

THE 2012
KAMLOOPS
AND MERRITT
HOMELESS
COUNT

a report prepared by the Kamloops Homeless Count Working Group with financial assistance from the City of Kamloops and The Government of Canada Homelessness Partnering Strategy















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MESSAGE FROM THE HOME-LESS COUNT WORKING GROUP

Homeless Counts are a valuable tool in the fight to end homelessness. Homeless Counts across North America contribute quantifiable data that helps us understand populations and track changes in demographics. Homeless Counts make it possible for us to measure change as we move towards finding long-term solutions to homelessness so that we know that our efforts are effective. Homeless Counts also make it possible for us to share data with other communities and compare methods and successes.

The 2012 Homeless Count has been a valuable opportunity to forge relationships in the community with help from the Kamloops Alliance Church, United Way, Kamloops Community Safety, the Tk'emlups Bylaw Officers, The Kamloops Working Group on Homelessness, and the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan. ASK Wellness Centre has been performing the count for several years and is happy to have the assistance of the community with this important project. One of the most important aspects of the count is being able to connect face-toface with people who often live in isolation. Volunteers on count day provide people who are sleeping outside and in shelters with a backpack full of winter essentials, but they also provide them with the idea that their community cares about them. When a volunteer is able to meet a homeless person and talk to them one-on-one it changes both of their lives, if only for a moment.

The Homeless Count Working Group would like to thank everyone who contributed time and resources to the count this year. We couldn't have done it without you!





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Project

The 2012 Kamloops and Merritt Homeless Count was a Point-in-Time count of homeless people and a survey of their characteristics. It was organized by the Kamloops Homeless Count Working Group, made up of individuals ASK Wellness Centre Kamloops, ASK Wellness Centre Merritt, Kamloops Alliance Church, Kamloops Community Safety, Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan, Tk'emlúps Indian Band Bylaw, and United Way Youth Club. Communities throughout North America conduct such counts to connect with people living on the street, track trends, raise public awareness, and inform policy and program development.

The Count was conducted over a 24-hour period from the evening of October 18th to the evening of October 19th. The methodology closely followed Counting Homelessness - Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities. This standardized set of procedures for collecting and reporting information allows communities throughout BC to compare and combine data on homelessness.

There were two components to the count: a shelter count, conducted in emergency shelters overnight from October 18th to 19th; and a street count, conducted by volunteers in public spaces during daylight hours on October 19th.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings

- 1. The total number of homeless people found was 99. Of this total, approximately 60% were male, 25% were female, and 15% were children under 19. This included both people "sleeping rough" (in public places) and those in emergency shelters.
- 2. Almost half of the homeless population had been homeless for between 1 and 6 months. Just over 20% of the population had been homeless for a year or more.
- **3.** Two-thirds of the homeless population have been in the community for a year or more.
- 4. Just over 40% of the homeless population stated that Kamloops was their last community of residence. Just over a quarter reported having last resided outside of BC.

- 5. Approximately 25% of the homeless population reported a medical condition, addiction, or mental illness.
- 6. Almost half of the homeless population gave "can't afford a place" as one of their reasons for being homeless. 35% also said they "can't find a place," and 25% said that "addiction" was one of the reasons for their homelessness.
- 7. 25% of those who were "sleeping rough" (in public places) said that the reason they were not staying in a shelter is that they were turned away.
- 8. One-third of shelter clients reported "disability benefits" as their main source of income.



INTRODUCTION

On October 18th and 19th, the Kamloops Homeless Count Working Group, with help from numerous organizations, businesses, and individual volunteers, conducted a 24-hour homeless count in Kamloops and Merritt.

A 24-hour count provides a snapshot of a community's homelessness population. It determines the minimum number of homeless people. Besides simply counting the number of homeless people found, a homeless count normally includes a survey component that provides valuable information about the characteristics of the homeless population in general.

The count in Kamloops and Merritt, like the counts done in other communities across the country, has several purposes. These include:

- to create public awareness
- to connect with people on the streets
- to track trends and measure change
- to inform program development
- to inform government policy

This was not the first count in our community. In Kamloops, ASK Wellness has organized an annual count since 2005. And in Merritt, a count has been done since 2010. But this is the first time that the count in our community has followed the Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities, prepared for the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General Housing Policy Branch. By following these guidelines, we can more easily compare the results with those in other communities, and with those in the future. Our count will also be acknowledged by BC Housing, and results may be combined with those of other communities to generate a more accurate picture of the provincial homelessness situation.

WHO WAS COUNTED?

Who was Counted?

Four categories of homeless people were counted:

people sleeping rough (in parks, on riverbanks, in streets and alleys, and other public or outdoor spaces)
people in emergency shelters (Extreme Weather Shelter was not operating Oct 18/19)
people in shelters
people in women's shelters

People in shelters were counted and surveyed by staff. Those sleeping rough were counted and surveyed by teams of volunteers who combed public spaces and visited service agencies known to be frequented by homeless people. Together, these groups of homeless people typify what is called "absolute homelessness." But there are other categories of homelessness that were not counted.

