues through group discussion.

5. **Scrap Booking:** Scrap booking can be considered multi-textual voicing. Similar to a timeline, journaling, or PhotoVoicing, researchers gather their perceptions into a scrap book collection of their interpretations of a project. They might include newspaper or newsletter clippings, photos, written texts, and other mementos. Scrap booking allows people to contextualize their collection and 'decorate' each entry according to their own rating and values, thoughts and perceptions. Like Photovoice, this visual representation of a researcher's reflections encourages group discussion, learning, and social action.

In recent times, it has become more recognized that individual communities can have major impact on research questions, project design, implementations, and outcomes of their own programs or projects. The aims of CBR, including the fundamental evaluation process has evolved from traditional frameworks to now including more creative models of evaluation.

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Participatory Evaluation: What is it? Why do it? What are the Challenges? (Policy and Practice, Community-Based Public Health) – “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll wind up somewhere else,” said Yogi Berra. When we collectively apply our hopes and energies to improving our communities, how do we know if we’re making the right choices along the way? How will we notice when we are spinning our wheels and what changes to make? By taking a community-based public health approach to our work, we create an opportunity to engage in a particular type of evaluation – participatory evaluation – that can help answer those questions.

## RESOURCES

*Community-Based Participatory Research: A Training Manual for Community-Based Researchers* (Sadaf Shallwani and Shama Mohammed) – This training workshop, developed to support community workers in Tando Jam, Sindh, Pakistan, is intended to enhance community-based workers’ role as community-based researchers in a community-based participatory action research project. It is a useful resource for North American audiences because it provides an easily understood introduction to key concepts.

[individual.utoronto.ca/sadaf/resources/cbpr2007.pdf](http://individual.utoronto.ca/sadaf/resources/cbpr2007.pdf)

*First Nation Self-Evaluation Of Community Programs: A Guidebook On Performance Measurement* (First Nations Working Group On Performance Measurement) – Developed to address a range of accountability practise issues including the need for First Nations to define success on their own terms, based on their own priorities; the relation between external relationships and internal accountability needs; and the need to recognize what is being achieved in communities.

[www.Ainc-Inac.Gc.Ca/Pr/Pub/Ae/Sp/9713\\_E.Pdf](http://www.Ainc-Inac.Gc.Ca/Pr/Pub/Ae/Sp/9713_E.Pdf)

*Guide to Project Evaluation: A Participatory Approach* (Population Health Directorate, Health Canada) Evaluation can be useful, exciting and an important knowledge development tool. This evaluation guide has been developed to help make all these things happen. The goal of this evaluation guide is to provide easy-to-use, comprehensive framework for project evaluation.

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/html/fvprojevaluation\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/html/fvprojevaluation_e.html)

*Needs Assessment Guide for Métis Communities* (National Aboriginal Health Organization – Métis Centre) A community-based needs assessment is a natural fit for our Métis communities because it begins in the community, is done by the community, is owned by the community, and improves the community. As a people who value determining our own future, a community-based needs assessment done the right way will be in keeping with our values and desire to direct our own lives.

[www.naho.ca/MHC\\_Site/E/documents/MCNeedsAssesmentGuideFINALwithreference\\_000.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/MHC_Site/E/documents/MCNeedsAssesmentGuideFINALwithreference_000.pdf)

*PhotoVoice: Social Change through Photography* – Photovoice has three goals. It enables people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and problems. It promotes dialogue about important issues through group discussion and photographs. Finally, it engages policymakers. [www.photovoice.com](http://www.photovoice.com)

*Splash and Ripple: Using outcomes to design and guide community work* (PLAN:NET Limited) – Outcome Measurement is a standard approach to program evaluation utilized by many project planners and funding sources. This popular guide presents the often complex concepts associated with Outcome Measurement in a format that is easy to understand and use. [hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/pubs/contribution/ripple-ricochet\\_e.html](http://hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/pubs/contribution/ripple-ricochet_e.html)

*Participatory Evaluation: What is it? Why do it? What are the Challenges?* (Policy and Practice, Community-Based Public Health) - “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll wind up somewhere else,” said Yogi Berra. When we collectively apply our hopes and energies to improving our communities, how do we know if we’re making the right choices along the way? How will we notice when we are spinning our wheels and what changes to make?

[depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/Evaluation.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Evaluation.pdf)

# Using Research to Understand Our Communities: the CNPR Indicators Project

by Kinwa Bluesky

Community indicator projects develop a profile of individual communities based on concepts such as community well-being, quality of life, and determinants of health. Kinwa Bluesky, Research Coordinator for the Centre for Native Policy and Research (CNPR), summarizes a unique indicator project that used the teachings of the Medicine Wheel as a framework to illustrate quality of life issues facing Aboriginal people living in urban areas.

In 2005, the Centre for Native Policy and Research released a report entitled *An Urban Aboriginal Life*, reflecting on the quality of life of Aboriginal People in the Greater Vancouver Area. The 2005 Indicators Report, written by Nathan Cardinal and Emilie Adin, attempted to document the social, economic, and environmental conditions of Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver. In order to do so, a series of indicators relevant to the Aboriginal community were developed and evaluated.

