Finding Safe Spaces and Services

A Community Action Plan to Address Indigenous Homelessness in Halton

A Project by Halton Community Legal Services
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Halton Community Legal Services

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Project Background

This is the final report arising out of the Indigenous Homelessness Needs Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Project (the project) led by Halton Community Legal Services (HCLS). The goals of the project were to (1) address knowledge gaps and define service priorities for Indigenous people who experience homelessness or are at risk of being homeless in Halton; and (2) use the resulting shared knowledge to foster strategic partnerships and create a community action plan. In particular, we wanted to answer these questions:

1. What is the community profile of Indigenous peoples who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless in Halton?
2. What is the experience of Indigenous people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless in Halton?
3. Are there particular elements, issues, types of trauma or other factors that create homelessness in the Indigenous population?
4. What are Indigenous peoples' movement and mobility patterns in seeking supports for housing stability? Where do they go for help?
5. What are the relationships between Indigenous peoples and the agencies, services and individuals that give them support and/or shelter?
6. What services, processes, approaches and changes would benefit Indigenous people's lives by reducing or preventing homelessness?

The project proceeded in three phases. Phase I included completion of an environmental scan and a literature review. Phase II involved conducting interviews, focus groups and a sharing and healing circle with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community as part of a community needs assessment, leading to the development of a community action plan in Phase III.

We undertook this project in the spirit of reconciliation, recognizing that HCLS plays an integral role in the provision of legal services and access to justice for Indigenous people in Halton Region. Each project phase was carried out by the HCLS Project Team. An advisory committee was formed consisting of Indigenous service providers from Peel and Hamilton, non-Indigenous service providers from Halton, and Indigenous people with lived experience of homelessness. The Project Advisory Committee developed a statement of principles to guide the project and ensure intercultural safety, a copy of which is in Appendix A.

This project is part of HCLS's effort to enhance its services to meet the unique needs of the Indigenous community in Halton. It is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Legal Aid Ontario and the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario.

This final report summarizes our main findings from each phase of the project, and outlines a Community Action Plan to address Indigenous homelessness in Halton.[1]

PHASE I

The Environmental Scan

To begin the project, we completed an environmental scan. We collected and analyzed data from the 2011 and 2016 federal census counts and the 2016 federal Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Initiative in Halton, for which volunteers administered a survey in the community, emergency shelters and transitional housing to develop a snapshot of homelessness across Halton Region. Our major findings are discussed below.

Aboriginal identity population in Halton

According to the 2016 federal census count, 5,460 individuals identified as Aboriginal[2] in Halton Region. Between 2011 and 2016, the Aboriginal population increased substantially (35.8%, to 1440 people) in the region. Milton had the fastest-growing Aboriginal population, followed by Burlington, Halton Hills and Oakville.

Figure 1: Population Indicating Aboriginal Identity Living in Private Dwellings[3]

Halton Municipalities	2011 Number	2011 Percent	2016 Number	2016 Percent	% Change 2011 to 2016*
Oakville	1160	28.9%	1415	25.9%	+ 22.0%
Burlington	1515	37.7%	1970	36.2%	+ 31.4%
Milton	545	13.6%	1045	19.1%	+ 91.7%
Halton Hills	800	19.8%	1025	18.8%	+ 28.1%
Regional Total	4020	100.0%	5460**	100.0%	+ 35.8%

* 2016-2011 ÷ 2011
** The total does not add to the sum of the four separate municipalities due to rounding by Statistics Canada.

Indigenous homelessness and Precariousness in Halton

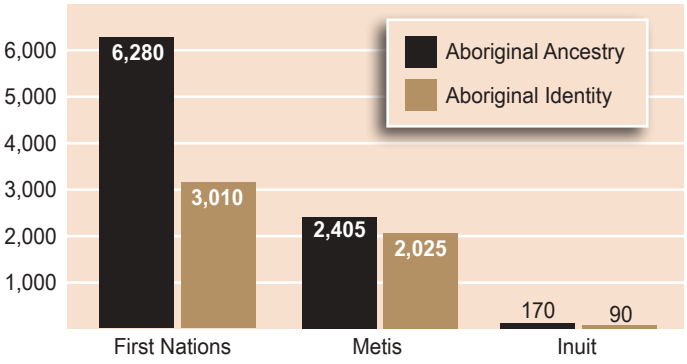
The PIT Count (see Figure 2, page 3) identified a First Nations and Métis population living precariously. First Nations and Métis respondents were over-represented in the count compared with their percentage of the Halton population according to the census. The proportion of First Nations people in the 2016 PIT Count (3.93%) is 7.08 times as large as the proportion identifying as First Nations persons in the census that year (0.555%). Similarly, the proportion of Métis people in the PIT Count (1.30%) is 34.7 times as large as their proportion in the census (0.0375%). No Inuit were counted among the homeless population in the PIT Count.

The PIT Count does not yield statistically significant results. However, the numbers strongly indicate that the proportion of First Nations and Métis people living precariously in Halton is many times larger than the proportion of the same groups in the general population. This trend may also apply to Inuit people, but no Inuit were identified in the PIT Count.

The erosion of Aboriginal identity

Data from the federal census also captures the erosion of Aboriginal identity. The graph below compares the number of people in Halton claiming to have Aboriginal ancestry with the number of people identifying as Aboriginal.

Figure 3: Aboriginal Ancestry and Aboriginal Identity in Halton[4]



The columns on the left show that 6,280 people claimed First Nations ancestry, but only 3,010 people (47.9%) identified as First Nations. The middle columns show that the apparent erosion of identity was far less for Métis people in Halton. Of the 2,405 people claiming Métis ancestry, 2,025 (84.2%) said they identified as Métis. The right-most columns show

Figure 2: Comparison of Halton's Aboriginal Identity Data from the Point-in-Time Count and the 2016 Census[5]

2016 Point-in-Time Count Aboriginal Data			2016 Census of Canada Aboriginal Identity Data		
Aboriginal Identity	Number	Percent	Aboriginal Identity	Number	Percent
First Nations	9	3.93%	First Nations	3005	0.56%
Inuit	0	0.00%	Inuk	90	0.02%
Métis	3	1.31%	Métis	2030	0.38%
			Multiple Aboriginal responses	130	0.02%
			Aboriginal responses not elsewhere included	200	0.04%
Non-Status; but have Aboriginal Identity	4	1.75%			
Don't know	22	9.61%			
Declined	0	0.00%			
Unclear	1	0.44%			
Not Aboriginal	190	82.97%	Not Aboriginal	535520	98.99%
Total	229	100.00%	Total	540975	100.00%

that 170 people claimed Inuit ancestry, while only 90 individuals (52.9%) identified as Inuit.

We assume that the lower the proportion of people indicating an Aboriginal identity of those claiming Aboriginal ancestry, the greater the erosion of ethnic identity. Thus, Métis people appear to experience the least amount of identity erosion, while First Nations people experience the greatest degree of identity erosion. As discussed later in this report, the erosion of identity is one form of homelessness experienced by Indigenous people.

Limitations of the data due to self-identification barriers

Local data on self-identification of Indigenous people accessing housing-related services is extremely limited. However, community initiatives are underway to build capacity to collect this data.[6] Based on existing data, at least 5,000 Aboriginal people live in Halton, a population that is growing rapidly. Given the limited census methodology (i.e., only sampling people in private dwellings), there is good reason to believe that the actual number is larger and that the unseen segment of the Aboriginal population has the greatest and most acute need.

Census data is valuable but limited for an organization like HCLS that focuses on disadvantaged people, because those living precariously are almost certainly excluded. The general Aboriginal population needs some services, but the need is greater for homeless or near-homeless people who have associated problems accessing health services, benefits and entitlements, protection from discrimination, etc. The need for local data is important to avoid stereotyping, homogenizing or pathologizing the Indigenous population. Too little is known about Halton's rapidly growing Indigenous community and its needs, except that these needs are great.

One reason for the limited data is that Indigenous people are reluctant to self-identify due to discrimination, lack of access to culturally responsible services, confusion over definitions, uncertainty over the standard of proof of Indigeneity, and to avoid lateral violence and aggression. They may also be unwilling to self-identify to retain the power of self-determination. For example, HCLS developed a comprehensive screening tool, the legal health check-up (LHC), as an outreach tool for our services.[7] The LHC offers respondents the opportunity to self-identify their Aboriginal heritage. Between October 2014 and December 20, 2017, 725 individuals filled out the check-up—yet none self-identified as Aboriginal. There is an obvious need for better collection of local data and for shared definitions and processes for self-identification across community service agencies.

The need for culturally responsive services in Halton

Halton has developed a Comprehensive Housing Strategy (CHS) to ensure that residents have ongoing access to safe and stable housing. The 2016 CHS Report Card updated the status of this strategy, acknowledging the need for outreach to local

Indigenous people in Halton "to ensure that Halton benefits from go-forward dedicated Indigenous funding for housing made available by the province."[8] Unlike other nearby urban areas such as Hamilton, Toronto and Brantford, Halton has no Indigenous organizations or agencies. There is no Native Friendship Centre, Indigenous health organization, Native Women's Centre or any independent, Indigenous-led social service or community service organization. This gap in in culturally responsive housing services has not been recognized in Halton.[9]

Social service agencies in Halton, including those represented on the Project Advisory Committee, recognize the need for culturally responsive services. One example is the Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK), the regional children's mental health service. ROCK has been funded for an Indigenous community outreach worker. Under the direct supervision of Simcoe County's Enaahtig Aboriginal Community Mental Health Program coordinator and the overall supervision of ROCK's executive director, and in partnership with ROCK, the Indigenous community worker will play a significant role in understanding the mental wellness needs of Indigenous families, youth and children in Halton.[10]

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada stated that reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing gaps in social, health and economic outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.[11] Developing culturally responsive housing for Indigenous people in Halton is a step in the right direction. It would also reduce service providers' and funders' exposure to human rights complaints, and address existing discrimination in providing and funding important social services. Service providers and funders have a unique opportunity to engage the Indigenous population to create, implement and improve culturally appropriate services across Halton. As the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal stated in the Caring Society case, "This is the season for change. The time is now."[12]

PHASE II - PART 1

The Needs Assessment on Indigenous Homelessness

During Phase II of the project, we conducted a Needs Assessment on Indigenous Homelessness and collected feedback from the Halton community. We interviewed 12 people who self-identified as Indigenous and were experiencing, or had experienced, homelessness in Halton Region. The interviews were intended to gather knowledge about the needs of low-income Indigenous people in Halton as they relate to the risk and presence of homelessness. A secondary goal was to learn how to enhance our services to meet the unique needs of the Indigenous community in Halton and create positive change.

Our approach

Our work was guided by the Two-Eyed Seeing approach developed by two Mi'kmaq elders, which challenges researchers to embrace both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing without emphasizing one worldview over another.[13] For our purposes, this approach required an understanding of homelessness from a Canadian and Indigenous perspective. According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, homelessness is traditionally defined to include:

> …a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized here in a typology that includes 1) Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation; 2) Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence; 3) Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally, 4) At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.[14]

Jesse A. Thistle, an Indigenous scholar, developed the following definition in consultation with scholars, community members, knowledge keepers and elders:

> Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such, housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships.[15]

These definitions guided our interview questions and analysis. By "seeing with both eyes," our goal was to develop lasting solutions that addressed the local (colonial) context of high rents and lack of affordable housing and the broader (Indigenous) context of community and connectedness.

Sampling, recruitment and challenges

Our goal was to conduct 15 to 20 interviews with Indigenous people living in Halton Region. We anticipated that recruitment would be difficult because the Indigenous popu-

lation in Halton is small, diverse and largely unseen. As a result, we used a method known as respondent-driven sampling, which allows researchers to access unseen or difficult-to-reach populations. A researcher starts with one member of the population (a seed), who refers the researcher to another potential interviewee, and so on. The assumption is that the people who are best able to access unseen populations are peer group members.[16]

Four Indigenous people who had experienced homelessness and had pre-existing relationships with HCLS were invited to be interviewed. Three agreed and served as seed participants. They were asked to invite members of their social networks with similar experiences to participate in the project. As an incentive, each seed participant was provided with a $25 gift card for completing the interview and an additional gift card for each individual they recruited.

At the same time, we also engaged in outreach with HCLS's community partners, emphasizing housing and homelessness service providers. Using intermediaries to achieve outreach has been the focus of extensive research led by HCLS, and has been effective in reaching highly disadvantaged populations.[17] Lessons learned from this research were applied to this project to overcome anticipated cynicism and mistrust that Indigenous participants would have of bureaucratic government organizations and their aversion to involvement with the legal system. Community posters were displayed in libraries and distributed through a local food security organization with a network of more than 80 partners. Posters were also distributed electronically by the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network to its more than 400 frontline staff.

