

City of Terrace & TDCSS Homelessness Outreach Program

Homeless Count April 2017

Homeless Count – Summary of Findings

April 2017

On April 26 & 27, 2017 Terrace and District Community Services Society (TDCSS) and the City of Terrace conducted the fourth homeless count. The purpose of the survey was to gather qualitative and quantitative data of individuals who self-identify as being homeless, and any common factors related to homelessness in the city of Terrace. The count was broken into two days to reach as many individuals as possible.

The staff compiled back packs to give to each participant who took part in the count, although those who declined to participate were still offered and given a pack as a gesture of good will. Each pack contained an emergency blanket, spork, mini first aid kit, granola bar, note book with pen and a bottle of water.

The homeless count similar to previous years collected information from individuals who self-identified themselves as being homeless, and have “no residence in which they pay rent.” The coordinators of the project recruited and trained volunteers. The project coordinators mapped areas of where homeless individuals were likely to congregate to conduct the actual count, and produced a list for reference.

TDCSS Homeless Outreach worker; Tarea Roberge, TDCSS Poverty Law Advocate; Michelle Lalonde, four social work students from NWCC; Tanya Cordeiro, Rebekah Coburn, Kimberly McCormick, and Alex Childerhose, conducted the count. A training session with staff and volunteers was held a week prior to the count to discuss safety precautions for those involved and strategies for administering the survey to ensure consistency and accuracy in the collection of the data. During this meeting feedback from last year’s volunteers was gathered, regarding how it was conducted last year, what worked well and what didn’t work so well. The survey was conducted on foot and with vehicles across the community, identifying individuals who self-reported as suffering from homelessness. Individuals also disclosed various health concerns; health problems including, physical disabilities, addictions, and mental health issues.

Our six individuals were split into two groups of three. One TDCSS Employee, one volunteer from the previous year and one new volunteer in each group. Each volunteer who administered the survey wore a TDCSS volunteer name tag and high Vis vest, to ensure they were easily identifiable. When TDCSS staff and volunteers approached an individual who self-identified as being homeless or showed interested in completing the survey, they were asked if they had previously completed a survey. This was done to reduce the likelihood of the same individual completing the survey more than once.

On April 26 & 27, 2017 staff and volunteers met at the TDCSS office at 8:30 am to divide into groups, load back packs and surveys. One last review was covered on which regions of the city each group would cover. The two groups met at Pizza Hut for lunch on the 26th and in the TDCSS board room on the 27th, to discuss the experiences during the morning, and to decide what areas would be covered during the afternoon. With the goal to ensure that all possible locations were covered at least once in order to get an accurate number. Many locations were covered more than once on both days in order to capture those who were transient throughout the day. On the evening of April 26th Tarea and Michelle went to the K'san Women's Transition House from 4:00-5:00pm, and then they went to the K'san Homeless Shelter at 5:00-6:00pm in order to capture those accessing shelters. They also made a stop at George Little Park from 7:00-8:00 pm to utilize the regular Field of Faith gathering and access people who may be there.

The volunteers and staff, spent the two full days exploring areas where individuals were known to frequent or hang out. The regular homeless hangout areas that were surveyed are as follows:

- Fisherman's Park
- George Little Park to Suwilaaks park
- The park at Lakelse and Emerson
- Behind and around the Bottle Depot and the Skeena Beer & Wine Store
- All of the downtown streets and alleys from Canadian Tire to the Old Skeena Bridge
- The bushes around and behind the Terrace Arena
- Kalum Street from Halliwell and along Graham Street
- Along the Skeena river and under the bridges by Walmart
- Behind Hanson Street in the bushes
- The bushes and trails along Lanfear hill
- Agar and Elks Park
- Bush behind Elks Hall
- The woods behind the hospital
- Ferry Island, and the railroad tracks by the Old Skeena Bridge
- Thornhill area
- Parking lot/woods behind Telus building

The volunteers and staff approached individuals in the above mentioned areas, as well as any locations in between whenever they came across individuals. They would introduce themselves, explained the Homeless Count, and their right to anonymity and asked if individuals were willing to participate.

Over the two days staff and volunteers connected with a total of 63 individuals,

- 40 males
- 21 females.
- On two surveys the gender was not specified

Similar to previous years, there is a discrepancy in the total individuals counted and the actual homelessness in the community. It remains difficult to identify and interview those who may be couch surfing, staying with friends or family, or who may have chosen to remain hidden so that they won't be forced out of their hiding/living spaces.

The results of the survey are as follows:

When people self-identified as homeless they were asked the same set of questions. A total of 63 surveys were completed:

- 40 (63.5%) were male
- 21 (33.3%) were female.
- 2 of the surveys the gender was not specified.