## What is an indicator?

Simply stated, indicators are single aspects or characteristics that act as indexes the serve to represent the larger social, economic, or environmental system. Indicators generally reflect major social issues, and can be used to understand changes over time, emerging issues, or problems requiring attention.

The *Urban Aboriginal Life* report sought to further highlight gaps in data on the urban Aboriginal population, as well as provide recommendations regarding future data gathering, research and policy development.

The report was unique because it used the teachings of the Medicine Wheel as a framework to determine categories and indicators for each of the 4 traditional directions of North, South, East, and West. In reflecting a more holistic expression of a Cree worldview, the approach sought to incorporate traditional beliefs held by other Aboriginal peoples. The Medicine Wheel has been an important tool for teaching and learning that encompasses and incorporates holistic aspects and relationships.

The traditional Medicine Wheel identifies four elements and directions of personal and community life:

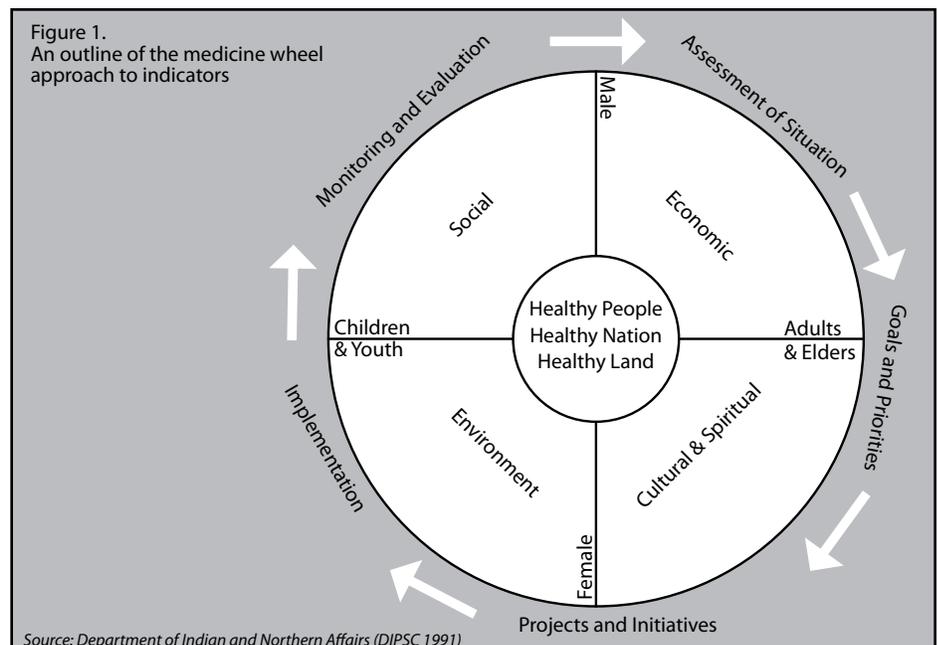
- mental/political (North)
- spiritual/cultural (East)
- emotional/social (South)
- physical/economic (West)

The Medicine Wheel framework (Fig. 1) used for developing urban Aboriginal indicators was adapted from the development indicators project conducted through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (DIPSC 1991).

The centre of the Medicine Wheel provides the ultimate goals and foundations of a healthy, respectful, and sustainable com-

munity: Healthy People (society), Healthy Nation (economy), and Healthy Land (environment). The framework identified three of the same elements as the traditional Medicine Wheel (spiritual/cultural, emotional/social, and physical/economic), but replaced the mental/political (North) with the environment element.

The northern direction represents a place of wisdom, and the surrounding environment (the home), is a source of wisdom. Each element is bordered by other elements, which both support and strain concepts and ideas central to each one. Thus only with the proper balance of these four elements can the centre goals of a "Healthy People, Healthy Nation, and Healthy Land" be achieved.



The four elements are also crosscut by various segments of Aboriginal society that both influence, and are in turn influenced by each of the elements. In addition, these four segments represent different groups and viewpoints in Aboriginal society: male; female; children & youth; and, adults & Elders. Each of these four segments is critical to forming the context for measuring the overall well being of the Aboriginal community.

Following discussions with Aboriginal community members and professionals, a total of 33 different indicators were selected in 12 different categories: each represented in one of the 4 traditional directions. The series of categories were developed to reflect the issues and values important to the urban Aboriginal community in Vancouver. The indicators were then analyzed and rated according to one of four categories: strong, improving/fair, deteriorating/weak, or poor.

In summary, the 2005 Indicators Report revealed the poor social conditions among the Aboriginal community in Metro Vancouver and documented significant disparities between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population.

Some highlights of the findings include:

**South quadrant** - health conditions for Aboriginal people lagged behind the non-Aboriginal community.

**East quadrant** - cultural activities and languages were weak or deteriorating, and conditions for the Aboriginal family were also weak. Incarceration rates for Aboriginal people revealed discouraging levels of overrepresentation of Aboriginal offenders. However, education rates were improving, and there were positive signs of language rejuvenation among Aboriginal children.