Who was not Counted?

The scope of this count did not include many people who fall into categories of homelessness besides "absolute homelessness."

For example, there are many people who can be classified as hidden homelessness. These are people who are living in temporary accommodations, which could mean with friends (couch-surfing), in treatment centres, youth centres, correctional facilities, campgrounds and hotels or motels. Counting the hidden homeless is a persistent problem. These people were not counted, but this group must be acknowledged when we consider the broader issue of homelessness.

This broader issue of homelessness also includes people who are at-risk of homelessness. Again, this group is outside the scope of this count, but it is important to understand that there are thousands of people with inadequate, inappropriate, unsafe, or unaffordable housing who are one step away from joining the official ranks of homelessness. This relates to what the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines as "core housing need." By this definition, shelter should cost a household no more than 30% of its income.





REPORT OUTLINE

This report includes all of the information generated through the count and the questionnaire used to collect data about the homeless population in Kamloops and Merritt. This is valuable information, but it is also important to understand the numbers and information in the proper context. After this introduction, readers will find the following sections, which address the questions listed:

Homelessness – What is it, what are its causes, and what are the effects? What is the current state of homelessness in Canada, in British Columbia, and in our region? What is the history of counting the homeless in Kamloops and Merritt? What is the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan?

Methodology – How was the count conducted? Why was it conducted in this way? What happened on count day? Who organized the count? Where were people counted and surveyed? What are the limitations of a homeless count such as this one?

Kamloops Results – What is the minimum number of homeless people in Kamloops? What are the characteristics of this population?

Merritt Results - What is the minimum number of homeless people in Merritt? What are the characteristics of this population?

Conclusions - What does it all mean?



What is homelessness?

When we say "homelessness," what exactly are we talking about?

The simple answer is that homelessness means not having a place to call home. But that's a bit too simple. What qualifies as a home? Can a motel, a tent on the riverbank, an emergency shelter, a cardboard box, a jail, or a hospital be called a home?

These questions are answered differently by different organizations, governments, and individuals. The very fact that there are many different definitions demonstrates the complexity of the issue. The Canadian Homeless Research Network summarizes the situation fairly well, stating that homelessness actually refers to a broad range of circumstances. At one end are people who clearly have no shelter. At the other end are those whose home is unstable, unsafe, unsuitable, or unaffordable.

Within this range of circumstances are different categories of people. One useful way to classify is to talk about people who are unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and at-risk of homelessness. People who are unsheltered are living in places not intended for living, such as parks and alleys. Those who are emergency sheltered are staying in shelters for people who are homeless, affected by family violence, or escaping natural disaster or destruction of home. People who are provisionally accommodated do not have

permanent shelter but are staying temporarily with other people, in interim housing, in institutional care, or in immigrant/refugee centres. And finally, those who are at-risk of homelessness are living in unstable situations and may at any time find themselves in the other categories.

The 2012 Homeless Count focused on the first two of the above categories: the unsheltered and the emergency sheltered. Under other definitions, these are the people who would be called "absolutely" homeless.

Regardless of which definitions are used, it's never easy to count homeless people. Homelessness is ever-changing. People move in and out of homelessness and in and out of different categories of homelessness. Some people experience homelessness only for one brief period of their lives. Others experience "episodic homelessness," alternating between periods of homelessness and stable housing. And others experience "chronic homelessness," which means they have ongoing difficulties maintaining housing.

For these reasons, a Point-in-Time homeless count can provide a "snapshot" of the homeless population and their characteristics on a given day. But it can't tell us the full story or the full extent of the problem.



The Causes of Homelessness

Each homeless individual experiences a unique set of circumstances. And although it may be difficult to determine the underlying cause of all homelessness, we can certainly point to several contributing factors. A homeless individual rarely experiences only one of these contributing factors. In some cases, several combine to push a person into homelessness. And once a person is homeless, another set of factors may keep a person there.

Poverty - Poverty is related to a person's inability to pay rent and meet basic needs. In 2010, British Columbia had a poverty rate of 11.5%, the highest in the country.

Addictions & Mental Health Issues – Addiction and mental health problems are prevalent among the homeless population. It has been estimated that anywhere between 30% and 60% of homeless people in Canada suffer from one or both of these issues. As can be seen in the Results section of this report, approximately 1/3 of homeless males had mental illness and/or addictions. For females, 1/4 reported addictions issues and almost 1/2 reported mental illness.

Abuse – Abuse, whether physical, sexual, or emotional, can make a living situation intolerable and push people into homelessness. A history of trauma may also increase a person's chances of developing mental health or substance use problems.