Recruiting participants through community service intermediaries was problematic due to differences in their voluntary Aboriginal self-identification practices. This was not surprising, as the environmental scan we conducted identified that better collection of local data was needed, as was development of shared definitions and processes for self-identification.[18] Some organizations had no practice; others did, but were unsure of the level of compliance by frontline staff.[19]

To increase recruitment, HCLS staff visited the clientele at sites such as community dinners and food banks. Outreach was also extended to adjacent municipalities to engage individuals who had left Halton to access services and supports not available locally. Additionally, recognizing the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in custody and involved in the criminal justice system, we approached other Legal Aid service providers at the courthouse and in custodial institutions.

Our sample and the interview process

We conducted 12 interviews between December 21, 2017, and February 23, 2018. Each participant was recruited independently, as none of the original seed participants or the other nine interviewees were able to recruit any other Indigenous people in Halton. This speaks to the fact that there appears to be a lack of social connection among Indigenous people who have experienced homelessness.

Interviews were conducted by an Indigenous community worker and then a senior staff lawyer with experience in community-based research projects. While non-Indigenous, this staff lawyer had previously built trust with Indigenous clients and had Indigenous community engagement skills and extensive training to ensure that she delivered services in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner. In addition, HCLS retained the McLean Consulting Group to support project activities such as sharing and healing circles with interview participants and outreach in custodial institutions.

Interviews were carried out at locations chosen by the participants when possible. Refreshments and snacks were provided during and after the interviews. Interviews initially included open-ended questions and a story-telling approach, but changed to a more structured format to facilitate data analysis. To ensure accuracy, a note taker attended each interview and, if the participant agreed, a recording was made. Our interview and consent protocols are included in Appendix B.

Lynn Lavallée, a researcher who completed a doctoral thesis using Indigenous research methods, emphasizes that the principle of reciprocity is essential within an Indigenous research framework.[20] The knowledge shared by participants is a gift, and recognizing their knowledge is important. At the start of the interview, the interviewer presented each participant with a gift of white sage[21] and made an offer to smudge.[22] This was done to demonstrate that the research was being undertaken in a good way and to show respect.

Our main findings from the interviews follow.[23]

Participant demographics

The demographic data from the 12 interviews reveals the following about participants:

- The average age of participants was 39 years, with two participants in their 20s and two in their 60s.
- Participants were mostly male (67%).
- Three participants were Sixties Scoop survivors.

- All participants had completed some high school. One participant received their General Equivalency Diploma (GED), four had a college diploma and had applied or completed some courses at the university level, and one participant had a bachelor's degree.
- Participants self-identified as Aboriginal, First Nations, Native or Indigenous. Some participants specifically identified as Métis (2), Algonquin (1) and Cree (1).
- A majority of participants grew up in Ontario (67%) and two-thirds identified a reserve as their home community. Half of the participants had lived in Halton for most of their lives, while the other half had lived in Halton for six years or less.
- Four participants had a relationship with HCLS before being interviewed.

Types of homelessness

Eleven of the 12 participants experienced more than one type of homelessness. This is consistent with the literature reporting that homelessness is a fluid experience in which one's shelter, circumstances and options may shift and change dramatically and frequently.[24] For example, Participant P lived in a tent in a public park for four to five months after being in and out of hospital. Participant K, who was a Sixties Scoop survivor, lived in and out of homelessness, including several years in her van, in a storage garage where she was exposed to raw sewage and had to bathe and wash dishes in water contaminated with diesel fuel, and in a farm basement with a sump pump.

Disturbingly, nearly every participant reported some form of Indigenous homelessness such as feeling spiritually disconnected from Indigenous worldviews (92%), experiencing loss of cultural identity (50%), and feeling like an outsider on return to their communities (92%). Participant L described her and her daughter's experience:

> *We stayed there [the reserve] for the weekend during the pow wow. So I got to meet [my family] but they were not interested in me, and to me it was very sad, very hard. Something that I'm still trying to cope with is my mother's shame. She probably never told the story of all her children and how they got taken. She just continued to go up and they didn't discuss it. So all of a sudden there's this woman and her daughter, and she's like "yeah this is my daughter" and they're thinking, "this is not the daughter we know, right." So they kept their distance … so I was like, "Fine, you don't want to know me. I still want to know you, but I don't know how to get to you so I'll sit on the outer edges and wait."*

When Participant Q was asked whether she would consider returning to her community, she said, "I don't know. I'd be all by myself, and I don't know anyone there."

Another participant reported being adopted into a "white family" said he struggled to find himself because he felt "guilty for being Aboriginal" and "guilty for not being Aboriginal," leading to "a lot of emotional confusion." His journey to reconnect with his Indigenous roots led him to say, "As much as I like saying that I have a family, it's like I totally feel like I don't."

Figure 4 (see page 8) identifies the different types of traditional and Indigenous homelessness participants experienced and their prevalence.

Factors contributing to Indigenous homelessness In Halton[25]

The 12 participants identified the following factors as contributing to Indigenous homelessness in Halton,[26] many of which are consistent with the literature:[27]

Lack of affordable housing

Nine participants said they felt trapped in a cycle of homelessness in which they lived in and out of shelters, couch surfed from place to place, and went in and out of substance abuse because they could not find affordable housing or waited years for geared-to-income housing.

Part of this is explained by a lack of income security. Two-thirds of participants had or were receiving income support such as Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) (42%), Ontario Works (OW) (42%), Employment Insurance (EI) (8%) or Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) (8%). Significantly, only one participant received support through Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Three participants reported having debts because their "bills were piling up," including one who had filed for bankruptcy.

To make ends meet, four participants said they accessed food banks. One said she went to a food bank for Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner but otherwise ate submarine sandwiches each day from a corner store. Another participant said he regularly went to the local food bank until it moved to a

Figure 4: Types of Homelessness and their Prevalence[29]

Type of homelessness	Definition	Total
Nowhere to go	Complete lack of access to stable shelter, housing, accommodation, shelter services or relationships; literally having nowhere to go	**67%** (8)
Emergency shelter	People staying in overnight shelters who may be impacted by family violence	**42%** (5)
Couch surfing	People staying in a temporary location that lacks security of tenure	**50%** (6)
Precariously housed	People whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards	**92%** (11)
Cultural disintegration and loss	Homelessness that totally dislocates or alienates Indigenous individuals and communities from their culture and from the relationship web of Indigenous society known as "All My Relations"	**50%** (6)
Spiritual disconnection	Separation from Indigenous worldviews or connection to the Creator or equivalent deity	**92%** (11)
Going home	Indigenous people who have grown up or lived outside their home community, and on "returning home" are often seen as outsiders, preventing them from securing a physical structure in which to live due to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal bureaucratic barriers, uncooperative band or community councils, hostile community and kin members, lateral violence and cultural dislocation	**92%** (11)
Escaping or evading harm	People fleeing, leaving or vacating unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or overcrowded households or homes to be safe	**75%** (9)
Relocation and mobility	People travelling between urban and rural spaces for work, health, education, recreation, legal or childcare services, to attend spiritual events and ceremonies, to secure affordable housing or to see family, friends and community members	**25%** (3)

location he could not access.

Half the participants stated they could not access affordable transportation. One reason may be that public transportation is extremely limited in Georgetown and Milton, particularly to more populated areas like Burlington and Oakville.

A quarter of participants said they often turned to HCLS for help in securing income support or benefits. Some participants also accessed Halton Access to Community Housing (HATCH), Peel Halton Dufferin Acquired Brain Injury Services (PHD ABIS) or asked friends for help. However, accessing services was a challenge for participants when they were homeless. For example, one participant reported having no access to services because he was living in a public park.

Systemic and/or direct discrimination regarding housing

Five participants believed they were denied housing because they were Indigenous, while four reported discrimination from their landlords and wider community. One participant reported being repeatedly called inappropriate names while walking in downtown Milton. Another participant, a Sixties Scoop survivor, said people get upset about Indigenous entitlements to band money or school funding. They say, "I wish I was Aboriginal so I could get money," to which the participant responds, "No you don't." Such indirect discrimination is produced by a lack of understanding in the non-Indigenous community of the history of colonialism and the nature of government supports that Indigenous people receive.

Trauma

Trauma was one of the most significant factors, in both childhood and adulthood. Three-quarters of the 12 participants said they left their home or foster care because of safety concerns, lack of stability or discrimination. Four participants said they were homeless because of abuse by a parent or stepparent, adoptive parent or spouse. Sadly, this reflects a cycle of abuse that began with the residential school system.

Participant K recalled a childhood memory of being abused by her adoptive mother, who "didn't know how to be a mother." The woman never had anything "positive or good to say …You couldn't communicate with her … She was the devil in disguise … She used to shame me [to] … take the Indian out [of me]." The abuse was so bad that when K spoke to a Children's Aid psychologist, he "was in tears … and invited [her] to go come and live at his place." She declined because she had "already been in the fire once [and] didn't need to be there again." Participant K was eventually rescued by a neighbour at the age of 16, after which she became homeless.

Another participant recounted several incidents of abuse in her foster home:

> *The woman of the house had three sons and one started saying something to me. I was always teased [by the son]…. and I beat the daylights out of him. [The mother] came down and saw her son on the floor… She grabbed me by my arms and pushed her nails right into my arms and held me so that her other two sons could beat me. So it wasn't a very loving foster home. I wasn't very strong, but I quickly became really strong. After each beating I was stronger.*

Half the participants said the trauma they experienced continues to affect their daily lives, but only one had received formal trauma services.

Child welfare and residential schools

Five participants said they and their family members (usually siblings) were placed in foster care (42%) or adopted (33%) with the involvement of Children's Aid Services, including two who were Sixties Scoop survivors. One of these survivors reported having 10 siblings placed in foster care.

Participants spoke of the loss of connection with family, culture and community. For example, Participant Q described her experience with foster care:

> *[It] was so much different than the life I was used to. I had to ask for food, I had to ask for any type of fruit. I wore the same skirt for three or four days.*

Another participant described her attempts to reconnect with her mother after being placed in foster care and then adopted, before turning to homelessness:

> *My story is at the age of four when I was removed from my mom. I became a runner; I could always make my way back home. [I was] put into a home that's white … not where I belong. … I kept running home because that's where I belonged. This is where I need to be … I was a really good runner.*
>
> *At 14 my adoptive parents were so frustrated with me that they ended up putting me back in Children's Aid … That's where I found the carnival to run away with.*

Some stories (but not enough) ended with a reunion. Participant Q recounted her 25-year journey to find her brother after they were separated as children:

> *I'd always ask Children's Aid, "Can I see my brother?" because they told me he was in and they said, "no, no." For 25 years I never saw my brother and then one day I went searching … I called … the reserve and one of the ladies said, "Your name will change when you get married, but his won't." I thought, "That's right!"… I phoned [the only other person with my last name] in the book … and said I wanted to speak to [my brother]…When my brother [answered]… he said, "you're my sister." [I said] "How do you know?" He said, "I knew you would find me one day."*

Participants also experienced intergenerational trauma, with half reporting that their family members (aunts, grandmothers, etc.) attended residential schools. For example, one said about how the residential school system affected her family:

> *They took my aunts [to a residential school]. My mother hid in the basement … so they didn't get her. When [my aunts] came back, they hated my mother for all they went through [while] she didn't go through it. And my one aunt … wouldn't talk about what happened, whereas my [other aunt] would. I used to always call her and just listen. [It was] very hard. Very hard … I would imagine [the schools] were sexually abusive because neither one of [my aunts] wanted to talk about that area.*

Employment, disability and discrimination

The intersection of disability and employment was a prominent theme throughout the interviews. More than half of participants (58%) reported a disability (physical impairment, mental health issues or substance abuse) that affected

their ability to work. Significantly, four of these participants said their injury had occurred at work. And 25% of participants said they were concerned about discussing their health problems with their doctor or employer. For example, one participant said he was worried that discussing his injury would prevent him from being hired.

Four participants reported human rights problems in their workplace such as a lack of accommodation for a disability. One participant said his co-workers made racist comments about Indigenous people.

Interactions with police and emergency services

Interactions with police were common for half of participants. Three participants had been incarcerated (for driving under the influence and an assault) or placed in a youth detention facility. This is consistent with reports that Indigenous people are disproportionately incarcerated and more likely to have contact with police compared with non-Indigenous persons.[28] One participant was banned from sleeping in parks (i.e., trespassing), in what amounted to a crime for being homeless.

Murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls

One in four participants reported a family member missing or murdered, further adding to the cycle of trauma, family dislocation and community isolation.