**West quadrant** - economic conditions in 2005 revealed levels of inequality between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population in Metro Vancouver. There were howev-

er signs of improvement. Furthermore while employment rates were weak, there were positive developments in the proportion of Aboriginal people holding management-level positions and in self-employment. There was also a noticeable improvement in the level of youth involvement in the local economy. It was noted that education proved to be an important factor in economic development given the employment rate of Aboriginal people with at least a high school diploma to be almost equal to that of their non-Aboriginal peers.

**Northern quadrant** - Environmental conditions were stable, but there were signs of significant deterioration in the near future. The amount of green space and protected areas were fair for an urban area, but there was concern because of the pressure placed on these areas by the growing population. The forecasting of air emissions showed levels of greenhouse gases to increase well above the targets set by the Kyoto Accord. Similarly, there were causes of concern regarding the interior environment with Aboriginal people being significantly overrepresented among the region's homeless, and the rate of Aboriginal households requiring major repairs was one of the worst for large cities in Canada.

The report acknowledged there were significant data gaps, which existed for various indicators. For example, many of the statistics, especially vital statistics, contained data for only one segment of the Aboriginal population, such as Status Indians, but was aggregated to provide a general statistic for all Aboriginal people without differentiating between the various Aboriginal groups. For the report, all Aboriginal people, including First Nation (both Status and non-Status), Métis, and Inuit, that lived within Metro Vancouver were included. In addition, specific groups within the Aboriginal community, such as women or youth, were highlighted for certain indicators when identified as important by the community or by important trends in the data.

## Recommendations and conclusion

Some of the key recommendations for a "Healthy People, Healthy Nation, and Healthy Land" included:

- Conduct further research into what constitutes a "traditional" activity;
- Undertake further research regarding both diabetes and cancer rates in the urban Aboriginal community;
- A comprehensive study regarding Aboriginal involvement in the local urban economy is needed to examine the changing level of involvement, especially among youth; and,
- Develop a comprehensive approach to documenting homelessness in the Aboriginal community. Periodic 24-hour counts, while extremely useful, only provide a glimpse of the issue.

The 2005 Indicators Report concluded policy must be developed to target the basic socioeconomic conditions of urban Aboriginal people in the region. Issues of cultural loss, housing and homelessness, education, and employment were identified as key to improving many of the issues affecting Aboriginal people, such as health, crime and safety.

In acknowledging the lack of methods or policies to provide a comprehensive assessment of the condition of urban Aboriginal people, the 2005 Indicators Report called for an organized and comprehensive approach to monitor the conditions of urban Aboriginal communities. The deficiencies and highlighted gaps in coverage were intended to assist in further developing more appropriate indicators for future reports and spur more research and data collection among other organizations and various levels of government.

## Using Traditional Knowledge in the Modern World - The Importance of Aboriginal Urban Indicators

by Kinwa Bluesky

In *An Urban Aboriginal Life: The 2005 Indicators Report on the Quality of Life of Aboriginal People in the Greater Vancouver Region*, the authors acknowledge the importance of developing both Aboriginal and urban indicators to inform the modern world in which we live:

*In order to revitalize Aboriginal culture and society, contemporary systems must return a sense of ownership and represent the values of Aboriginal peoples. Modern-day systems, and the indicators used to measure these systems, reflect the norms of an industrial society, and do not reflect the values and conditions of Aboriginal peoples (Cardinal & Adin, p. 17).*

This contemporary industrialized system often denies the space for Aboriginal peoples' unique and creative articulations regarding labour, work, land-based economies, and traditional/modern cultural systems. In failing to obtain input from Aboriginal peoples, indicators are often culturally biased, and are limited in providing information regarding social, economic, and environmental aspects of Aboriginal communities. As such, indicators should be culturally and community relevant in order to be responsive to local communities.

In the greater Vancouver area, regional indicators need to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives and need to respect, recognize and support the diversity that exists within the communities. Failing to do so will result in an externally superimposed indicator framework that will be of little utility.

It is important to also note that indicators should be responsive to not only Aboriginal people, but also to urban characteristics as well. Aboriginal people are increasingly becoming a more significant proportion of urban communities. In 2005, approximately half of all Aboriginal people in Canada lived in urban areas with 28% living in large metropolitan areas (Siggner & Costa, 2005).

The conditions experienced by Aboriginal people living in the urban context are significantly different than those living on reserve or in rural areas. Therefore, it is imperative that urban-focused indicators be developed to provide basic information about the conditions in urban areas, as well as identify those characteristics of an urban society that are both beneficial and problematic for Aboriginal people.

## RESOURCES

*An Urban Aboriginal Life: The 2005 Indicators Report on the Quality of Life of Aboriginal People in the Greater Vancouver Region* (Centre for Native Policy and Research) – Documents the present social, economic, and environmental condition of Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver, acts as a benchmark for future studies, highlights gaps in data; and provides recommendations regarding future data gathering, research, and policy developments. [www.cnpr.ca/OnlinePublications.aspx](http://www.cnpr.ca/OnlinePublications.aspx)

*Community Socio-Economic Development from a Plains Indian Perspective: A Proposed Social Indicator System and Planning Tool* (Native Studies Review 7(1)) – Not available online. [publications.usask.ca/nativestudiesreview/Issues/Vol7No1.html](http://publications.usask.ca/nativestudiesreview/Issues/Vol7No1.html)