Lack of Affordable Housing – There is a serious shortage of rental units that fit the budget of the underemployed and unemployed. For a person on income assistance, the rental allowance of \$375 rarely covers the cost of a suitable apartment, if one is even available. Of the homeless people surveyed in the 2012 Count, 50% gave "can't afford a place" as one reason for their homelessness.

Cultural and Social Barriers – Cultural and social barriers are a reality for many of our country's immigrant and refugee populations. These barriers are also one of the reasons why 23% of BC's aboriginal people are homeless and a further 41% at risk of homelessness.

Lack of Support – Many homeless individuals, particularly those dealing with issues such as mental health and addictions or physical disabilities suffer from a lack of support. In the past few decades, many institutions for people with mental illness have been closed down. While community service agencies have attempted to respond to the needs of this population, their resources are stretched. There may also be a lack of support for those who are discharged from correctional facilities and hospitals. Some people may also have difficulty finding housing with the facilities they need need special facilities (wheelchair accessibility, for example).



Costs of homelessness

Homelessness comes at a very high cost, both social and financial.

To begin with, homelessness has devastating effects on people's health. Many homeless people have inadequate nutrition and hygiene and insufficient sleep or rest. The conditions in which they sleep may increase their risk of contracting infectious disease, and they may not have adequate access to medical help when they do get sick or injured. Homeless people may feel socially isolated and have difficulty finding the emotional and social support they need. The connection between homelessness and mental health problems has been welldocumented. For some, a mental illness has contributed to their homelessness. For others, homelessness has contributed to the development of mental health problems. These health costs may be incurred not only by homeless adults, but by their children as well.

Beyond the health costs, there are major social costs for those who are homeless. They suffer intolerance and stigma, either because of their homelessness itself or the contributing factors such as mental health issues or addictions. Intolerance can enhance the sense of isolation and desperation which many homeless people feel, and decrease their chances of changing their circumstances. Homeless children and youth

may encounter difficulties in school, which may reduce their chances of thriving in the future.

Homelessness, or failure to address the issue properly, also impacts the broader community and reduces quality of life for all. It influences public spaces and perceptions of safety. It may harm business and tourism. It puts undue strain on many types of services, including hospitals, which we all rely on, and correctional facilities, which the public helps fund. And it undermines the idea of a community where everyone has the chance to thrive.

The strain on services, and the financial cost to the public, is significant. Numerous studies have tried to estimate the exact cost of services (emergency and non-emergency) that accompany homelessness. Estimates range from \$55,000 to \$134,000 per individual per year. And the longer a person remains homeless, or the more episodes of homelessness an individual experiences, the higher the costs of health services and potential incarceration.

These costs add up very quickly. In a 2007 article called "Shelter-Homelessness in a growth economy: Canada's 21st century paradox," Gordon Laird estimated the total annual cost of homelessness in Canada at 4.5 to 6 billion dollars. This total was based on the most conservative estimates of the total number of homeless people in Canada.



Homelessness in Canada, British Columbia, and Kamloops

How prevalent is homelessness in Canada? We have already mentioned the costs based on conservative estimates. Those estimates put the number of homeless people in Canada at 150,000. Other estimates come in as high as 300,000 people. Regardless, the number is significant. In 1999, the Federal Government acknowledged the problem by establishing the National Homelessness Initiative. This body funded housing and services for the homeless across Canada until 2007. In that year, the NHI was replaced by the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. which now allocates 387.9 million dollars every year for services and programs to combat homelessness. \$5,000 in HPI funding went toward the 2012 Kamloops Homeless Count.

In British Columbia, communities face many of the same challenges as those in the rest of the country. However, BC has the highest overall poverty rate and the highest child poverty rate in the country. Our province also has a relatively high rate of aboriginal homelessness. It has been estimated that 41% of BC's Aboriginal people are at risk of homelessness and that 23% are absolutely homeless.

The overall provincial picture of homelessness is impacted greatly by the situation in Vancouver. The most recent homeless count in Vancouver estimates a minimum of 1.296 sheltered and 306 unsheltered homeless individuals. While the 2012 total of 1.602 is only slightly higher than the 2011 figure of 1,581, many advocates are alarmed by the fact that the unsheltered number is almost twice as high as that of 154 in 2011. Vancouver is a port city, with relatively mild winters and extremely high housing costs A Vancouver Sun article in May of 2012 reports that "only 27 percent of singleoccupancy rooms are being rented at the welfare rate of \$375 per month, meaning nearly 75% of the city's cheapest form of housing remains unaffordable for those on welfare."

Several other communities in the interior have attempted to gauge their homeless situations. The latest homeless count in Kelowna revealed over 300 people living on the street and in shelters. And a 2010 count in Nelson put the street homeless population in that community at 40.



Homeless Count 2012 Kamloops & Merritt BC

Now what about Kamloops? What factors make our city unique when it comes to the issue of homelessness?