Safe spaces and service gaps as an overarching theme

A major theme that emerged from the participant narratives[30] was the need for safe spaces and service gaps. Participants were asked, "If you could make changes that would improve the system, what would they be?" Participant L's response makes clear that addressing service gaps and creating safe spaces for Indigenous persons to access culturally responsive services in Halton is a justice issue:

> *I think it's very important that people have a place to go, that they know it's safe, that they can be proud, that they can learn the proper traditions. I think that all builds having pride in yourself and not listening to the negative. We're fed a lot of negative, and a lot of us have been in a negative light, have lived a negative life. The only way we're going to correct that is by getting the correct information from the correct people. If we don't have that in Halton, or if we don't have that outreach in any type of community, we're doing injustices.*

Participants frequently raised the need for visible, positive, dedicated, safe, indoor and outdoor space. Participant T described it this way:

> *Halton needs a community centre … a community space. Something outdoor. … There needs to be some space or something to honour [our history and the territory].*

The need for space was as important for older participants who identified as Sixties Scoop survivors and for participants who had experienced trauma. Participant K said:

> *I'm a Sixties Scoop survivor. There is nothing right now for Sixties Scoop survivors. Even if it was just one time a month, at least we could get together. Even to this day there's nothing for nobody … So I guess we're going to the burial grounds with broken hearts.*
>
> **Interviewer:** *So space for a community to get together, place to gather?*
>
> **Participant K:** *Yeah, somewhere … A friendship centre, that'd be nice. A healing centre, that'd be nice to hear other people voice their different stories. What else: somewhere that somebody could come maybe into the Region. A health professional or somebody like [a traditional practitioner].*

Access to traditional healing methods such as medicinal sage, ceremonies such as smudging, sweat lodges, and access to healers and elders were repeatedly identified as service gaps. Opportunities to attend local pow wows, drumming workshops, craft workshops and community gardens were also raised.

Housing-specific service gaps identified include:

- dedicated Indigenous housing;
- housing search assistance;
- supportive services to help retain housing;
- assistance with first and last month rent; and
- information on other community services such as food banks.

One participant made it clear that easy access to a service

is necessary or the service is irrelevant. He described barriers in accessing services due to a lack of identification and not having a phone. When he was able to telephone a service provider, he routinely ran up against voice mail. Another participant expressed frustration with a lack of services, despite being asked to self-identify as Indigenous:

> *It drives me nuts. They'll take in all this information, like you identify this, that and the other thing, and you sort of expect there to be a department for Aboriginal, but there's nothing there. Why did I identify, if it serves no purpose?*

The lack of culturally appropriate housing services in Halton helps explain the self-identification problem. As highlighted in the comment above, there appears to be no reason for an Indigenous person to take the brave step of self-identifying to a service provider, particularly if self-identification may lead to racism. Service providers must provide culturally responsive services to, and address the needs of, their Indigenous clients.

PHASE II - PART 2

Collecting Community Feedback

Once the Needs Assessment was complete, we collected feedback on our findings by holding a series of sharing sessions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers and Halton community members, and a sharing and healing circle with participants. We discuss each of these sessions in turn.

Traditional sharing and healing circle with participants

We shared our findings with interview participants during a talking circle held on May 17, 2018, at the Church of the Incarnation in Oakville. A sharing and healing circle is akin to a focus group in which researchers gather information through group discussion. Participants were invited to the circle as an important way to confirm the interpretation of the data and sharing control of its analysis with them.

The circle began with a traditional opening conducted by Rick McLean of McLean Consulting and included a smudge, thanksgiving address, strawberry ceremony and opening song. A meal was also served to put participants at ease. The staff lawyer then presented our findings and asked for feedback.

Participants felt that our findings were a good start and accurate. Other themes that participants identified include: (1) that sexual abuse and substance abuse can contribute to homelessness; (2) that homeless men face more barriers than women due to living restrictions for some types of housing; (3) a lack of emergency shelters; including no youth shelters in Halton; and (4) the need for frontline community outreach workers to make Indigenous people aware of services.

The second half of the sharing and healing circle asked participants to make recommendations to address the above challenges and discussed next steps. Participants emphasized the need for shared indoor and outdoor space to gather, heal, hold ceremonies and ultimately build the Indigenous community in Halton. Another goal of these spaces would be to teach the broader Halton community about Indigenous culture and belief systems and treaties. Schools were thought to be a good place for these spaces. Participants also said that having a vehicle to access them was important due to transportation limitations in Halton.

To achieve these goals, participants offered to teach, share, combat ignorance and volunteer in the community. Rick McLean offered to come to the community to conduct ceremonies and organize social gatherings. Participants stressed the need to work together and create community through music, art and events. They needed to find their voice, face their pain together and access the tools necessary to heal. This required more elders in Halton and support from the non-Indigenous community. Participants said they were willing to provide support "in any way possible."

The main recommendations that emerged from the sharing and healing circle include:

1. The Indigenous community in Halton needs to explore how to acquire space for community festivals and events, including regular community socials and possible Aboriginal Day events.
2. Regular access to community members who can help provide ceremony.
3. More Indigenous frontline workers who can work directly with the community to educate and improve awareness of community services.
4. Conduct an Indigenous youth session to determine their needs.

Two participants who were unable to share their thoughts during the circle later reached out to HCLS. This reflects the ongoing and non-transactional relationship between researchers and the Indigenous community identified by Lavallée. The first participant said that it is important to have "somewhere to call home" before you

can move forward. She also said that she would not have secured her current apartment if not for the intensive support she received at every step of the moving process. The second participant agreed that the Indigenous community needed an accessible, outdoor space to gather for community events.

Focus group with non-Indigenous service providers

In addition to sharing our results with participants, we held separate focus groups with Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers. The first session was held in February 2018 with non-Indigenous service providers.[31] The goal of this session was to discuss how best to address the needs of Halton's Indigenous community.

Providers were first asked to discuss in groups their cultural competency in dealing with Indigenous people. Different levels of cultural competency were reported. Some agencies had a legal mandate to address Indigenous issues, while other providers reported minimal contact with Indigenous clients. Some service providers offered workplace accommodation, such as allowing Indigenous staff members to take time off to attend sweat lodges. To address intergenerational trauma, some agencies always asked Indigenous clients about their backgrounds.

In addressing the needs of their Indigenous clients, providers reported the following difficulties:

1. Indigenous clients may not want to self-identify due to negative experiences or fear of discrimination. They may also not want to interact with other members of the Indigenous community.
2. When someone identifies as Indigenous, it is difficult to know what to do next. The balance between respecting Indigenous clients and integrating them into the broader community is also challenging.
3. Indigenous people see mental health issues through a spiritual lens.
4. Indigenous people have a culturally different concept of time and take more time to develop relationships.

Service providers were then asked what they needed to become more culturally responsive. Responses included:

1. an Indigenous expert in Halton
2. self-reflection and discussions of privilege
3. an organizational voice to represent Indigenous people
4. the ability to connect past experiences of Indigenous people to the current situation
5. improved cultural competency training to ensure that staff members put training and skills into practice and frontline time to implement that training. There should also be a way to measure the success of this training. Mandatory training for trainers was also mentioned, though in past this idea was resisted.

Providers acknowledged the perception that they lack a general understanding of Indigenous issues. They recognize the need to deliver authentic Indigenous services and ensure that their actions match their words (mission statements, etc.). They must listen and understand.

The following five additional themes emerged:

1. The need for a common approach across sectors for legal issues like housing, based on the needs of the Indigenous community and available resources.
2. The need for common training across agencies so Indigenous clients receive culturally safe services at every agency.
3. The need to develop a baseline to gauge whether providers are meeting the needs of Indigenous clients or whether Indigenous clients just "come through the door." Any research ought to be done in consultation with the Indigenous community.
4. Training must be accompanied by a culture change at the organizational level (staff, board members, donors, etc.). This requires space for conversation, working together, recognizing where the organization is and its limitations, and the level of its openness. Management must also support Indigenous training (such as improving attitudes, and devoting more time to training or Indigenous programs).
5. The need to approach every client as if they are Indigenous and to recognize the nuances between different Indigenous groups.

Service providers agreed that a concrete action plan was necessary to move forward and develop a collective voice. They agreed to have future meetings. Indigenous homelessness was identified as a priority, but providers acknowledged the need for time and money to deal with the many other issues affecting Indigenous clients.

Focus group with Indigenous service providers

A focus group with Indigenous service providers[32] was held in April 2018 and facilitated by Mary Jamieson from McLean Consulting Group. The session began with a traditional opening smudge, followed by a sharing and healing circle.

Anecdotal evidence from service providers suggests that Indigenous people living in Halton are over-represented in areas such as homelessness and justice and health issues. Two members of the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee also identified the needs of Indigenous youth who seek cultural reacquisition. Work being done in this area includes assisting with self-identification at schools and connecting youths to Grandmother Voices (a collective of elders on Six Nations).

Halton is the only region in southern Ontario without an organization dedicated to servicing the Indigenous population, though HCLS has attempted to address this service gap and support the Indigenous community. Aside from this project, HCLS has partnered with the Aboriginal Justice Strategy and Legal Aid Ontario to address challenges around self-identification. Work is also being done on the Point-in-Time Count, and HCLS continues to offer services to Indigenous clients and plan community events like a community feast. Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK) in Oakville has partnered with the Enaahtig Healing Lodge near Orillia to address mental health needs holistically. Indigenous clients may also request housing and child welfare assistance. However, true change in Halton will take time, since many service providers (as noted above) appear to lack internal capacity to address Indigenous needs.

Indigenous service providers outside Halton have responded to service gap with "one-offs," but this is not a long-term solution. For example, De dwa da dehs nye > s Aboriginal Health Centre (DAHAC) and Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) both report serving Indigenous clients from Halton, despite having neither the funding nor mandate to do so. DAHAC has mostly tried to connect those in need with their home nation of Six Nations or New Credit First Nation, but some clients are not from these First Nations. HRIC has made its Indigenous workers available to Halton residents "when reasonable," but this has strained its resources.

The Toronto Police Services (TPS) supports Halton Police with a new Indigenous engagement initiative by providing Aboriginal peacekeepers for mentorship, education and guidance on police/Indigenous citizen interactions.

Significantly, child welfare and housing advocacy is available from the Human Rights Legal Support Centre's Indigenous Services in Toronto. They are able to assist Indigenous people from Halton and are looking to raise their profile in Halton.

Service providers did not wish to create an action plan without a formal steering committee to implement a vision and mission. It was made clear that future discussions must carefully consider which community elders, knowledge keepers or cultural teachers are consulted, since some community members may be wary or unaware of a leader's connections, status or ancestry. Service providers were also open to meeting at the Church of the Incarnation, so long as the Halton Indigenous community could evolve in the space without programing from well-intentioned organizations.

Following its facilitation of this session, McLean Consulting made the following recommendations:

1. Develop a contact list of Indigenous service providers, elders, knowledge keepers and community advocates, since Halton's Indigenous community does not know its own members. This would be a good first step in developing relationships in the community.
2. Further utilize HCLS leadership, including hosting regular Indigenous cultural gatherings for at least a year at the Church of the Incarnation. Consistency is required to build committed relationships.
3. A Halton organization should apply for funding to hire a staff member or consulting firm to form a steering committee in the region to address the Indigenous service gap. Committee recruitment could occur during the meetings at the church.

Meeting with the non-Indigenous community

On June 16, 2018, we shared our findings with about 30 members of the non-Indigenous community at the Church of the Incarnation. Community members also participated in a smudge and cultural competency training with Rick McLean of McLean Consulting. We collected feedback from participants on three questions:

1. What have you learned from our presentation about Indigenous homelessness in Halton? Did anything surprise you or not surprise you?
2. What can the non-Indigenous community do to support a community action plan?
3. What can you do to support a community action plan?

Responses to the first question suggest that the non-Indigenous community lacks knowledge of the Indigenous population in Halton. About 40% of participants were unaware that there was an Indigenous homelessness problem, and 58% did not even know that Indigenous people live in Halton. These findings are consistent with the feedback we received from community participants in the 2017 "I Am Affected" campaign. This said, participants were receptive to the cultural competency training, suggesting that they are willing to listen and learn.

Regarding the second question, participants appeared to understand the need to support the Indigenous community in a way that lets them determine their own needs. Some participants noted that they should be allies and listen (13%). Others thought that the non-Indigenous community should create safe spaces (33%), fundraise (13%) and raise awareness and advocate for Indigenous issues before local representatives (27%). A common theme was the need to educate the non-Indigenous community, including through cultural competency training. As one participant wrote, "We are still at the first level of involvement, so just getting information out is paramount."

Around 25% of participants did not answer the third question or said they did not know what to do. Those who did respond said they would raise awareness and share what they learned with family, friends and the community (33%), provide financial support (33%) or speak with their local representatives (13%). Only one participant said he/she would attend Indigenous events.

In terms of specific projects, one participant said he/she would like to establish an Indigenous book club in Halton, while a local pastor offered to provide space, transportation and food for Indigenous events. Another participant expressed the more general desire to help establish "cooperative enterprises and services with successful Indigenous people."