*Measuring Well Being of Communities: The Genuine Progress Index* (Dr Pita R Sharples, Co-leader, Māori Party, New Zealand) – To calculate the GPI you take the GDP, subtract all the negatives (crime, pollution, divorce rates), accentuate the positives (voluntary work, marae activities, cultural revival), and end up with a new measure of sustainability, well-being and quality of life. [www.twor.ac.nz/docs/pdfs/Paper%20by%20Dr%20Pita%20Sharples.pdf](http://www.twor.ac.nz/docs/pdfs/Paper%20by%20Dr%20Pita%20Sharples.pdf)

*Performance Measurement, Development Indicators & Aboriginal Community Development* (Centre for Community Enterprise) – Examines the use of development benchmarks and indicators in economic development programs support by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [www.cedworks.com/files/pdf/free/Perform\\_00.pdf](http://www.cedworks.com/files/pdf/free/Perform_00.pdf) additional information at: [www.cedworks.com/benchmarks.html](http://www.cedworks.com/benchmarks.html)

*Understanding Health Indicators* (First Nations Centre of the National Aboriginal Health Organization) - Provides information about indicators of health and well-being for First Nations communities. Gives ideas on where to get them, how to use them and how to organize them. It explains what makes a good indicator. First Nations examples and models are highlighted throughout. [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_HealthIndicatorsInformationResource.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_HealthIndicatorsInformationResource.pdf)

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Cardinal, N., & Adin, A. (2005). *An Urban Aboriginal Life: The 2005 Indicators Report on the Quality of Life of Aboriginal People in the Greater Vancouver Region*. Vancouver, BC: Centre for Native Policy and Research.

Development Indicators Project Steering Committee (DIPSC). (1991). *Using Developmental Indicators for Aboriginal Development*. Economic Development Staff Program, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa.

Gadacz, R.R. (1991). *Community Socio-Economic Development from a Plains Indian Perspective: A Proposed Social Indicator System and Planning Tool*. Native Studies Review 7(1): 53-75.

# The Partnership Dance: Understanding research partnerships to address community issues such as homelessness

by Jim Sands

Partnerships are often promoted as an effective way to address community issues, but the mechanics of developing and maintaining healthy partnerships do not always receive in-depth attention. Jim Sands, Project Coordinator with the Social Planning and Research Council of BC, outlines some key considerations involved in the development of research partnerships.

Partnership with research organizations can be seen as a double edged sword. On the one hand, the legacy of colonialism still haunts many research relationships. On the other hand, new models are emerging that seek to maximize the benefits while mitigating the pitfalls of research projects on community issues such as homelessness. Research is increasingly being seen as a tool that can support empowerment especially when it provides a voice for Aboriginal concerns and issues. Moreover, a new generation of Aboriginal researchers is making its presence felt in academic institutions across the country.

This article will examine the usefulness of partnerships with research organizations to address community issues such as homelessness. We will examine issues related to partnerships generally before looking at the issues related to research partnerships.

## Background

Partnerships developed around research projects exploring indigenous issues take place against the backdrop of a long history of exploitation and colonization. Research processes have been identified as one of many tools that have been used to oppress and silence Indigenous people. For example, Linda T. Smith notes that Western research:

*... brings to bear, on any study of indigenous peoples, a cultural orientation, a set of values, a different conceptualization of such things as time, space and subjectivity, different and competing theories of knowledge, highly specialized forms of language, and structures of power.* (Smith, 1999)

Some research projects have caused damage to communities and have taken advantage of the trust that community members have placed in outsiders who have made promises that have not been kept.

One often cited example involved a study of rheumatic disease among members of the Nuu-chah-nulth on Vancouver Island. With a promise that the research would lead to the development of new treatments for diseases, blood samples were collected from more than 800 members of the community. The promised treatments never materialized. Instead, in direct violation of statements contained in the consent form the samples eventually formed the basis for a number of studies in the field of biological anthropology at an entirely different university. Almost 20 years later, the original blood samples were returned to the community and the promised treatments had been long forgotten (Arbour and Cook, 2006).

The situation is not entirely bleak. One promising project involved researchers who collaborated with Aboriginal communities in the Fraser Valley to compile the *Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. The book provides in-depth information on over natural, cultural and spiritual issues over 15,000 years of history and, more importantly, provides an essential document that recognizes the full history of the area the people who live there.

## Partnership Basics

The topic of partnerships has generated a great deal of discussion in recent years. While there is increasing pressure on com-

munities and institutions to develop and maintain partnerships, the mechanics of building sustainable partnerships are not always understood.

The development of effective partnerships is not an easy task. A number of complex issues ensure that while partnerships may resolve many problems, they may also create many more problems that need to be addressed. For example, one of the difficulties is understanding that there are many different types of partnerships. Partnership activities can be seen along a continuum from simple networking and information sharing to full incorporation including integration of key activities (Fig. 1). The complexity and difficulty of the partnership process increases as the level of commitment and objectives of the partnership grow.

Partnerships are also complicated if they are developed across sectors. For example, people working in a medical setting may be used to a decision making that is hierarchical, timely, and efficient. These processes have developed in order to fulfill a mandate of delivering health care in a timely and efficient manner. On the other hand, community-based organizations may employ decision making processes that are consensual, process oriented, and fully inclusive. Again, this helps these organizations to fulfill their mandate to reflect the interests of the community.