For one, Kamloops serves as a regional hub. People from throughout the Thompson, Nicola and Cariboo regions come to Kamloops for services, employment, and other opportunities. Kamloops has a large hospital, a university, an urban reserve, and a regional correctional facility. These institutions and services may serve to increase the number of non-permanent residents in our city. And that, in turn, may exacerbate homelessness.

The issue has not gone unnoticed, and the 2012 homeless count is by no means the first. In 2005, a homeless count was conducted by The Kamloops Community Committee on Homelessness and reported by TRUE consulting. From 2006 to 2011, a vearly homeless count was organized by ASK Wellness and their outreach workers, who are very familiar with the homeless population in Kamloops. This 2012 Count built on the knowledge and experience of the past seven years. It has expanded the scope of the count, involving the Kamloops Homeless Count Working Group and adopting standardized provincial guidelines and procedures for counting homelessness.

In Kamloops, the fight against homelessness hasn't stopped at attempts to count homeless individuals. In 2009, the Changing the Face of Poverty Group, brought together people from all sectors of the community, including business, labour,

government, Aboriginal groups, faith-based groups, non-profit agencies, community and neighbourhood groups, work centres, for-profit community service organizations, and private landlords. Their purpose was to develop a Homelessness Action Plan, which aims to eradicate homelessness in Kamloops by 2015 Hundreds of communities across North America and Europe have developed such plans. These plans represent concerted community efforts to tackle the issues head-on.

The Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan lays out six goals in the fight against homelessness. These goals are as follows:

- to assess the local housing situation, enhance the stock of acceptable housing, and respond to changes in the housing market
- to provide greater housing stability and reduce evictions
- to connect people with the help they need
- to build the basic skills that people need to maintain housing and independence
- to improve fairness, accessibility, and responsiveness
- and to help people find and maintain employment

Shortly after completion of the plan, a Coordinator was hired to ensure that the Plan's strategies were carried out. Having a dedicated coordinator also helped the 2012 Homeless Count become broader and more ambitious. What follows is a detailed description of this count.





The 2012 Kamloops Homeless Count was a "Point-in-Time Count." This means it provides a 24-hour snapshot of the homeless population in our community. It provides a low estimate, or minimum number, of homeless individuals, as well as information regarding this population's characteristics. There were two main aspects of the count: a shelter count, done overnight at emergency shelters; and a street count, conducted by volunteers in the streets, alleys, and parks and along riverbanks during the daytime.

The count followed the guidelines laid out in Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities. Using a standardized set of guidelines will allow us to compare results with other communities. Conducting the count with the same protocols in the future will also allow us to compare numbers and characteristics from year to year.

The 2012 Count sought to improve upon previous counts in the following ways:

- to expand on the number and variety of supplies offered to homeless individuals
- to expand the volunteer base leading up to and on count day
- to expand the shelter portion of the count
- to produce a comprehensive report to be made available to the public

Key Partnerships

The 2012 Homeless Count was truly a community effort. The effort was spearheaded by the Kamloops Homeless Count Working Group, made up of individuals from ASK Wellness Centre Kamloops, ASK Wellness Centre Merritt, Kamloops Alliance Church, Kamloops Community Safety, Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan, Tk'emlúps Indian Band Bylaw, and United Way Youth Club. The group met every two weeks beginning on July 17th to plan the Count. This group collaborated with the Changing the Face of Poverty group and received funding through the City of Kamloops under the Federal **Government's Homelessness Partnering** Strategy. Staff at ASK Wellness and members of the United Way Youth Club donated a lot of time to organizing sponsorship for the count while others dedicated their time to communications, logistics, and publicity.



Homeless Count 2012 Kamloops & Merritt BC

Publicity

A count such as this depends on a good publicity. The general population needs to know that a count is being done and why it is being done. A variety of media outlets helped to publicize the count, including CBC, CFJC-TV, the Echo, Kamloops Daily News, Kamloops This Week, Radio NL, social media and the websites of all our partner agencies.

Homeless people themselves also need to know that a count is being conducted. Many willingly take part in a count and survey and can be on the lookout for volunteer teams. To this end, service agencies used word of mouth to publicize the count.

Timing

The count in Kamloops was conducted over a 24-hour period, from approximately 9:00 pm on Thursday, October 18th to 9:00 pm on Friday, October 19th.

The Merritt Homelessness count was conducted over a period of several hours on Friday, October 19, 2012 starting at 8:30 am and ending later in the afternoon of the same day.

At this time of year, with winter approaching and temperatures dropping, much of the transient population has returned to their more permanent homes or moved on to the coast. This allows the count to more accurately reflect the more permanent Kamloops homeless population.

Weekdays were chosen in the hopes of increasing volunteer participation. The 2011 count was conducted on a weekend, and organizers noted that this negatively impacted the number of volunteers who came out to take part in the street count.