PHASE III

The Community Action Plan

On July 24, 2018, we met with members of the Project Advisory Committee to discuss our findings and develop a Community Action Plan (CAP) to address Indigenous homelessness in Halton. Input from committee members who could not attend the meeting was collected through email or phone calls.

The CAP is based on our findings from Phases I and II and the community feedback we received. It consists of several community committees and/or working groups with complementary responsibilities, as described below. The CAP's organizational structure is outlined in Figure 5 (see page 19).

❶ The Steering Committee

The CAP will be overseen by a steering committee consisting of an equal number of members from the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community in Halton. At least one member should be from each of the key stakeholders: (a) HCLS, (b) a non-Indigenous service provider; (c) an Indigenous service provider; (d) a non-Indigenous community member; (e) an adult Indigenous community member; (f) a youth Indigenous community member; and (g) an Indigenous elder, knowledge keeper, or expert. Members of the present Project Advisory Committee should be encouraged to participate.

Recruitment of the Steering Committee members should begin once the CAP is finalized in October 2018. The present Project Advisory Committee is responsible for recruitment, with careful consultation of Indigenous elders and teachers, where possible. If required, a Halton organization may apply for funding to hire an Indigenous consulting firm to assist with the recruitment. The Steering Committee should be in place by January 15, 2019.

Responsibilities

The Steering Committee will be responsible for developing a vision and mission statement that will guide the CAP.

The Steering Committee will also create formal working groups/subcommittees in line with the Indigenous teaching that all voices matter and should be heard, including (1) an Indigenous Community Working Group/Subcommittee; and (2) a Service Provider Working Group/Subcommittee. Other subcommittees or task forces may be created as necessary. Steering Committee members may also serve as members of the subcommittees or working groups as appropriate or necessary. Subcommittees should be established no later than April 1, 2019. Recruitment may be required only for the Community Working Group, since HCLS already meets with Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for reviewing the progress of, and providing feedback to, each subcommittee.

The Steering Committee or its designates will work in partnership with Halton's Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC) for the Catholic and public school boards to identity two schools that can be used as safe spaces for community events and ceremony. They should also consult the wider community for suitable spaces, including approaching the Sheridan College Indigenous Student Support Centre, which has created a community healing garden. The schools and/or spaces should be (a) reasonably accessible to the Indigenous community; and (b) willing to make a one-year commitment to promote the development of lasting and strong relationships.

Safe spaces for the Indigenous community to gather should be in place by March 1, 2019. The Committee should speak with Rev. Patrick Gushue of Knox Presbyterian Church Sixteen, who attended the June 16 session and extended an offer of space, to see if his church or outdoor space is suitable.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for recruiting an organization independent from Halton Region to secure funding to hire an (ideally) full-time **Indigenous community liaison**. This liaison will be responsible for identifying and creating strategic partnerships and links between the Steering Committee and working groups (or their respective projects

or initiatives) and other agencies, programs or organizations within or outside the Halton community to help meet, expand or strengthen CAP projects. The liaison should also attend all Steering Committee and working group meetings.

Annual meeting

The Steering Committee will hold a semi-annual or annual meeting with all CAP members to review progress and develop an action plan or strategy for the coming year. The Steering Committee must release an annual progress report 60 days after this meeting with clear objectives and projects.

Other meetings

At least three Steering Committee members must attend all working group meetings. One Steering Committee member will also be responsible for collecting and disseminating all progress reports.

❷ Service Providers Working Group/ Subcommittee

The service providers working group/subcommittee will consist of an equal number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers, will meet at least four times per year. Its goals are to (a) improve non-Indigenous service providers' cultural competency and their provision of culturally appropriate services for Indigenous clients; and (b) address the Indigenous service gap. Management and frontline workers should be required to attend to promote organizational change and buy-in.

Responsibilities

This working group should address the following projects:

1. Review, develop and implement common cultural competency training across Halton by December 30, 2019 to ensure that Indigenous clients receive culturally sensitive services at every agency. As a first step, the working group should discuss existing resources with Selby Harris at the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre and Marcus Logan at the Oakville Public Library.
2. Develop a common approach to the legal issues around Indigenous homelessness, taking into account the specific needs of the Indigenous community and the availability of resources. Housing items to be discussed might include the need for dedicated Indigenous housing or culturally competent housing search assistance and rent assistance.
3. Develop a funding strategy to address the Indigenous service gap, including having existing service providers in Halton: (i) apply for funding to hire more Indigenous frontline workers to work directly with the Indigenous community, spread awareness on community services and navigation assistance to accessing services, and create safe spaces, (ii) support Indigenous service providers in bringing culturally appropriate services to Halton, and/or (iii) create new services within Halton.
4. Further develop strategies to create culturally safe and responsive services to respond to the lack of Indigenous self-identification.
5. Develop a contact list of Indigenous service providers, elders, knowledge keepers, community advocates and allies in Halton by December 30, 2019. As a first step, the working group should consult the resource list at the Oakville Public Library.

This subcommittee or working group should develop or make substantial progress on developing these strategies by December 30, 2019. Progress reports should be submitted to the Steering Committee 30 days after each session.

❸ Indigenous Community Working Group/ Subcommittee

The Indigenous community working group/subcommittee will meet at least four times per year, with support from interested members of Halton's non-Indigenous community, to develop its own action plan. This is in keeping with the goal of having the non-Indigenous community act as allies to the Indigenous community. This working group must include youth representation, to respect the Indigenous belief that all voices matter and should be heard.

The Steering Committee and/or adult members of the working group are responsible for ensuring that youth members are able to attend all meetings by (a) meeting when a majority of youth members are available; (b) meeting at locations that are generally accessible to youth members; and/or (c) assisting with transportation to and from meetings. The Steering Committee and/or adult members of the working group will work in partnership with Sheridan College and the IEAC to meet this responsibility.

When possible, members of this working group will receive

honorariums and gifts of tobacco from the Steering Committee for their participation. Available honorariums will first be provided to youth members.

Responsibilities

This working group/subcommittee's action plan should include strategies for:

1. Further developing and distributing educational materials to the non-Indigenous community in Halton. These materials could explain, among other things, the history of Indigenous people in Halton, the treaties that apply to Halton, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the importance of reconciliation.
2. Engaging Halton schools, including partnering with and supporting the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, to further develop Indigenous engagement programming for youth.
3. Strategic advocacy at the community and government level to improve funding and access to Indigenous services.
4. Community programs, feasts, community gatherings or strategic partnerships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community, including raising awareness and encouraging participation in such events.
5. A youth initiative in which the working group will partner with HCLS or another Halton organization to secure funding to complete a needs assessment and run a sharing and healing circle for Indigenous youth in Halton. The working group and/or Steering Committee may also develop a task force to spearhead any projects or initiatives.
6. Any other initiative that the Steering Committee and the community-based subcommittee deem appropriate.

This action plan should be completed by December 30, 2019. Progress reports should be submitted to the Steering Committee 30 days after each meeting.

4 Miscellaneous

At least three members of the Steering Committee and 50% of the working group membership must attend working group meetings for proper quorum.

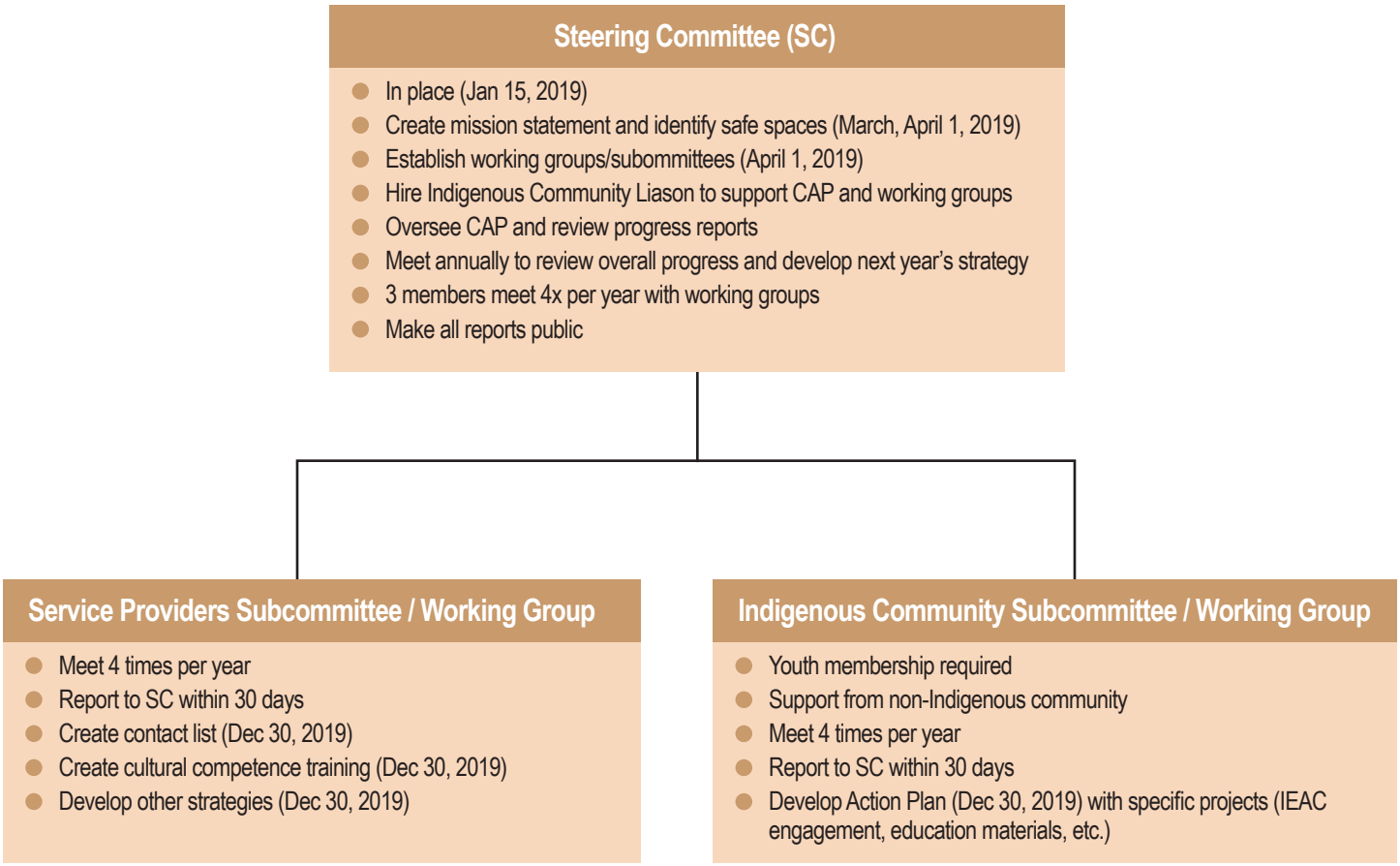
Meetings should be scheduled as far in advance as possible to ensure adequate progress and avoid scheduling difficulties.

Minutes shall be taken at every meeting involving the Steering Committee and working groups/subcommittees. When possible, one person on each committee will be responsible for the minutes to ensure consistency.

The Steering Committee or its designate will ensure that progress reports and/or meeting minutes will be made available electronically to all persons involved in the CAP to ensure accountability and transparency.

Any deviations from this CAP must be approved by the Steering Committee and be in accordance with the CAP mission statement and values, except that the Steering Committee or its designate(s) must fulfill all responsibilities under the CAP.

Figure 5: Community Action Plan – Organizational Structure, Responsibilities and Deadlines



The Way Forward

We are grateful to have had the opportunity to complete this project with good hearts and minds.[33] We are also honoured that the interview participants trusted us with their stories. Over the past year, we have learned that Indigenous peoples are long-term residents of Halton; that Halton has an Indigenous homelessness problem; and that Halton lacks the services and resources to address this problem. We have heard that this calls for a community-based solution.

Before us is a great opportunity and a critical choice. Armed with the knowledge from this project, the Halton community can continue with the status quo, or it can move forward with the Community Action Plan and develop solutions. HCLS plans to continue to work towards meeting the needs of our Indigenous clients. We hope this document provides a foundation for community action.

Appendicies

APPENDIX A: Statement of Project Principles

The impact of colonization and intergenerational trauma are the foundation for the inequality that Indigenous people in Canada have long faced both on and off reserve. Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), in recognizing this legacy and creating a framework for reconciliation, observed that reconciliation (a) must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians; and (b) requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Indigenous people's education, culture, language, health, child welfare, administration of justice, economic opportunities and prosperity.

We know that many Indigenous people make Halton Region their home. As of 2016, 5,460 individuals in Halton identify as First Nations, Inuit or Metis (Canadian Census results)– a figure that has steadily grown since 2011. However, this figure is likely larger for two reasons. The 2016 data focused on socially stable Indigenous people and likely missed the segment of the population living precariously. Indigenous people may also be reluctant to self-identify, meaning that the true need for culturally appropriate services remains unseen.