We can see that forms of decision making are best suited for the needs of the organizations. Difficulties may emerge if a local hospital and a community-based organization attempt to develop a program, for example,

Figure 1.



to deliver health care services to people who are homeless. These problems may be unsolvable unless both organizations can examine their assumptions about decision making and agree on a decision making process that supports the goals of the project.

Time and resources are key issues in developing partnerships. Depending on the complexity of the relationship it will take a great deal of time to build trust, develop mutual understanding and shared vision, and to effectively resolve conflicts as they arise.

It is often the case that the resources to develop and sustain partnerships are difficult to find. Support to develop partnerships must either come from the partners themselves or agencies. Many organizations have learned the hard way that partnerships developed solely for the reason of obtaining funding can be very difficult to manage and sustain.

## Community-Academic Partnerships

Interest in community – research partnerships is growing in response to a perceived need to develop research projects that are relevant to community needs and concerns. The issues we've outlined with regard to partnerships generally are very relevant to this type of collaboration.

Some key issues that emerge over and over again are:

**Time frame** – Community issues such as homelessness represent immediate crises for many Aboriginal communities. Research is often framed in terms of long term and theoretical as opposed to the short term and

practical. Partner organizations must take the time to develop a shared understanding of what will be accomplished through research projects in the immediate and the long terms.

**Resources** – There is a growing disparity between resources available for research and resources available to develop solutions to community issues such as homelessness. Too often decision makers have used the excuse that “we don't know enough” and “we need further study” to avoid addressing critical issues. Many argue that research projects receive funding from separate sources. This implies that if research projects ended today the money would still not go into solutions without the political will to create solutions. While these arguments may have some validity, there remains a strong need for research projects addressing homelessness to ensure that they are using resources effectively.

**Relationships** – Personal relationships are an essential component of problem solving at the community level. This is especially true with regard to the Aboriginal community. Strong relationships built on a foundation of trust and respect can help partnerships as they go through various stages of development. The difficulty is that there are often few resources to support relationship building.

A number of different strategies have been used to address these issues. In the U.S.A. Community Campus Partnerships for Health provides an extensive website devoted to promoting the creation and sustainability of effective partnerships to address health issues (see resources section for more information).

Recently, a major project sponsored by the organization, the Community Partner Summit, examined the current state of partnerships. It was concluded that while there had been some successes and that there was immense potential, there still remained a great deal of work to do to promote the widespread development of authentic partnerships between community and academic organizations.

“Equal partnerships have yet to be realized on a broad scale, due to inequitable distributions of power and resources among the partners involved. Instead, these partnerships are often driven by priorities and requirements of funding agencies and higher education institutions.” (Community Campus Partnerships for Health, 2007)

Summit attendees agreed that “authentic partnerships” were based on a framework that included:

1) **Quality processes** – including open, honest and respectful communications, a shared vision and agenda, and making allowance for shared power and decision making.

2) **Meaningful outcomes** – are articulated by the partnership and are tangible and relevant to all involved.

3) **Transformation at multiple levels** – including social (changes in systems, policy, and deep understanding), institutional and organizational (changes in assumptions, systems, policies, and values), and individual transformation (development of political consciousness, social vision)

(continued on page 32)

## Who funds research?

by Eldon Yellowhorn, Department of Anthropology, Simon Fraser University

Individuals interested in conducting research on homelessness, but who do not have experience in the fund raising arena, may find the steps involved daunting. Funding agencies, such as the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada, usually expect that researchers possess specialized knowledge that elevates their work above anecdotal observation. For example, applicants must have a doctorate in one of the several subjects that SSHRC will sponsor.

Moreover, they insist that applicants have professional affiliations with (most often with a university) that would receive and manage any funds obtained for such purposes. Without these basic qualifications, applying to funding agencies is out of the question. However, that does not mean the endeavour is futile because the right strategy may well bring success. Creating a partnership with an academic will elicit institutional and funding support.

Universities distinguish themselves from teaching colleges by mandating active research programmes; this expectation is embedded in faculty appointments. Through my professional career I have learned to design my own research projects and to apply for funds to activate my plans. My current research grant came from SSHRC, which is the primary funding source for social science research in Canada. I have learned too that applying for research funding requires tenacity because there are no guarantees that even a well-designed project will receive funding. The standard research grant is awarded to individual applicants and can be as much as \$250,000.00, which is disbursed over a three-year period. Applicants submit their project proposals for adjudication by reviewers who decide if a project merits support. Since this agency has limited funds, the actual amount a researcher receives will usually be less than the amount requested depending on how many projects get accepted. Principal investigators receiving a standard research grant will carry out the research and support along graduate students who will participate in various aspects of the project.

Recently SSHRC began a pilot programme called the aboriginal research grant. It resembles the standard research grant but is dedicated to enhancing the role of Aboriginal People involved in social science research. This type of grant is awarded to individuals to facilitate their research.