The 18th and 19th of the month fell between income assistance cheques. Patterns of service use typically change within a few days that income assistance is received. Doing the count mid-month helped organizers predict the movement and location of homeless people more accurately.

In Kamloops, the weather forecast for the 19th called for rain, which could have made finding homeless individuals more difficult. However, there was little or no precipitation on the day of the count. It is not believed that weather impacted the count in any significant way.

Merritt experienced higher than average precipitation the night before the count and periodically throughout the day of the count, making an impact on the number of homelessness on the streets



Counting & Surveying

There were two aspects to the 2012 Homeless Count. The first was the actual count of homeless individuals. This was done during the shelter count overnight from October 18th to 19th and in public places during the daytime of the 19th. The count produced an estimate of the minimum number of homeless people in Kamloops for the 24-hour period.

Shelters were asked to complete a form indicating the number of men, women, and children sheltered on count day, the number of people turned away because the facility was full or the person was ineligible, and any unusual circumstances that may have affected the count.

The count was also conducted in public places by teams of volunteers, who sought out potentially homeless people and asked them screening questions. The first question was "Have you already spoken to someone wearing a tag like this today?" This question

was designed to avoid double-counting. Next, volunteers offered a backpack of supplies and asked if they could have 5 minutes of the person's time to ask some questions about their situation. The backpack was given regardless of whether someone agreed to answer questions.

The second aspect of the count was the survey or enumeration. This anonymous survey provided information about homeless individuals, ranging from the duration of homelessness to the experience of barriers such as mental health issues and addictions. It also included demographic information such as age, gender, and ethnicity. For the shelter count, staff completed enumeration forms on behalf of their clients. For the street count, volunteers surveyed those counted individuals who agreed to participate.

Enumeration Tools

The enumeration form for the shelter and street counts overlapped in many areas. Both included the following questions / information:



Homeless Count 2012 Kamloops & Merritt BC

Enumeration Tools

The enumeration form for the shelter and street counts overlapped in many areas. Both included the following questions / information:

- gender
- year of birth
- number of children under 19 (at shelters and transition houses, this meant the number with the client on count day)
- how long the person has been without a place of his/her own
- how long the person has lived in Kamloops in what community the person last had his/her own place to live
- medical conditions, addictions, mental illness, and physical disabilities
- main reasons for not having a place to live
- ethnicity
- aboriginal, First Nations, or Metis
- if Aboriginal, does the person reside on or off reserve
- main sources of income

The shelter enumeration forms also included the following:

who is the person with?

does the person have a place to live when he/she leaves the facility?

The enumeration form for public places also included the following:

does the person have a place where he/she pays rent?

where did the person stay last night? why did the person not stay in a shelter last night?

who lives with the person?

The Working Group drew these questions from the Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities, adding the question about on or off reserve for Aboriginal respondents.

Participation in the enumeration was voluntary. A homeless individual would still be accounted for, with or without participating in the survey.

Volunteers

The success of the 2012 count depended on the work of over 70 volunteers. Approximately 65 people helped with the street count, while several others helped to stuff backpacks and two volunteers from Starbucks served coffee to the volunteer teams. These volunteers were recruited through the network of social service agencies as well as through television, radio and newspaper ads, posters, discussions with agencies, the Homelessness Action Plan website, and social media. Volunteers were asked to sign up early so that they could take advantage of training sessions.



Training sessions were held on the evenings of October 11th and October 14th in Kamloops and on October 16th in Merritt. Conducted by an outreach worker from ASK Wellness and a constable with the RCMP, these training sessions instructed volunteers on how to approach homeless people in public places, how to identify themselves, to be sensitive to body language and voice, and to call 911 if an individual was unresponsive or injured. While it is important to teach volunteers about safety, trainers are also sure to mention that no one has ever had a safety issue in the history of the count.

Count Day Procedures

The Count Day procedures were guided by members of the Kamloops Homeless Count Working Group. The ASK Wellness Centres in both Kamloops and Merritt functioned as headquarters for the 24-hour period of the count.

The Shelter Count

Shelters were contacted well before the actual count day to confirm their participation. Members of the Working Group dropped off information forms as well as enumeration forms for staff to fill out on count day. Volunteers themselves did not enter the shelters out of respect for confidentiality and security of those staying there.

The following shelters participated:
Y Women's Shelter
Emerald Centre
Journey's Into Tomorrow (Merritt)

On the morning of October 19th, shelter information sheets and enumeration forms were collected by members of the Working Group.

The Street Count

The "street count" was designed to count homeless individuals in public places, either at their sleeping quarters or at services agencies and other public locations. These locations included riverbanks, bottle depots, streets and alleys, bus shelters, and the food bank. Many of the locations were chosen because they are "known" places where homeless people sleep or congregate. Outreach workers and service agency staff assisted in identifying such locations.