Halton Community Legal Services has received funding by the Government of Canada through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy Innovative Solutions to Homelessness funding to conduct needs assessment research and knowledge sharing related to Indigenous housing and homeless in Halton.

We acknowledge Article 23 of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP): Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

We recognize that to date research involving Indigenous peoples in Canada has largely been defined and primarily carried out by non-Indigenous researchers. The approaches used have not generally reflected Indigenous world views, and the research has not necessarily benefited Indigenous peoples or communities.

We recognize that engagement with community is an integral part of ethical research involving Indigenous peoples. In the course of engaging the community we commit to the creation of safe spaces for communication, listening, sharing and learning and will be open to new ways of knowing. We will take a restorative approach: in order for there to be reconciliation there needs to be truth and sharing.

We will develop respectful relationships and promote collaboration between researchers and participants. We know that the participants will be an important source of guidance for the research. We acknowledge that this is the community's project, not our own and at all times we will approach our work with humility.

All project activities shall be designed to include safeguards for participant privacy and measures to protect the confidentiality of any data collected. Community engagement will be governed by informed consent, the ability to withdraw from participation at any time, assurance that withdrawal from participation will not affect provision of services and confidentiality. We will be mindful of not replicating behaviours that amount to cultural misappropriation.

We recognize this project means walking a path of reconciliation together with an open heart and open mind that are connected. True reconciliation can only happen through reflection, action, and partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities. Halton Community Legal Services and its project partners will work in this manner, embracing the spirit of the TRC report and UNDRIP.

APPENDIX B: Interview Topics/Questions

Indigenous Homelessness Needs Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Project

Interviewer Name:
Note taker:

Date:
Time:
Location:

Participant Name
First Name:
Last Name:
Other names used:

Currently residing:

Phone #:

How can we contact you if we get interrupted or want to follow up with you?

Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with us today. We would like to offer you a gift of tobacco and to smudge if you want to.

< Proceed as necessary based on response >

Now, I would like to take a few minutes to briefly go over our project and a consent form with you and to ensure that you have no questions or uncertainty before we begin.

< Review and have consent form signed before proceeding any further >
< If consent to recording start >

Do you have any questions?

The interview should take about 1 hour, but if at any time you need a break, please let us know.

Socio-demographic information

I would like to collect some more information about you:

1. How old are you?

2. What is your date of birth?

3. What gender do you identify with?

- ☐ male / man
- ☐ female / woman
- ☐ two-spirit
- ☐ trans female / trans woman
- ☐ trans male / trans man
- ☐ genderqueer/gender non-conforming
- ☐ not listed: _____
- ☐ don't know
- ☐ decline to answer

4. What is your current source of income?

5. How far did you go in school?

Community Connection

6. Where you are from?

7. How do you identify yourself?

8. Why did you leave your home community?
Examples: Work, health, education, legal and child care services, spiritual events access to affordable housing, recreation

9. Please describe your connection to that community and the land.

10. Do you know the history?

Homeless experience in Halton

11 How long have you been in Halton?

12 While you have been in Halton have you had the experience of:

a) Having nowhere to go/ being without shelter?
Examples: living rough, spent time sleeping in a car or alleyway or garage or barn or bus shelter or an abandoned building or storage locker or anything like that?

b) Staying in emergency shelter? Examples: homeless shelter or violence against woman shelter, temporary shelters or out of the cold programs

c) Couch surfing or staying temporarily with family, friends or acquaintance?

d) Living in precarious circumstances?
Examples: in a place that you couldn't afford, had repair problems, was too small, was overcrowded with too many people, where you got evicted from, you were late paying rent, you couldn't pay for electricity gas or water or for heat?

e) Being harassed or discriminated against or been treated unfairly by a landlord.

f) Being denied a unit because of: race, spiritual beliefs or practices, ancestry, First Nation, Inuit or Metis background, place of origin, gender expression, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, disability, age, receiving social assistance?

g) Being subjected to racism related to housing?
Examples: by neighbours, service providers

< For each 'yes' ask > Tell me about that experience.

Probe:
- What was/is going on in your life?
- What conditions led to your being in the situation?
- What supports did/do you have?
- Housing or stay in a shelter ever impacted by someone's substance use?
- Ever told to leave a shelter?
- Denied a bed?

< If needed you can ask these questions to help draw out the narrative > :

13 Where did you go when/if you didn't have your own place to stay?

14 What family members were with you?

15 Was anyone else with you?

Income security

16 Did you rely on food banks and community meals?

17 Did you have any of these benefits: Ontario Works, Ontario Disability, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, Guaranteed Income Supplement, child benefits, workers compensation, disability tax credit, other tax rebates?

18 Did you need help getting or keeping any of those benefits?

19 Were you filing your taxes?

20 Did you have debts?

21 Could you afford transportation?

22 Did anyone take things from you or your money without your permission?

Education

23 Were you worried about your children's education, attendance or performance in school?

24 Were you worried about your own education, attendance or performance in school?

25 Were you able to access the programs you wanted for adult education or job training?

26 Are you over due on any student loans?

Employment

27 Did you have a disability that affected your ability to work?

28 Were you concerned about telling anyone about any health problems?

29 Have you ever been hurt at work?

30 Were you ever harassed or discriminated against or treated unfairly by your employer or a co-worker?

31 Did you have trouble finding work because of: race, spiritual beliefs or practices, ancestry, First Nation, Inuit or Metis background, place of origin, gender expression, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, disability, age, receiving social assistance?

32 Does an employer owe you money?

33 Have you ever worked and someone took all or some of your money?

34 Did you ever feel forced into doing something for money?

Health/ EMS Interaction

35 What did you do when you felt unwell?

36 Did you have a family doctor?

37 Could you get prescription medication?

38 Could you get over the counter medications?

39 Did you need health services and supports: e.g. assistive devices, counselling, physiotherapy,

40 Did you go to walk in clinics?

41 Did you go to the emergency department at a hospital?

42 Did you ever have interaction with the police or other EMS?

43 Did you use other emergency services like distress centres or distress lines, suicide prevention, COAST, sexual assault crisis centre?

44 Did you ever get taken to the hospital against your will?

45 Were you ever in hospital for r a period of time when you didn't have a permanent address to go to when you got out?

46 Was your discharge delayed so you could find a place to go?

Child Welfare

47 Were You/ anyone in your family in foster care?

48 Were you or anyone in your family adopted?

49 Was the children's aid society (CAS) involved?

50 Did any of your family attend residential school? What was the impact of that experience?

Trauma/Abuse

51 Have you ever been concerned for your safety?

52 Did you have to leave a home because of safety unstable or unhealthy situations?

53 Has fear or confusion ever made you feel trapped in a lifestyle you did want to be a part of?

54 Have you ever become homeless as a result of emotional, physical sexual or psychological abuse?

55 Has the experience of trauma impacted your day to day living in other ways?

56 Did you get help to deal with the trauma abuse?

Legal System

57 Were you involved in any family or criminal court matters?

58 Were there any orders affecting where or who you could live with?

59 Was your release from an institution delayed or denied because no place to live?

Cultural homelessness

60 While in Halton did you have a connection to your identity, community, culture, relations?

61 Were you able to participate in spiritual or cultural practices?

Relocation and mobility

62 Were you able to return to your home community?

63 Have you ever returned to/considered returning to your home community? If yes, please tell me about that experience. If no, please tell me why you made that decision.

Reflection

64 What was the impact of homelessness on you?

65 What worked and was helpful for you?

66 What did not work?

67 If you could make changes that would improve the system, what would they be?

Seeding

68 Do you know of any other Indigenous people who have experienced homelessness in Halton?

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your story with us. I understand that this may have been a difficult conversation for you. We can provide you with resources and supports that may be helpful, but would also encourage you to call a close friend or family member if you feel that personal support is needed. Can we help you with this in any way?

What is the best way to contact you for the review of your story?

When we have completed all the interviews, we will be inviting people to a listening circle so we can report on what we heard and plan next steps. Would you like to be invited to participate in that listening circle? How can we best keep in touch?

We would like to provide you with a gift card to show our gratitude and appreciation of your willingness to share your story with us.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your time and the sharing of your story. Please fill out the bottom of this sheet to indicate that you did receive the gift card.

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received a gift card as part of my involvement in the Indigenous Homelessness Needs Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Project.

Signed:_____
Indigenous Homelessness Needs Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Research Project

Thank you for agreeing to share your story of homelessness in the Halton Indigenous Homelessness Needs Assessment and Knowledge Sharing Project.

Purpose of the Research: This research project is intended to address the lack of knowledge about the needs of low-income Indigenous people in Halton Region, Ontario in relation to homelessness and the risk of homelessness.

Description of the Research: Much of the research will consist of conducting interviews and hearing stories from Indigenous people in Halton about their experience with homelessness. Reports based on the information may be made public. No identifying information will be disclosed and the information will not be used in a way that would allow an individual to be identified in any public document.

Your Involvement in the Research

We are inviting you to include your own story of homelessness.

Your participation in the interview process is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You have a choice as to what information you are willing to provide and can choose what questions you are willing to answer.

All information that you share with us will be kept confidential and will not be revealed by the office without your permission, with the following exceptions:

Limited disclosures to third parties may be made to fulfill funding or other legal obligations which are necessary for our office to conduct business.

Reports based on the information may be made public however; the information will not be used in any way that would allow you to be identified.

We believe on reasonable grounds that there is an imminent risk of death or serious bodily harm, and disclosure is necessary to prevent the death or harm. We will not disclose more information than is required.

When required by law or by order of a tribunal of competent jurisdiction, we will disclose confidential information, but will not disclose more information than is required.

At any time during the process we can take a break or stop or decide to continue at another time. We will have a list of community resources available for you. You may have a support person present with you.

The interview process is meant to be informal and is estimated to take an hour in length.

You will be asked about your experiences with homelessness, including barriers to housing you have faced, social supports you may have received, what supports or resources weren't available but perhaps may be helpful to you, as well as opportunities to make cultural connections with other Indigenous people and resources in the area.

The stories we gather will be combined to form a clearer picture of the nature of Indigenous homelessness in Halton. The results will help to form an action-plan for resources and services in Halton region, so that they are culturally appropriate to Indigenous people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homelessness.

Notes will be taken during the interview and, if you agree we will make an audio recording of the interview to ensure we don't miss any aspects of the important story you have. It is

important that the information be correct. We will provide you with an opportunity to view and correct your own personal information before it is used.

Our staff volunteers and contractors are trained in issues of confidentiality and privacy and have signed a binding confidentiality agreement which applies indefinitely even after employment has ceased. We have in place physical, technological and procedural safeguards to prevent unauthorized access to your information.

The general results of this study will be released around the fall of 2018.

A gesture of appreciation for sharing your story in the form of a gift card will be provided.

Consent

By signing this form, I agree that:
(please circle and initial beside each response)

The study has been explained to me. Yes No

All of my questions were answered. Yes No

Possible harm, discomforts and possible benefits (if any) of this study have been explained to me. Yes No

I understand that I have the right not to participate and the right to stop at any time. Yes No

I understand that I may refuse to participate without consequence. Yes No

I have a choice of not answering any specific questions. Yes No

I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study. Yes No

I have been told that my personal information will be kept confidential. Yes No

I understand that no information that would identify me will be released or printed. Yes No

I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form. Yes No

Date:_____

Name:_____
(please print)

Signature:_____

Witness:_____

Witness Signature:_____

APPENDIX C: Participant Narratives

NARRATIVE 1 Participant C's story

C is a 27-year-old man who has lived in Halton most of his life. He identifies as Métis on his mother's side and currently resides with his mother in Halton. His father lives on the West Coast. Despite being housed by his mother, C considers himself homeless and without any real sense of home. He feels that his mother houses him out of obligation and says that due to a lack of financial resources, he has nowhere else to go.

C came to Halton Community Legal Services to appeal a decision on Ontario Disability Support Program benefits. He had been previously denied benefits for his learning disability and schizophrenia delusional disorder. Now he has been approved to receive these benefits. C's mother has not coped well with his disabilities.

Over five years ago, C applied for rent-geared-to-income housing in Toronto through Housing Connections. C cannot work due to his disabilities, so his options to secure housing have been limited. C applied in Toronto because he believed that it might offer quicker access to housing. He also selected Toronto because it had more supports and better public transit. But it is difficult to move off the waiting list, and C has yet to receive an offer.

C subscribes to naturopathy and holistic medicine, choosing not to take medication for his mental illness. He is unaware of any traditional healing or Indigenous resources in Halton. If C knew of any, he would want to connect to these communities. As a young person, he feels shut out of the system and detached from the community he was raised in.