SSHRC sponsors a particular type of grant called the Community-University Research Alliance, which encourages the involvement of host communities. First a letter of intent is submitted and adjudicated by a selection committee. Applicants that receive approval are invited to submit a formal proposal for grants up to \$200,000.00 annually for up to five years. These grants bring together stakeholders from academia and the general public who cooperate in a research initiative. Projects must demonstrate a potential for significant outcomes, such as student training, capacity building, curriculum development and community decision-making. They are judged on research methodology and potential contributions to knowledge. The grants will offer support for graduate students, but depending on the nature and commitment of the research alliance, funds can be used to hire a project manager or hire local partners.

Advocates for research into homelessness may find that developing a partnership with academics may be the best approach for implementing such a project.

## Principles of Good Community-Campus Partnerships

Partnerships form to serve a specific purpose and may take on new goals over time.

Partners have agreed upon mission, values, goals, measurable outcomes and accountability for the partnership.

The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.

The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.

The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.

Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and developing a common language.

Principles and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.

There is feedback among all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.

Partners share the benefits of the partnership's accomplishments.

Partnerships can dissolve and need to plan a process for closure.

Source: [Community Campus Partnerships for Health \(depts.washington.edu/ccph/principles.html#principles\)](https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/principles.html#principles)

(continued from page 30)

Although the Community Partner Summit emphasized the work that remains to be done, there have been some promising developments. For example, in Canada the Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance (WIRA) has been working since 1998. "The intention behind WIRA is to not only increase the body of knowledge related to inner-city research, but also create lasting partnerships with communities in conducting relevant and integral studies."<sup>1</sup>

The work of WIRA is guided by an Executive Steering Committee consisting of twelve community members and two academics

which meets about seven times a year to adjudicate research applications. WIRA also works with a range of partners including a range of academics, community organizations, all levels of government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

The WIRA process has had a number of successes. The gap between academia and the community has been narrowed, research in the community has been noticed by the media and academic institutions, and important lessons have been learned by community members and by academic researchers. In addition a Summer Institute was started in 2002 that brought together students, academics and community members for semi-

nars and discussion about ongoing issues.

At the same time, a number of limitations have been identified. Perhaps not surprisingly, sustainable funding tops the list of challenges facing the coalition. WIRA has been primarily funded by the Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and well as by supplementary funds from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The ability to attract funding will impact the scope of research that can be undertaken.

Other challenges include articulating the line between traditional research and advocacy, finding qualified and interested researchers with the time to undertake community research projects, developing congruency between the needs of the community and interests of the researcher, the lack of resources to address a wide range of community challenges, and supporting committees in becoming empowered decision makers. In addition, the multi-layered political environment plays a central role in the process. "It could potentially be as damaging to ignore this as to consider it," says one staff member.

## Conclusion

Although the history of partnerships has been disappointing and exploitative, there is growing evidence to suggest that research partnerships can make an important contribution to decolonization and empowerment. Developments such as creation of a set of research guidelines by the CIHR and support for Academic Research Centres, as well as the enthusiasm and skill of a new generation of Aboriginal researchers have been important indicators of the progress that has been made.

1. Planning (E)mergence: The Convergence of Theory and Practice through the Collaborative Efforts of the Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance by Jason Granger, Tom Carter, and Anita Friesen.

## RESOURCES

### Publications

*Achieving the Promise of Authentic Community-Higher Education Partnerships: Community partners speak out!* Summarizes the dialogue that occurred at the Community Partner Summit (April, 2007) including current realities, what does and doesn't work, what is an authentic partnership, and how can authentic partnerships be achieved?

[www.johnsonfdn.org/Publications/ConferenceReports/2007/AuthenticCommunityHigherEd.pdf](http://www.johnsonfdn.org/Publications/ConferenceReports/2007/AuthenticCommunityHigherEd.pdf)

*American Indian Law Centre Model Tribal Research Code* Intended to help Aboriginal communities provide both a framework within which expectations are clearly articulated to would-be researchers, governments, and other funding agencies, and a clear process for compliance.

[www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/research/pdf\\_files/mdl-code.pdf](http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/research/pdf_files/mdl-code.pdf)

*Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network Principles of Research Collaboration* Template providing Principles for Research Collaboration (PRC) between partner organizations and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

[depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/Principles\\_of\\_Research\\_Collaboration\\_Template.doc.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Principles_of_Research_Collaboration_Template.doc.pdf)

*Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) Prepared to assist researchers and institutions in carrying out ethical and culturally competent research involving Aboriginal people.

[www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29134.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29134.html)

*Model for Building Collaboration* (Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan) Based on the principles that mutual respect, recognition, mutual responsibility and sharing call upon us to learn from each other while seeking answers or solutions to mutually important matters. [www.socialplanning.ca/health/building\\_collaboration\\_report.pdf](http://www.socialplanning.ca/health/building_collaboration_report.pdf)

*Negotiating Research Relationships: A guide for communities* (Nunavut Research Institute and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) Examines ways you and your community can decide how research is done in your area, and how you can be involved. Explains legal rights when it comes to research, and suggests ways to work with researchers to ensure individual rights are protected and that community concerns are respected by researchers. [www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/1.1B\\_ResearchRelationships.pdf](http://www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/1.1B_ResearchRelationships.pdf)

*Negotiating Research Relationships with Inuit Communities: A guide for researchers* (Nunavut Research Institute and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami)

Aims to improve the process of negotiating research relationships with Inuit communities in Canada.