Beginning at approximately 7:00 am on October 19th, volunteers began assembling behind ASK Wellness Centre to form volunteer teams of two to four people each. These teams were taken into the Centre to be briefed and assigned a route. The ASK Wellness outreach worker used a wall map to lay out walking routes. Routes were assigned based on priority, comfort level of volunteer teams, type of footwear, and familiarity. One person on each team was given a "Volunteer" badge to identify him/her as a part of the 2012 Count and a package of enumeration forms. Teams were also told what they might find in each area, such as known encampments. When a volunteer team returned, they reported their experience, handed in the enumeration forms, and were either assigned another route or finished for the day.

Each volunteer team was given several back-packs to be handed out to homeless individuals. The backpacks given to the homeless contained several essential items, including a hooded sweatshirt, toque, mitts or gloves, socks, toothbrush and toothpaste, underwear, snacks, shampoo, deodorant, water, and food coupons. Backpacks specifically for women also included feminine hygiene products.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the days following October 19th, all of the shelter and transition house information as well as all the data on the enumeration forms was entered into spreadsheets. The spreadsheet data was used to determine totals for the count itself as well as to generate the information tables that appear in the Results section of this report. Research for the report was conducted for several weeks leading up to count day, and the report itself was written in the two weeks following October 19th.

Limitations

It is very difficult to count all the homeless people in a community in a given 24-hour period. For this reason, it is important to remember that the total number of individuals counted represents a minimum or low estimate of the total homeless population. So why exactly is it so difficult?



Finding Homeless People - Despite the knowledge of outreach workers and agency staff, it is not always possible to find homeless people. In fact, many individuals may deliberately avoid people as a survival strategy. Homeless individuals staying on private property may have also been missed, as volunteer teams restricted their search to public places.

Disappearance of Some Known Camps – In the week prior to the Count, several known homeless camps were dismantled. This meant that outreach workers were unsure about exactly where these homeless people relocated.

Voluntary Nature - Homeless individuals had a choice whether to participate or not. They may have been counted as homeless, but they may have declined to take part in the survey. Many who did take part in the survey did not wish to answer some questions.

Volunteer Participation – Volunteer hours were donated primarily in the morning, which means that some of the homeless population that emerged in the afternoon or evening may not have been counted.

Street Count Times – Many public routes were not assigned to volunteer teams until mid-morning, which means that some individuals in known homeless camps had already headed out for the day. These people may or may not have been counted at other public places.

The Hidden Homeless – The scope of this count included people staying in emergency shelters and transition houses, as well as those sleeping in public places. However, the truly homeless population (according to broader definitions) includes those who are staying temporarily with friends, acquaintances, or family, in hotels or motels, and in time-limited residential programs such as the Phoenix Centre Detox facility. The difficulty of counting the hidden homeless is well-documented. That didn't stop the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia from attempting to gauge hidden homelessness in Prince George, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nelson, and Nanaimo in 2010. According to their estimates, there were as many as 1,167 hidden homeless people in Kamloops throughout the year.



Kamloops

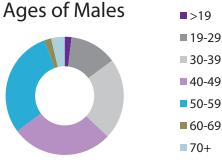
1. Total Number of Homeless People 99

1.1 total number of homeless males **59**1.2 number of males in each age category

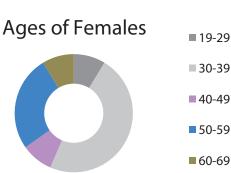
<19 1
19-29 7
30-39 12
40-49 15
50-59 16
60-69 1
70+ 2

1.3 total number of females **24**1.4 number of females in each category

Ages of Fermi



1.4 number of females in each category <19 0 19-29 2 30-39 11 40-49 2 50-59 6 60-69 2 70+ 0



1.5 total number of children under 19 years **9**

Details on children not included in profiles

7 individuals with no gender recorded

2. Length of Time Homeless

9 not answered
2.1 males

less than 1 week

1 week to less than 1 mo.

1 mo. to less than 6 mo.

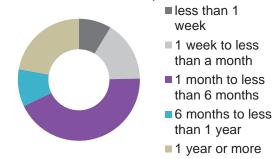
6 mo. to less than 1 year

1 year or more

2.2 females

nales	
less than 1 week	1
1 week to less than 1 mo.	6
1 mo. to less than 6 mo.	10
6 mo. to less than 1 year	1
1 year or more	4

Length of Homelessness (men & women combined)



3. Length of Time in the Community

9 not answered

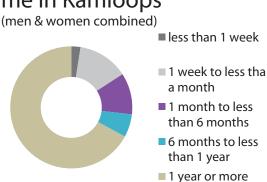
3.1 males

less than 1 week	2
1 week to less than 1 mo.	6
1 mo. to less than 6 mo.	7
6 mo. to less than 1 year	5
1 year or more	39