NARRATIVE 2 Participant D's story

D is a 42-year-old man who first came to Halton at age 2 with his sister to be adopted by a family in Burlington. He was born on a reserve in northwestern Ontario, but has never returned there. His adult life has been marked by moving from one shared accommodation to the next, never truly feeling safe. Once this school year ends, he will be back in Halton region looking for the next place to live—a cycle that never ends.

For D, having completed a certificate and diploma program, education has always been a priority. He has plans to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree, but it will depend on his ability to afford tuition. Right now, D works part-time and receives Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits, as he had a stroke that caused a permanent brain injury. Ten years ago D began applying for Employment Insurance, then Ontario Works, and finally he received ODSP.

> ***"Interviews are always interesting because you can get accommodations for your interviews, but . . . for full-time work it doesn't seem to work out.***

D thinks his disability has prevented him from getting hired by employers, who have simply dismissed him based on his learning disabilities. D has asked for accommodations for his learning curve, but finds that despite his qualifications, the conversation usually ends with the interview. Going off ODSP would present too many unknowns: how many hours would he get at work and how would he afford his medication?

When D moved back to Halton after time away at school in the United States, he began the scramble of finding a place to live. While he never found himself with nowhere to go, he had to live with roommates or the landlord. He would rather have a whole apartment, but could never afford to live independently. D's constant fear of being unable to pay rent and ending up on the streets has kept him working at all costs, as without an address his ODSP would be in jeopardy and his life would begin to unravel quickly. He needs meals and medication to prevent seizures from reoccurring.

> ***"You get references to entitlement with, say, band money, funding for school. A lot of people say like "I wish I was Aboriginal so I could get that money."***

Even though D has a desire to visit his former community in northwestern Ontario, he has learned it is plagued with addiction issues and the effects of mercury poisoning. Addiction is a very difficult subject to raise with his birth mother and it usually ends the conversation. His large family—four siblings and two half-siblings—are scattered throughout the United States, Halton and Hamilton, but they have reconnected over the years. One of his sisters, an Indigenous woman out West missing for 10 years, was ultimately found by the RCMP. D sees his siblings who have families of their own and wishes

he could have that too. He has always lived a life walking in two worlds, as an Indigenous person and as a non-Indigenous person.

The one place D felt connected to his culture was the Indigenous support centre at college. Through this inclusive space he felt comfortable just being himself, and not having to answer questions about his status or tuition funding. At birth, D's mother registered him for status through the Indian Act, which gives the holder important legal rights. Through his status, D could apply to his band for assistance with his tuition fees. While at school, he faced many negative attitudes towards his Indigenous identity. Peers accused him of being entitled to benefits only due to his status, something he wished they could more fully understand. He even felt that he couldn't identify as Indigenous for fear of these discriminatory attitudes. He hopes to replicate his feeling of belonging while at the support centre, by connecting with an elder to seek guidance. He has not found people in Halton with shared experiences, no one to appreciate his history of adoption, being raised Catholic and its intersection with his Indigenous heritage.

D's ultimate goal is to find secure housing that would last longer than a semester at school. He wants assistance finding accommodations and managing his finances. D is concerned with paying rent on time and minimizing the moving expenses he has incurred. At his age, he wants to stay in one place and build a life.

NARRATIVE 3 Participant K's story

K is a 63-year-old woman from a First Nation in Ontario who came to Halton 20 years ago seeking better living opportunities. Unfortunately, her cycle of homelessness was not broken but rather perpetuated. K moved throughout the region coping with precarious housing, including living out of a van, a toxic basement and a farm. Recently she moved into an apartment in Milton.

K's story of homelessness began when she was separated from her family and her reserve; she is a child of the Sixties Scoop generation. In April 1962, the Children's Aid Society forcibly took K from her family and placed her in foster care in a small Ontario community. A family adopted her and her younger sister, but at 16 K left due to abuse she suffered there. With the help of a neighbour she moved out on her own, seeking assistance through Ontario Works to support herself. K later learned that she had four more siblings born after she was "scooped," but she didn't know where they had been placed. To this day, one sibling remains missing.

> ***"[I was] brought up [with] "take the Indian out of the child"…"You're going to be a drunk just like the rest of them"***

The time spent with her adopted family took a significant toll on K, mentally, physically and emotionally. She was raised to feel inferior due to her Indigenous identity. She was told to stop being Indian. She was shamed. A visit to Children's Aid Society for counselling didn't provide any solutions. Her adopted family saw K through a lens of stereotypes, believing she would grow up to develop an alcohol or drug problem. That she was a girl added to these discriminatory attitudes. Her adopted family told her she would be a whore. After feeling alone and with nowhere else to go, K left and returned to the reserve she was born on, searching more than ever for a real sense of identity. This is a process that she has continued throughout her adult life—where does she fit in?

K had been raised by her grandparents on the reserve, but after her time with her foster family she was broken and untrusting. Back at the reserve K found her grandmother, but much had changed since she had been taken. The family home she remembered was gone and her siblings weren't there; most had ended up in foster care. Her mother had always been in and out of her life, suffering from her own disabilities. K's childhood memories from the reserve are now fading, but she continues to ask "why" and seek answers about the events in her life.

> ***"Mentally, physically, emotionally— you try to rise above it all. Then you take whatever is available. You have no choice. You have no money.***

Once she relocated to Halton in 1999, K was faced with the same struggle to find housing she had dealt with as a young adult. She had nowhere to go but to housing support, which meant accepting living accommodations as they came up. Through Ontario Works these could be a room for rent or an

emergency shelter, never an apartment of her own. When she asked for more options she was told to move to Hamilton, a Band Aid solution to a lack of housing in the region. When K tried to rent through the private market, there was always a reason she couldn't move in: the landlord didn't accept Ontario Works recipients, wanted a tenant who was working full-time, or pets were not allowed. Always something. Not until K found a proactive voice through the legal clinic could she secure an apartment. At age 63 she finally has an apartment; not a basement prone to flooding.

Throughout her time in Halton, K has not connected with other Indigenous people, nor does she know where to do so. As a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, she would like to meet other people who have gone through that experience. A simple start could be a monthly meeting for survivors in the community. The hope would be to have a friendship and healing centre for people to voice their stories and learn from one another. K wants to be able to access social and health services out of a centre in her area. Hamilton and Toronto are too far to travel to, especially with limited finances and poor health. Where is the network in Halton?

NARRATIVE 4 Participant Q's story

Q is a 66-year-old woman whose family, from a reserve in eastern Ontario, came to Toronto for better employment opportunities. Q has been in Halton for the last 40 years, living day-to-day on an Old Age Pension of $1079 a month. In the past Q has rented housing on the private market, and when that fell through, turned to emergency shelters. She is now registered with Halton Access to Community Housing (HATCH), living in a rent-geared-to-income unit.

> ***"The life in foster care was so much different than the life that I was used to; I had to ask for food, I had to ask for fruit, I wore the same skirt for three or four days. . .***

Q's beginnings of homelessness trace back to her teenage years. At 11, she and her brother were placed into foster care due to neglect by their mother. Their father had been ill and unable to care for the kids. Living in a foster home was very different. Everything required permission, from eating an orange out of the fridge to changing her clothing. She didn't cope well with this structure and began to run away from the foster home.

At 16, Q began staying with her mother instead of the foster home. She had dropped out of high school and soon began dealing with a tumultuous home life. Her experiences during this time of being raped, beaten up and not fed properly were traced back to her mother. Severe physical abuse was inflicted on her and her brother. After leaving foster care to go back with her mom, Q felt like excess baggage: no one wanted her around. To protect her, Q's father made her a Crown ward through the family court system, which would ensure she wouldn't be placed back in her mother's custody. This trauma has had a lasting impact on Q as a parent, who vowed to always provide for her children, no matter the cost.

> ***"I'm a survivor. Because I had to survive for my kids. Had to survive to get my status, had to survive for being in the work field, going back to school. . .***

Q visited her family's reserve in order to obtain status, a decade-long struggle for her Indigenous community to recognize her as a member of their band. Status as an Indigenous person is important for Q, as it provides legally protected rights and benefits. On what the government gave her (through ODSP), she could not provide for herself, whereas with status, Indian Affairs would help. If she needed a chair for the bathtub, this came through Indian Affairs. If she needed a walker, this came through Indian Affairs. Whatever the provincial government wouldn't give her, Indian Affairs did once she finally obtained her status.

Q is proud to say she is Indigenous. She is a child of mixed parents, an Indigenous mother and an Irish father. Her mixed background has brought considerable discrimination from her Indigenous community, which has rejected her as one of their own. Even after obtaining status, Q was barred from becoming a member of her band at the reserve because her husband was not Indigenous. As per the Indian Act, bands themselves have the right to grant membership and to determine who can access resources and property. Q was longing to become part of this community. She wanted to live on the reserve her family came from, but still she faced exclusion.

At 40, Q moved onto a different reserve near Brantford for eight months and tended a large garden that fed many people

within that community. Her husband and son lived with her on reserve, a place where she wanted to be in order to continue her cultural practices. But domestic abuse by her husband brought Q's time on reserve to an abrupt end. On the reserve, abuse towards women is not accepted, as women are the lifeblood of the community. She feared her husband and faced the most difficult decision of her life as a parent: to raise her son on her own or preserve his relationship with both parents. Her past promise to always provide for her children echoed in her mind, and Q left the reserve with her husband and son.

Q's family has been affected by residential schools. Two of her aunts shared some experiences from their time there. Q has found it very difficult to accept that her aunts might have experienced sexual abuse at school. Her aunts have struggled to tell the family about this time in their lives, but made it clear they felt alone and hated due to their culture. Q hasn't found anyone to talk with about this history, and wishes someone else understood. Coming from Toronto, she had seen the benefit of communal gathering spaces, where food and clothing were available and people could connect. Nothing similar exists in Halton.

Being homeless has had a major impact on Q's perceptions of social services in Halton. She has battled through being denied housing and living in emergency shelters. While living in a shelter, she reconnected with her love of community gardening and tried to engage other people to contribute and talk to one another. She believed that working on this garden would give people purpose within their lives and a sense of home when they didn't otherwise have one. This didn't always meet instant acceptance, but she continued to encourage others. She has survived to support her children and provide them with better opportunities than were available to her. She wishes that more information was readily available to someone in her position, struggling to access the basic necessities of life. Before Q entered the emergency shelter, she didn't know where food banks were in Halton or who to speak with about waiting lists for housing. She needed these supports before going into a shelter.

NARRATIVE 5 Participant P's story

P is a 36-year-old man who has been homeless since he was discharged from hospital and had no one to turn to. He is a member of a Cree community in Manitoba. Ten years ago P was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and degenerative disk disease; his illness now requires him to use a wheelchair. Being on the street in a chair, he wasn't able to get a job and going anywhere was a struggle. The only financial assistance P received was from Ontario Works, but paying for meals and his medication was nearly impossible. Being homeless was an experience P had lived through in his teens and early twenties; this time, after being pushed out of Toronto, he ended up in a provincial park.

> ***"Homelessness comes in any manner knocking at your door. Mine was a hospital. Got out of the hospital and didn't have anyone, anywhere to go.***

At age 2, P was adopted out of his Cree family to a non-Indigenous family in northwestern Ontario. He was raised in a Christian household, very different to the reserve community he was born on. After completing Grade 8, P became frustrated with school and dropped out. From being removed at such a young age, P has little attachment to his reserve community, which has suffered by being surrounded by non-Indigenous communities. The people still on reserve no longer have a strong sense of their traditions and culture. Once he got out of the school system, P left his adopted family in search of answers about his Indigenous identity.

By his mid-twenties, P had been in and out of many shelters in Toronto. He had four children of his own, but after his diagnosis and a split from his partner, the Children's Aid Society took the kids away. P had no family in the area to live with and faced going back to an emergency shelter. He never felt that he had his own space and couldn't bring his belongings with him to temporary accommodations.

In order to make some money, P began crafting and selling dream catchers in the Toronto area. Unfortunately his art supplies put him over the two-bag limit at most shelters across the city. He sat on the waiting list for subsidized housing for five years, watching many apartments being given to others. Once he could see no end to the constant waiting, P set out for the

park in Halton to pitch a tent in the camping grounds. He lived there for five months.

While at the park, P continued to craft dream catchers and care for the land he was living on. He was not permitted to sell his wares on park property, so he was without income. This restricted his access to the medication he needed and to transportation. He wanted to seek services that would connect him with other Indigenous people, but the park was isolating.

During this time P developed an idea for a communal shop for fellow Indigenous peoples who were struggling to find permanent housing. He wants to see a space for Indigenous people to share their skills and work with their community, while at the same time earning a living to improve their circumstances.