[www.itk.ca/publications/ResearchRelationships.pdf](http://www.itk.ca/publications/ResearchRelationships.pdf)

*The More We Get Together: The politics of collaborative research between university-based and non university-based researchers* (doctoral dissertation)

Explores the experiences and understandings of university-based and non university-based researchers about their collaborative work. [www.nald.ca/full-text/together/together.pdf](http://www.nald.ca/full-text/together/together.pdf)

*Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context* (Faculty of Human and Social Development, University of Victoria) Developed to help ensure that in all research on or involving Indigenous peoples, appropriate respect is given to the cultures, languages, knowledge and values of Indigenous peoples, and to the standards used by Indigenous peoples to legitimate knowledge.

[www.hsd.uvic.ca/policies/documents/igovprotocol.pdf](http://www.hsd.uvic.ca/policies/documents/igovprotocol.pdf)

*Wellesley Institute Sample Terms of Reference Contract* Creating a Terms of Reference Contract gives your team an opportunity to ask: What does Community-Based Research mean to us? Why are we working together? What principles are underlying our partnership? And, how will we work together? [depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/MOU6.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/MOU6.pdf)

### Organizations

*Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance* (Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg) – Committed to fostering innovative research, training and related activities that work toward the social, cultural and economic development of Winnipeg's inner city communities.

[ius.uwinnipeg.ca/wira\\_overview.html](http://ius.uwinnipeg.ca/wira_overview.html)

### Additional resources

University of Victoria Research protocols and Guidelines - [web.uvic.ca/~scishops/resources.htm#protocol](http://web.uvic.ca/~scishops/resources.htm#protocol)

Community Campus Partnerships for Health - [depts.washington.edu/ccph/commbas.html#Principles](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/commbas.html#Principles)

## Funding Opportunities

Atlantic Aboriginal Health Research Program: Provides small research grants to support health research by Aboriginal communities/groups or university researchers working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities. [aahrp.socialwork.dal.ca/aahrp\\_4444.html](http://aahrp.socialwork.dal.ca/aahrp_4444.html)

Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health: Supports research to address the special health needs of Canada's Aboriginal people. Its role is to lead a national advanced research agenda in the area of aboriginal health and promote innovative research that will serve to improve the health of aboriginal people in Canada. It offers many sources of funding. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8176.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8176.html)

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council – Aboriginal Research Program:  
[www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program\\_descriptions/aboriginal\\_e.asp](http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/aboriginal_e.asp)

Network Environments for Aboriginal Research BC: NEARBC provides a list of current funding opportunities: [www.nearbc.ca/funding.html](http://www.nearbc.ca/funding.html)

Canadian Foundation for Innovation: Created by the Canadian Government, the CFI provides funding for research infrastructure.  
[www.innovation.ca/index.cfm](http://www.innovation.ca/index.cfm)

Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research: provide leadership and to implement core funding programs to build BC's capacity for excellence in health research. [www.mschr.org/sub-funding.htm](http://www.mschr.org/sub-funding.htm)

Newfoundland and Labrador Applied Centre for Health Research [www.nlcahr.mun.ca/funding/index.php](http://www.nlcahr.mun.ca/funding/index.php)

Wilfred Laurier University's Research Office offers a list of current research funding opportunities: [www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp\\_id=157](http://www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp_id=157)

National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) has information on requests for proposals and papers: [www.naho.ca/english/](http://www.naho.ca/english/)

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# Aboriginal Homelessness Research Resources

## I. Research

**Aboriginal Homelessness Prince Rupert and Port Edward: An assets and gap review of existing services for the homeless (Prince Rupert Steering Committee on Aboriginal Homelessness)** - Assets and gaps analysis of Aboriginal homelessness in Prince Rupert and Port Edward. [www.ihpr.ubc.ca/media/Helin2002.pdf](http://www.ihpr.ubc.ca/media/Helin2002.pdf)

**Aboriginal Women and Homelessness (Native Women's Association of Canada)** - There are more women among the Aboriginal homeless population than are found in the non-Aboriginal population. Despite these higher numbers, services and programs are more oriented towards the male population. [www.nwac-hq.org/en/documents/nwac.homelessness.jun2007.pdf](http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/documents/nwac.homelessness.jun2007.pdf)

**Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in British Columbia (McCreary Centre Society)** - External forces, such as the inter-generational impacts of the residential school system, have left Aboriginal youth at greater risk of experiencing negative health consequences related to poverty, discrimination, loss, trauma, and various forms of violence than their non-Aboriginal peers. [www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/Against\\_the\\_odds\\_2007\\_web.pdf](http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/Against_the_odds_2007_web.pdf)

**Being Homeless is Getting to be Normal: A study of women's homelessness in the Northwest Territories (YWCA Yellowknife, The Yellowknife Women's Society)** - Characteristics specific to the Northwest Territories that contribute to homelessness in general, as well as among women in particular include things such as cross-territorial migration with minimal funding to supply adequate social, housing and other services to migrants, as well as on-going colonialism and government policies and programs, such as the NWT Act, which destroy Aboriginal culture and self-reliance. [www.ywca.ca/northern\\_territories\\_reports/NWT\\_PDFS/NWT\\_FinalReport.pdf](http://www.ywca.ca/northern_territories_reports/NWT_PDFS/NWT_FinalReport.pdf)