3.2 females

less than 1 week	0
1 week to less than 1 mo.	5
1 mo. to less than 6 mo.	2
6 mo. to less than 1 year	0
1 year or more	16

Length of Time in Kamloops



4. Community of Last Residence

15 not answered

4.1 males

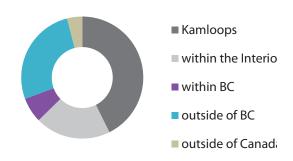
Kamloops	18
within the Interior	12
in BC	3
out of BC	16
out of Canada	2

4.2 females

Kamloops	14
within the Interior	3
in BC	2
out of BC	4
out of Canada	1

Community of Last Residence

(men & women combined)



5. Health Conditions

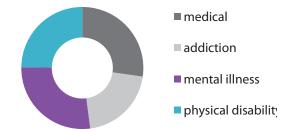
17 not answered - multiple responses recorded

5.1 males

medical	22
addiction	19
mental illness	22
physical disability	21

Health Conditions

(men & women combined)



5.2 females

medical	11
addiction	6
mental illness	11
physical disability	9

6. Reasons for Homelessness

10 not answered - multiple responses recorded

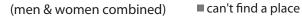
6.1 males

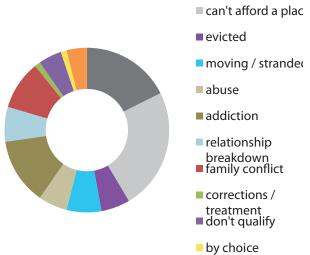
can't find a place	23
can't afford a place	30
evicted	8
moving/stranded	5
abuse	2
addiction	19
relationship breakdown	6
family conflict	11
from corrections/treatment	2
don't qualify	3
by choice	2
other	6

6.2 females

liaies	
can't find a place	8
can't afford a place	12
evicted	2
moving/stranded	7
abuse	8
addiction	4
relationship breakdown	6
family conflict	6
from corrections/treatment	0
don't qualify	5
by choice	0
other	1

Reason for Homelessness





other

7. Reasons for not Staying in a Shelter Facility

For those sleeping rough only - 16 not answered - multiple responses recorded

7.1 males

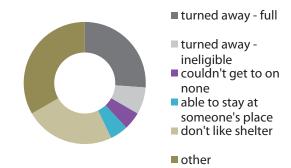
turned away - shelter full	10
turned away - ineligible for facility	3
couldn't get to one/none in the area	1
don't know about them	0
able to stay at someone's place	2
don't like shelter	9
other	11

7.2 females

turned away - shelter full	1
turned away - ineligible for facility	0
couldn't get to one/none in the area	1
don't know about them	0
able to stay at someone's place	0
don't like shelter	1
other	3

Reason for Not Staying at a Shelter

(men & women combined)



8. Living With

13 not answered - multiple responses recorded

8.1 males

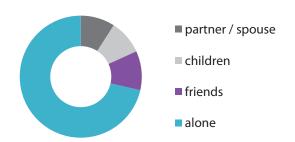
partner/spouse	6
children	0
friend(s)	4
pet	0
alone	44

8.2 females

partner/spouse	1
children	7
friend(s)	4
pet	0
alone	11

Living With

(men & women combined)



9. Ethnicity

13 not answered - multiple answers recorded

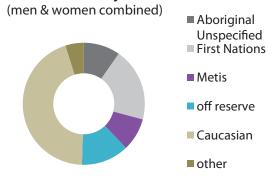
9.1 males

Aboriginal Unspecified	10
First Nations	14
Metis	6
on reserve	0
off reserve	8
Caucasian	35
other	2

9.2 females

Aboriginal unspecified	0
First Nations	6
Metis	3
on reserve	0
off reserve	5
Caucasian	11
Other	3

Ethnicity





10. Main Source of Income

Shelter Clients Only - 55 not answered - multiple responses recorded

10.1 males

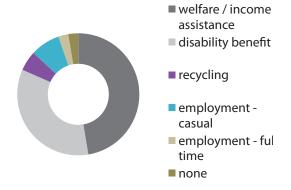
Welfare/Income assistance	7
Disability Benefit	9
Employment Insurance	0
Pension	0
panhandling	0
recycling	2
employment - casual	3
employment – full time	1
other	0
none	0

10.2 females

71114100	
Welfare/Income assistance	11
Disability Benefit	4
Employment Insurance	0
Pension	0
panhandling	0
recycling	0
employment - casual	0
employment – full time	0
other	0
none	1

Source of Income





11. Place to Live Upon Discharge

Shelter Clients only - 62 not answered

11.1 males

yes 3 no 8

11.2 females

Yes 7 No 9

Place to Live Upon Discharge From Shelter

(men & women combined)



Merritt

1. Total Number of Homeless People 15

- 1.1 total number of homeless males 10
- 1.2 number of males in each age category