After living in the park for several months while waiting to be approved for housing, P was put up in a hotel, once again temporarily. From there, he waited for his reserve community to provide his status information. Like many other Indigenous people who have lived off reserve, P struggled to obtain his status card, a piece of identity that would entitle him to legally protected rights and benefits from the government. This constant state of not knowing where he will live has taken a significant toll on P; he has lost all faith in government services.

NARRATIVE 6 Participant M's story

M is a 24-year-old man from a small reserve on the east coast who came to the Halton area to attend college. He had been in a program in eastern Canada for homeless youth. M's father is Indigenous and his mother is of Norwegian and Irish descent. He lived on reserve with his family for 12 years. M's home life was extremely hard as a child, as both his parents were abusive. His father was physically abusive and is now in jail, while his mother was psychologically abusive towards M and his Indigenous identity. He has many half siblings from his father.

His mother and father were unable to provide for M, so he was sent to a group home temporarily with the hope of living with his grandparents. As a minor M was involved with police on drug charges and sent to a youth juvenile detention centre. M never completed high school, so when he later chose to attend a drug rehabilitation program, he completed his high school equivalency (GED). Before M could move in with his grandparents, he lost his grandfather and became homeless.

His cycle of homelessness began on the East Coast and continued into Halton, with M learning to access community dinners and food banks. In his opinion, it has been easier to cope with being homeless in Halton due to the generosity of people. He has found cultural support through the Indigenous support centre at the college. However, it is still hard to access many social services, as they are spread out across the region.

When M first came to Halton for schooling, he lived in a basement apartment with no windows and no door on the bathroom. He and five other people paid $570/month each. M did not realized that this living situation was illegal, and soon after he moved there the home came under investigation. The homeowner tried to extort M for rent money, and ultimately M had to leave. He began couch surfing with strangers he met on the Internet.

M is now living in an apartment with two roommates, each paying $575/month plus Internet fees. The apartment is not maintained by the landlord and has a roach problem. The group has tried to raise concerns but has only met denial by the landlord. One roommate is leaving and M will be unable to afford the unit without another roommate. He is seeking a two-bedroom apartment for him and his girlfriend, who is a full-time student and working to support herself. It has been extremely difficult to find an apartment in Oakville that they can afford.

NARRATIVE 7 Participant A's story

A is a college student who moved to the Halton area from the East Coast to enroll in college. Growing up there were no family discussions about their Indigenous background. His maternal great-grandmother was Métis, but this identity was never mentioned. Only after a distant relative told A and his two siblings did he began to develop a keen interest in his identity. A has done research and used an ancestry website to learn more about a cultural background he had only connected to in history class.

Since A has been in Halton, he has lived in a condo and within a house, shared accommodation that has not been ideal but what he could afford as a student. His condo landlord at-

tempted to evict him so a family friend could move in. He faced animosity from the landlord's daughter and did not have legally protected rights under the Residential Tenants Act because he qualified as a boarder. He has since moved places to live with roommates, and doesn't feel he can be picky as a student. Even though it has crossed his mind, A believes obtaining status as an Indigenous person will be difficult because there are still too many unknowns in his family tree. Moving forward, A would like to explore his self-identification more and dedicate time to researching his history, which he has only come to know as a young adult.

NARRATIVE 8 Participant J's story

J is a 29-year-old man from the East Coast who grew up in a mixed family: his father is Indigenous and Chinese and his mother is Brazilian. J has been living in the Halton area to attend college and is seeking admission at university for next year. He wants to pursue more education and now lives off student loans and a part-time job.

Growing up, J's family never lived on reserve because his father wanted to protect the children from being exposed to its alcohol problems. However, J was raised to visit the reserve on weekends, listening to stories from elders and being immersed in his culture. During his childhood J felt the impact of racism; the colour of his skin changed the way people perceived him.

> ***"They said things like "I didn't know Natives could work hard." He liked proving them wrong.***

Both his friends and coworkers saw him differently because of his background. On his first job as a landscaper, his coworkers frequently made racist comments about Indigenous people; none of them knew that J was Indigenous himself. When one of his friends told the other workers J was in fact Indigenous, they said things like, "I didn't know Natives could work hard." J liked proving people wrong. He doesn't want to be forthcoming about his identity because he wants people to get to know him for the person he is, instead of prejudging him. He has heard the negative stereotypes that have been used: "Natives get handouts."

Through these experiences, J wants to have a tough skin, just as his father did when he first came to Toronto after completing high school. J's father experienced considerable racism when he came to Toronto in the early 1960s looking for work. After an outing at a bar where a fight broke out, J's father and uncle faced harsher punishment than others. This differential treatment is what J's father hoped to rise above, working hard to build a business, to show others in his community that they did not need to be victims.

J left home at 18 to start an independent life, attending university and opening his own small business. For a while after leaving home, J didn't feel comfortable going back to visit the reserve because he felt he would be seen as an outsider and not welcomed. Since his time at college in the Indigenous support centre, he has realized that he will be accepted and has made it a priority to connect with his home community. J has visited his reserve several times over the past year and hopes to continue this relationship. It is difficult in Halton to find supports for Indigenous people. He wants to attend pow wows, but Hamilton is too far to go during a busy school week and while maintaining a job.

NARRATIVE 9 Participant L's story

L is a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, and has lived in Halton her entire life. At age 4, she was taken from her mother by the Children's Aid Society and put into foster care. The foster home was near her mother's house in Oakville, and L began to run away back home. She was confused about the separation from her mother. At the age of 5 she was adopted into a loving French-Canadian family. They were not prepared for the strong-willed L, who would continue to search for her mother and roots.

L's mother is a residential school survivor and had seven children. Residential schools were government-funded, church-run schools set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of Aboriginal children. Many children were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. The ongoing impact of residential schools is felt through generations and has contributed to continuing social problems. L's mother is Ojibway from Manitoulin Wikwemikong (First Nation).

> ***I was a very confused 16-year-old, part of the Sixties Scoop and not even knowing it. So where does an Indigenous 16-year-old go in Halton***

When L was 14, after running away to live with her mother, she was again made a ward of the Crown and returned to foster care. At this time she ran away with carnivals that passed through town. She felt this was empowering: to be independent and not have to rely on those she felt had let her down. L moved home briefly into her adopted family but once again was not successful in bonding. She went back on the road with a carnival, moving continuously from town to town. This lifestyle was unsustainable, and at age 16 she decided to move to Toronto. She hoped a bigger city centre would bring more opportunities for work and an apartment.

Instead of more opportunities, L found that in the city there were more people like her, street kids with nowhere to go. She was accepted into a women's shelter as a form of temporary housing. Being only 16, L was not accustomed to following rules of a shelter and did not fit well into the environment. She didn't see why she needed a curfew when she had been living independently for the past two years.

She soon left the shelter to couch surf with friends, trying to work in order to rent her own apartment. This also offered her an opportunity to learn some of the life skills she needed in the city. When she was able to save up for an apartment, it was not a permanent solution to her problems. She didn't have the discipline to pay rent each month, and no one told her she could face eviction if she fell behind on a payment. This led L to seek refuge back in the shelter system.

Being homeless was a perpetual cycle of getting her things together and then going back to the shelter when she could no longer afford an apartment. For L it was a constant in-and-out of precarious housing. These struggles brought on depression, and after a failed suicide attempt, L came to be in hospital for six weeks.

Due to the discrimination that L witnessed towards Indigenous people, she quickly decided not to identify herself or to associate with members of the Indigenous community in Halton or the city. L didn't want to be treated as different, and did her best to hide her identity. When dealing with police, she described herself as being from Oakville, never identifying [as Indigenous], as she had witnessed those who did be beaten or worse. She experienced differential treatment and came to distrust police through these interactions.

L has had a history of abusive relationships and is a victim of domestic violence. She entered these relationships for the feeling of security and safety that she initially felt with the person. It was extremely difficult to leave for fear of re-entering the cycle of homelessness she had known before. In fear from her husband, L took her two children and stayed in a women's shelter in Halton. She returned to the matrimonial home but eventually succeeded in making a clean break. Many people did not want to rent to a single mom, whether she was Indigenous or not. L was able to stay with her adopted family until she saved enough money to afford her own place. It was a proud moment when L could put a down payment on a house.

> ***Halton is so out of touch with. . . sometimes you say 'Oh I'm Native' and then you become that "Oh how interesting, tell me about it."***

During her recovery L was able to complete hairdressing school and develop a marketable skill. Working as a hairdresser in Oakville for 32 years, L used the opportunity to educate people. Her customers did not know she was Indigenous and often brought up topics in the news, such as issues at Six Nations reserve.

L has had difficult conversations with her daughter about her identity as an Indigenous woman in Halton. When her daughter was accepted by a prestigious ballet school, she faced an enrolment form that asked whether or not she identified as Indigenous. Her daughter chose not to identify for fear of repercussions. Today she is extremely proud of her heritage, having learned so much more about her family's history.

L was reunited with her natural mother 20 years after being taken. Then the two of them could heal and L could begin to understand what had occurred to them and gain some answers about who she was. Then she could bond with her loving adopted family, which never really gave up on her.

Along with her daughter and natural mother, L went to her reserve. They stayed there to meet family and community members and to attend a pow wow. It was very difficult to connect with people, having never lived on reserve, spending so much time away in Halton. The reserve community kept their distance from L. She was called an "apple", a derogatory term to describe someone of mixed background. But L describes herself as being very proud to be Indigenous, and

has continued to go every year since with her family, friends or anyone who wants to understand her culture.

> *Let your mess be your message.*

Throughout her adult life, L found no supportive programs in Halton. All she wanted was a place to go where people would understand her roots. In thinking about future generations of Indigenous community members, she would like a cultural centre, somewhere to be safe and proud of your heritage. She feels that having a centre would build pride in oneself and the community. It would also educate the people of Halton about the history of Indigenous people. L believes it is very important that fellow Indigenous people share their story.

NARRATIVE 10 Participant P's story

P is a 35-year-old Indigenous man from the Algonquin First Nation. He has worked on and off as a roofer for the past 20 years, taking jobs in Halton and Peel. He was born and raised in Milton, but his family is from an area near North Bay that is home to both Métis and Algonquin peoples. P's remaining family continue to live up North, on reserve.

P has been homeless for the past two and a half years. He lives with his cousin and a friend in a park. They constructed a teepee from a walnut tree and transport truck tarps. Before he came to live in the park, he lived in a small place in Milton, given to him to use by an old family friend.

P's history of homelessness began over 10 years ago. Since 2006 he has been living on friends' couches, moving from place to place as the need arises.

In 2004, P and his ex-partner had a son together but they broke up two years after. The dissolution of the relationship started a pattern of P moving back and forth from North Bay to the Halton region, depending on what work he was doing. He has experienced a lot of family hardship in the last five years, losing his two sisters, uncles and mother to sickness; now just he and his brother are left.

P has addiction issues that have led to incarceration for periods of his life. When released, he has couch surfed and tried to get back on his feet. He owes outstanding fines but doesn't have enough money to pay them off; he pays child support to his ex-partner and works whatever roofing jobs he can. He has experienced racial discrimination in Halton on numerous occasions, most often hearing racial slurs directed at him on the street. Often the language is directed at alcoholism, violence and generalizations about his skin colour. These interactions have infuriated him.

In his time as a homeless person P has never accessed any shelters until now (April 2018). He says his biggest problem is that there are no men's shelters in Milton, only Oakville. His community supports, his friends and his employment are all in Milton. He has accessed community dinners and the food bank in Milton for the past four years. He tries his best to use these resources, though not having transportation it can sometimes prove difficult to walk to each location. Any time P gets hurt or needs medical attention, he pays out of pocket at a clinic or hospital, because he has no OHIP card or identification. He needs assistance in obtaining his status card from his reserve community.

Culture is extremely important for P; he wants to keep his fluency in Ojibway, his mother's language. P hunts for moose and elk in parks and goes fishing. In Milton, he has a group of friends who share similar ancestry he meets up with; he also uses Facebook to stay connected to his community. He has attended Aboriginal Week in Toronto to celebrate cultural practices and connect with other people. P grew up attending spiritual ceremonies with his mother, performing tobacco offerings and learning drumming from his uncle. He hasn't been able to attend any ceremonies in recent years as he has no money to travel and is constantly struggling to make ends meet.

P ultimately wants to live in Milton, in a house he can afford, close to his group of friends. If he moved back to North Bay, it would be easier to find cheap housing, but limited work is available. All Halton shelters are in Oakville and Burlington, and he doesn't want to continue to wait for a bed, especially in the winter months. His stress continues to build each day he has to wait. He would like to attend programs in Milton for Indigenous community members, like drum workshops, craft making and regular gatherings to share ideas and problems. Such gatherings would go a long way to improve P's condition of life.

NARRATIVE 11 Participant T's story

T is a 35-year-old woman who describes herself as a very traditional Indigenous person from the Cayuga Nation. Her father is from Six Nations and her mother is Jamaican. T grew up visiting the reserve her father was raised on, attending family gatherings, funerals and pow wows. When T's grandmother passed away her family stopped visiting the community, and not until she had her first son at 21 did she reconnect with her Indigenous identity.