**Bridges and Foundations Project on Urban Aboriginal Housing (Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) Program and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)** - Intended to build functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to design and develop culturally supportive communities and quality, affordable housing options. [www.bridgesandfoundations.usask.ca](http://www.bridgesandfoundations.usask.ca)

**Eagle Feathers – Final Report (Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education. Society)** – A snapshot into the lives of Aboriginal Youth on the Street that identifies issues that are symptoms of historic and ongoing social exclusion and systemic racism toward Indigenous peoples. [24.85.225.7/PACE2/docs/pdf/Eagle\\_Feathers\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://24.85.225.7/PACE2/docs/pdf/Eagle_Feathers_Final_Report.pdf)

**Homelessness in a Growth Economy: Canada's 21st century paradox (Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership)** – Canada can no longer afford our high incidence of homelessness. A paradigm shift is required, not unlike the evolution of Canadian social policy from the 1930s to the 1960s. [www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca/files/pdf/SHELTER.pdf](http://www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca/files/pdf/SHELTER.pdf)

**The View from the Sidewalk: Towards a new definition of people who are homeless** – Presents a working definition of homelessness developed by a group of Organic Intellectuals (a research team made up of people who had experienced homelessness first hand) who reviewed existing definitions, literature and policies on homelessness, and conducted province-wide interviews with people who were homeless. [www.vcn.bc.ca/~voice](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/~voice)

## II. Organizations

**Aboriginal Homelessness Outreach Program (BC Housing)** - Continues the work of the provincial housing strategy, Housing Matters BC. Directly engages homeless Aboriginal people living on the streets and provides access to housing, income assistance, and community-based support services to help break the cycle of homelessness. [www.bchousing.org/programs/Aboriginal\\_housing/AHOP](http://www.bchousing.org/programs/Aboriginal_housing/AHOP)

**Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee (Metro Vancouver)** - Works to reduce and prevent Aboriginal homelessness, and to improve the quality of life for those that are homeless. [www.lnhs.ca/homeless\\_initiative/index.html](http://www.lnhs.ca/homeless_initiative/index.html)

**Canadian Institutes for Health Research: Institute for Aboriginal People's Health (IAPH)** - Leads a national advanced research agenda in the area of aboriginal health and promote innovative research that will serve to improve the health of aboriginal people in Canada as one of 13 institutes associated with CIHR. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8668.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8668.html)

**Homelessness Partnering Strategy (Human Resources and Social Development Canada)** – Seeks to prevent and reduce homelessness by helping to establish the structures and supports needed to move homeless and at-risk individuals towards self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society. [www.homelessness.gc.ca](http://www.homelessness.gc.ca)

### Housing Again

A site dedicated to putting affordable housing back on the public agenda. Includes up-to-date information, resources, events and alert listings. [www.housingagain.web.net](http://www.housingagain.web.net)

**Metro Vancouver Regional Homelessness (Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH))** - Developed and oversees the implementation of the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver, titled Three Ways to Home to reflect the three components of a comprehensive solution to homelessness: affordable housing, support services, and adequate income. [www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness)

**National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)**- An Aboriginal-designed and -controlled body committed to influencing and advancing the health and well-being of Aboriginal Peoples by carrying out knowledge-based strategies. [www.naho.ca/english/about.php](http://www.naho.ca/english/about.php)

**Shared Learnings on Homelessness** - Practical tools, resources and information sharing for frontline staff, managers and volunteers working to address the problem of homelessness in their communities. [www.sharedlearnings.org](http://www.sharedlearnings.org)

**Toronto Disaster Relief Committee** - Provides advocacy on housing and homelessness issues. Has declared homelessness a national disaster, and demands that Canada end homelessness by implementing a fully-funded National Housing Program through the One Percent Solution.[tdrc.net](http://tdrc.net)

**Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (Human Resources and Social Development Canada)** – Strives to create integrated, culturally-appropriate and community-driven strategies, and solutions that address the wide range of needs faced by Aboriginal people in eight pilot cities. [www.homelessness.gc.ca/initiative/uah\\_e.asp](http://www.homelessness.gc.ca/initiative/uah_e.asp)

IN NOVEMBER, 2006 OVER 150 PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL FRIENDSHIP CENTRE FOR THE SECOND BC/YUKON ABORIGINAL FORUM ON HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH.

THREE PUBLICATIONS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED AS A RESULT OF THE FORUM QUESTIONING RESEARCH I: FORUM REPORT (SECOND BC/YUKON ABORIGINAL FORUM ON HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH); QUESTIONING RESEARCH II: HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH AND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES (A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES); AND QUESTIONING RESEARCH III: WHAT DO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH? (A GUIDE FOR RESEARCHERS).

THE FORUM WAS ORGANIZED BY THE NATIVE EDUCATION COLLEGE AND SPARC BC (SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL OF BC) IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE INCLUDING MEMBERS FROM ABORIGINAL RESEARCH ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE BC/YUKON REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH COMMITTEE.