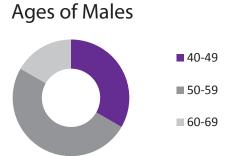
4 not answered

 40-49
 2
 13%

 50-59
 3
 20%

 60-69
 1
 6%

- 1.3 total number of females 4
- 1.4 number of females in each category



Ages of Females



- 1.5 total number of dependent children under 19 years 0
 - 1 individuals with no gender recorded

2. Length of Time Homeless

5 not answered

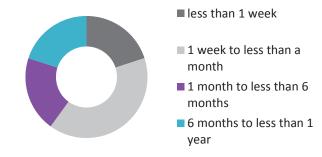
2.1 males		
less than 1 week	1	6%
1 week to less than 1 mo.	2	13%
1 mo. to less than 6 mo.	1	6%
6 mo. to less than 1 year	2	13%

2.2 females

less than 1 week	1	6%
1 week to less than 1 mo.	2	13%
1 mo. to less than 6 mo.	1	6%

Length of Homelessness

(men & women combined)





3. Length of Time in the Community

6 not answered

3.1 males

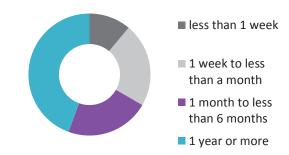
1 week to less than 1 mo. 1 6% 1 month to less than 6 mo. 1 6% 1 year or more 4 26%

3.2 females

Less than 1 week 1 6% 1 week to less than 1 mo. 1 6% 1 month to less than 6 mo. 1 6%

Length of Time in Merritt

(men & women combined)



4. Community of Last Residence

2 not answered - multiple responses recorded

4.1 males

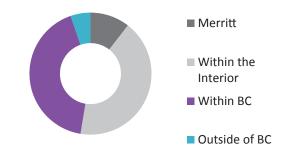
Kamloops 1 6% within the Interior 7 46% in BC 7 46%

4.2 females

Kamloops 1 6% within the Interior 1 6% in BC 1 6% out of BC 1 6%

Community of Last Residence

(men & women combined)



5. Health Conditions

2 not answered - multiple responses recorded

5.1 males

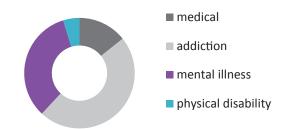
medical 2 13% addiction 7 46% mental illness 7 46% physical disability 1 6%

5.2 females

medical 1 6% addiction 3 20%

Health Conditions

(men & women combined)



6. Reasons for Homelessness

5 not answered - multiple responses recorded

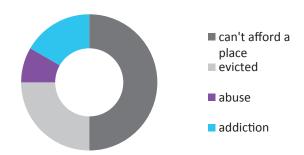
6.1 males		
can't afford a place	4	27%
evicted	2	13%

6.2 females

can't afford a place	2	13%
evicted	1	6%
abuse	1	6%
addiction	2	13%

Reason for Homelessness

(men & women combined)



7. Reasons for not Staying in a Shelter Facility

1 not answered – multiple responses recorded, All participants recorded answered that the reason they are not in a shelter is because there isn't one in Merritt

7.1 males

couldn't get to one/none in the area 10 66%

7.2 females

couldn't get to one/none in the area 4 27%

8. Living With

2 not answered - multiple responses recorded

8.1 males

alone 9 60%

8.2 females

friend(s) 2 13% alone 1 6%

Living With

(men & women combined)



9. Ethnicity

4 not answered - multiple answers recorded

9.1 males

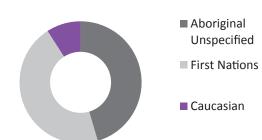
Aboriginal Unspecified 5 33% First Nations 2 13%

9.2 females

First Nations 3 20% Caucasian 1 6%

Ethnicity

(men & women combined)





10. Main Source of Income

2 not answered – multiple responses recorded All participants recorded reported Welfare / Income Assistance as their main source of income

10.1 males
Welfare/Income Assistance 9 60%

10.2 females

Welfare/Income Assistance 4 27%





CONCLUSIONS

The 2012 Kamloops and Merritt Homeless Count was a very important step in understanding and responding to homelessness in our communities. While a count such as this cannot capture the full extent of homelessness, it does provide an accurate point-in-time snapshot of the issue. The information in this report can be used to raise public awareness and to guide policy and program development. By following the standardized provincial guidelines for homeless counts, the numbers in our community can be easily compared and combined with those in other communities. These guidelines will be used in future counts, which will allow us to make year-to-year comparisons and track trends and changes in the homeless population. Perhaps future counts can be organized at the same time for the entire province or country.

In the future, it may also be wise to attempt to gauge the extent of hidden homelessness in Kamloops and Merritt. The hidden homeless often go unaccounted for, but understanding their circumstances can help us close the front door to homelessness. Prevention is key, and if we can also improve the lives of those at-risk of homelessness, we can look forward to a community where everyone has the chance to thrive.