For many years T had not acknowledged her past traditions and the ceremonies that were once so important to her. When she came to know someone in Peel who asked if she'd be interested in helping open a community centre for Indigenous people, she quickly agreed. T wanted to bring change in her own life and for her community; this new network was a way to do this.

> ***"I'm meant to do something more right now. I'm meant to connect with something else.***

At age 21, T had completed her Bachelor of Business Administration through college and had recently given birth to her first son. After the child arrived, her former partner left the relationship and T was a sole parent. This was a traumatic experience to go through, and T felt very alone in thinking about her future. She moved back in with her parents, who offered their love and support. Then she decided that she was meant to be doing more and wanted to connect with something else. She remembered the words that the woman had said to her when she first proposed the idea of the community centre: "This is the community, this is what we're going to bring back."

That resonated profoundly with T. She moved to Peel Region, and began building the centre and connecting fellow Indigenous people who had been displaced off reserve. In the centre's early stages, she was doing a variety of roles, trying to work on community outreach, cultural coordinating and the administrative side of the organization. She has continued to support this network.

The goals of the community centre were to preserve and continue a traditional way of life amongst Indigenous people, irrespective of their Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe or Cree culture. Their drive and motivation was to connect Indigenous people with one another and re-teach culture and language. With increased demand for social services in the community, such as shelters and food banks, the centre has shifted its focus to meeting these pressing needs. It has been difficult to continue to run the cultural programs and outreach for youth, as funding is limited. T believes in the importance of these programs, especially to teach children spiritual practices and impart a connection with the land.

T has been struggling for years to obtain status for her five children. T holds full status under the Indian Act, having been registered by her father before the law was changed in 1986. The changes meant that there were now two qualifications, status and non-status. A non-status person might be the descendant of mixed parents like T, or someone whose family never registered under the Indian Act. The government has changed the laws surrounding who qualifies as a status Indian, and T's children were denied each time. After she attempted five times to register her son, she eventually gave up.

> ***"Halton needs a community centre. Halton needs a community space.***

This systemic failure will not have an effect on the practices and traditions T wants her family to maintain. She knows their culture and she'll continue to do what she and her family have done their whole lives: living respectfully on the land and practicing their ceremonies freely. On reserve, T and her kids can all partake in ceremony. This is how they pass on the culture, the language; everything. She is recognized and accepted on reserve, which was very different from how she felt while living in Peel. In Peel, she felt disconnected from her Indigenous community, and the school board where her children attended had very different ideas about school hours, nutrition and the connection with children. There were many things that didn't fit her culture.

From her previous experience in Peel, T wants to see a centre in Halton that acts as a community space. In her opinion, Halton needs to bring in Elders to create somewhere that honours this territory. This territory has belonged to many nations since the 1700s. There needs to be something for the youth. There needs to be language for the children. The centre needs to be open and state that its purpose is for the next seven generations. That was the original purpose of the centre in Peel.

When she moved her family from north to south Peel, T noticed that people were only coming to the centre for food. No one wanted to learn beading, no one wanted to learn Wampum, no one wanted to share stories. She spoke a little about residential schools with people who came in, but they weren't there to listen.

She believes Indigenous people are losing a lot of healing opportunities. She has faith that healing that starts from the bottom can start to heal these communities. She wants to see that members of her community receive spiritual healing in addition to the food and shelter they also need. The first step is to create a safe space for the community; then more people will want to learn their language. More people will want to engage with children. Others will want to start gardening, a tradition T cherishes.

Ultimately, T connected herself to the centre in Peel when she was 21 because she felt it was something in her blood: her identity. Her mission is to be able to connect more with youth and to impart that connection to the land and their language. By investing resources in teaching youth, the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report will be carried across generations and have a meaningful impact. It's planting the seed and watching it.

> ***"I'm a seed and I've just sprouted, so I'm not even fully there. But Halton needs something: a space.***

Endnotes

1. Our previous reports were: Halton Community Legal Services, *Home Is Where the Community Is: An Environmental Scan and Literature Review on Indigenous Homelessness in Halton* (2018), online: <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/home-where-community-environmental-scan-and-literature-review-indigenous-homelessness> and Halton Community Legal Services, *Two-Eyed Seeing of Indigenous Homelessness in Halton – A Needs Assessment* (Oct 2018), online: <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/two-eyed-seeing-indigenous-homelessness-halton-community-needs-assessment>.
2. Although the term "Indigenous" is becoming more common in Canada, "Aboriginal" is used by the federal census and many organizations. Both terms comprise Inuit and Métis people as well as First Nations.
3. Census data was provided by: Statistics Canada, Data tables, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016156 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2017), online: <http://bit.ly/2mb7D7P> (under "Geography" tab select "Geographic index" and then "Halton") [2016 Census Profile] and Statistics Canada, Halton, RM, Ontario (Code 3524) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99 004-XWE (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2013), online: <http://bit.ly/2FmcPyL> [2011 NHS].
4. 2016 Census Profile, *ibid.*; Point-in-Time data on homelessness were provided directly by the Service Manager, HIFIS
5. 2016 Census Profile, *supra* note 2.
6. For example, the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network plans to "expand socio-demographic data collection and review to build the capacity of providers to assess and evaluate the impact of a person's social determinants of health" (Mississauga Halton LHIN, *Advancing Health Equity*, (2016), online: <http://bit.ly/2CrELix>).
7. Currie, Ab (2015), *Extending the Reach of Legal Aid: Report on the Pilot Phase of the Legal Health Check-Up Project*, Canadian Forum on Civil Justice, online: <https://bit.ly/2CKfC7a>
8. Halton Region, *Report SS-16-17 – Housing Services Program Update, Attachment 1: 2016 Comprehensive Housing Strategy (CHS) Report Card*, (2017) at 6, online: <http://bit.ly/2EVVpbZ>.
9. For example, 50 regional housing service providers that attended the Housing Summit in Burlington on Oct. 13, 2016, recognized only "gaps in providing housing that is culturally appropriate for newcomers, addresses the needs of youth, seniors and multi-generational families, and for individuals with health and ability needs." The housing needs of Indigenous people were not mentioned (Oakville Community Foundation, *Issues & Gaps*, online: <https://bit.ly/2D1OM7h>).
10. A full description of the job posting is on file at HCLS.
11. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg, 2015) at pp. 15-17, online: <http://bit.ly/1ivfedJ>.
12. *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al v. Attorney General of Canada*, 2016 CHRT 10 at para 41.
13. Debbie Martin, "Two-Eyed Seeing: A Framework for Understanding Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Approaches to Indigenous Health Research", (2012) 44:2 Canadian Journal of Nursing Research 201 at p. 31.
14. S. Gaetz et al., *Canadian Definition of Homelessness* (Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2012) at 1, online: <https://bit.ly/2pQyyI2> [Gaetz]. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness is a non-partisan research and policy partnership at York University.
15. Jesse A Thistle, *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*, (Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2017), at 6, online: <https://bit.ly/2COezTy> [Thistle].
16. In the *Our Health Counts Toronto Study*, respondent-driven sampling was described as "a chain-referral technique that is recognized internationally by scientists as a cutting-edge method of gathering reliable information from hard-to-reach populations" (M. Firestone et al, *Our Health Counts Toronto – Project Overview & Methods* (2018) online: <https://bit.ly/2QaEGr3>). Strong social networks and Indigenous community staff within Indigenous-led organizations were identified as key to the success of this research (see, J. Smylie, "Our Health Counts Toronto, Interim Analysis" (May 2016)).
17. Currie, *supra* note 7.
18. *Home Is Where the Community Is*, *supra* note 1 at 13.
19. This finding is based on feedback we received during a sharing circle we held with non-Indigenous service providers discussed in later in this report.
20. Lynn Lavallée, "Practical Application of an Indigenous Research

Framework and two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection," (2009) 8(1) International Institute for Qualitative Methodology 21 at 35.

21. Sage is one of the four sacred medicines, along with tobacco, cedar and sweetgrass (see Native Women's Centre, *Traditional Teachings Handbook* (Hamilton, 2008) at pp. 5-6, online: <https://bit.ly/2Nxje0Y>).

22. Ontario Human Rights Commission, "Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed. 11 Indigenous Spiritual Practices" (Toronto: OHRC, 2015), online: <https://bit.ly/2BoAk6L> ("The smudging ceremony is a common purification rite performed in Ontario that involves burning one or more sacred medicines, such as sweetgrass, sage, cedar and tobacco. There are many variations on how a smudge is done").

23. Given the sample size, we recognize that our findings are not statistically significant. However, the common experiences of those we interviewed suggest that our findings do reflect how the largely unseen Indigenous community in Halton experiences homelessness.

24. Gaetz, *supra* note 14 at 1.

25. The 12 participants also reported legal needs not directly connected to homelessness involving family law and access to services. Almost half the participants (42%) said they had a family doctor. But one in four participants could not afford prescriptions or over-the-counter medications unless they were covered by ODSP. Participants reported limited access to supports like mental health services. Two participants said they wished they had access to holistic medicine and healthier food, respectively. Five participants reported dealing with divorce, child custody or child support. Three participants had also dealt with prior criminal matters unrelated to their homelessness.

26. Access to adult education was not a major barrier for participants. Nearly half the respondents (42%) were able to access adult education programs at a college or university, while three (25%) said accessing these programs was difficult. Only one participant expressed concern about not finishing a degree or had student loan debt. Most participants did not have school-aged children, but one stated that she wanted her children to have a "good education in cultural teachings."

27. See, e.g., Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre (SIMFC), *Knowledge Sharing by First Nations and Métis Homeless People in Saskatoon* (2009) at 25, online: <https://bit.ly/2maQzyM> (citing violence in the home, discrimination by landlords and a lack of affordable housing as factors, but also noting "there are as many reasons for homelessness as there are homeless individuals"). See also Cyndy Baskin, "Aboriginal Youth Talk About Structural Determinants as the Causes of their Homelessness", (2007) 3(2) First Peoples Child and Family Review 31 at 38 (noting that Indigenous youth often experience homelessness in lack of connection with their culture). Many studies also report intergenerational trauma as a key contributor to Indigenous homelessness (e.g., Carly Patrick, *Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review* (Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press, 2014) at 13, online: <http://bit.ly/1ee0ey1>; Jalene Taylor Anderson & Damian Collins, "Prevalence and Causes of Urban Homelessness Among Indigenous Peoples: A Three-Country Scoping Review," (2014) 29(7) Housing Studies 959 at 970).

28. According to the federal Department of Justice, Aboriginal people account for 25% of the provincial prison population, 26% of the federal prison population and 37% of the youth prison population. The proportion of Indigenous adults in custody is nine times their representation in the adult population (3%). Indigenous youth (12-17) in custody are about five times their representation in the youth population (7%) (Department of Justice, *JustFacts – Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system* (January 2017), online: <https://bit.ly/2mtLSks>. According to the 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization, 40% of Aboriginal people reported contact with the police (criminal or not) in the 12 months before the survey, versus 30% of non-Aboriginal people (Jillian Boyce, *Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014*, (Statistics Canada), online: <https://bit.ly/2CGirqi>.

29. Gaetz, *supra* note 14; Thistle, *supra* note 15 at 10-12.

30. The research assistant who coded the interviews developed a narrative account of each participant's experience from the transcript. This enabled experiences to be shared in a reporting system more consistent with Aboriginal oral traditions. Eleven participants approved their narrative, copies of which are in Appendix C. One narrative was not approved because the participant had left his shelter for another and could not be contacted.

31. Attendees included: Home Suite Hope, CMHA – Halton Region Branch, HMC Connections, HCLS, Halton Region, Shifra Homes, ROCK, HNHB – LHIN, Summit Housing & Outreach, MH LHIN, Milton Transitional Housing, Support & Housing Halton, Halton CAS/Bridging the Gap, Affordable Housing Halton, Lighthouse shelter.

32. Attendees included: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, Toronto Police Services, Aboriginal Peacekeeper, Halton Community Legal Services, Church of the Incarnation, Human Rights Legal Support Centre, Indigenous Services, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, Reach Out Centre for Kids/Enaahtig Healing Lodge, Legal Aid Ontario, a Halton Community Legal Services Board member and DAHAC.

33. This is Haudenosaunee teaching about the Good Mind. The Peacemaker teaches Haudenosaunee people that their thoughts manifest their reality; they are powerful medicine. From the time of childhood, Haudenosaunee people are taught to be aware of their thoughts and have control over their thoughts so that respect, peace and humility are the roots from which all thoughts should come from. HCLS embraced this teaching to harness the good mind so that the project benefited from respect, peace and humility. (Email from Rick McLean on file with HCLS)