The survey results indicated that

- 46 (73%) of the respondents reported as Aboriginal
- 5 (8%) as Non-Aboriginal
- 12 (19%) were not specified.

When participants were asked "have you stayed in a shelter within the last 12 months?" Of the 63 individuals that were surveyed 50 answered that particular question

- 40 (64%) responded yes
- 10 (16%) responded no.
- 13 (20%) unspecified individuals

When asked "Where did you stay last night?" Of the 63 individuals surveyed

- 21 (33%) reported staying in the shelter/transition house
- 17 (27%) reported staying outside/vehicle
- 14 (22%) reported staying at someone else's place
- 11 (17%) individuals did not provide an answer to this question.

When individuals were asked the reason they did not stay in a shelter last night, the responses varied from person to person.

- 36 (57%) did not want to give a reason for why they did not want to access the shelters facilities
- 14 (22%) were able to stay with a friend or family
- 7 (11%) dislike the shelter
- 1 (1.5%) did not feel safe at the shelter
- 5 (8%) used other as their answer to this question.

When individuals were asked how long they have been homeless

- 9 (14%) reported 2 months or less
- 9 (14%) reported 6 months or less
- 3 (5%) reported 1 year or less
- 6 (9.5%) reported 2 years or less
- 12 (19%) reported 4 years or less
- 7 (11%) reported more than 4 years; (3 at 5 years, 2 at 8 years, 1 at 12 years, and 1 at 37 years)
- 17 were unspecified.

When individuals were asked to give their age or the year that they were born,

- 1 (1.5%) of the people was under the age of twenty
- 19 (30%) of the people reported being between 20 -30
- 13 (20.5%) reported being between 30-40
- 14 (22%) reported being between 40-50
- 8 (12.5%) reported being between 50-60
- 6 (9.5%) of the people reported they were over the age of 60
- 2 (3%) were unspecified.

When individuals were asked where they lived before they came to Terrace, there was an overwhelming number of different locations given.

Kincolith – 3	Dawson creek - 2
Prince George - 6	Kitwanga - 1
Kitimat - 2	Hazelton - 1
Prince Rupert - 5	Nass Valley - 1
New Aiyansh - 7	Gitsagukla - 1
Kamloops - 1	Hartley Bay - 1
Montreal - 1	Manitoba - 1
Haida Gwaii - 2	Smithers - 1
Kispiox - 1	Vancouver - 1
Campbell River - 1	Terrace - 5
Good Hope Lake - 1	Unspecified - 17
Burns Lake - 1	

Individuals were asked if they were new to Canada within the last 5 years,

- 50 (80%) people responded no
- 13 (20%) were unspecified.

Individuals were asked if they had any health problems, Medical Condition

- 16 (25%), Medical Condition
- 15 (24%), Physical Disability
- 30 (48%) Addiction
- 11 (17%) Mental Illness
- 23 (36.5%) of those people suffer from dual diagnoses.

Individual were asked if they know where to access public washrooms in the community?

- 46 (73%) answered yes
- 2 (3%) people answered no
- 15 (24%) were unspecified to the question.

Individuals were asked where they received their money from,

- 31 (49%) people get their money from welfare/income assistance
- 7 (11%) people get their income from disability benefits
- 9 (14%) individual gets their income from binning/bottles/panhandling
- 2 (3%) individuals get their money from Employment Insurance
- 4 (6%) people get their money from employment
- 3 (5%) people get their money from old age security, CPP or other pensions
- 2 (3%) individuals get income from their band
- 3 (5%) people get their income from family and friends
- 11 (17%) individuals get their money from multiple sources
- 4 (5%) of people receive no income
- 11 (17%) were unspecified.

Individuals were asked; what do you feel the one most important service would be to help people who are homeless? The most prominent answer was Affordable housing with

- 14 people stating that it was in dire need.
- The next most prominent answer with 8 people stating, more access to food, with a side note that there is nowhere to access food services on Saturdays.

Other suggestions were:

- year round damp shelter
- safe place to gather and camp
- laundry access, more volunteers
- housing for single people
- access to sharps containers
- care packages
- treatment center
- detox
- safe housing
- conflict training for shelter staff.

The Homeless Count for 2017 was successful with both volunteers and participants reporting having had positive experiences with the process. Majority of the participants in the survey were eager with the opportunity to complete the survey and share valuable information about their lives and the challenges they continually face while living in abject poverty in Terrace. Staff and

volunteers found this to be both educational and informative. Volunteers and staff took the time to share information that the participants asked for, and needed to know. The individuals surveyed were given the opportunity to share their voice about the challenges they continually face while living in abject poverty in Terrace.

Respectfully submitted by

TDCSS Homeless Outreach Worker

And 2017 Volunteers