



**Cowichan Region Homelessness Report
February 2014**

*A Report of the
Regional Affordable Housing Directorate*

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FORWARD

The Regional Affordable Housing Directorate (RAHD) of Social Planning Cowichan would like to thank Jane Worton and Greg Awai of Queenswood Consulting Group for their care and dedicated effort in undertaking the Cowichan homelessness count. Jane's relevant research and project management experience, which included participating in the design of *Counting Homelessness - Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities* and the 2007 Homeless Count in Greater Victoria, proved invaluable for this project. Greg and Jane coordinated a large number of community volunteers in order to undertake this challenging and mammoth task throughout our large and very rural region. We would also like to thank the many volunteers and other supporters who assisted in this project. The study results will provide local and senior levels of governments, community agencies, RAHD and all concerned parties with solid data to support our ongoing efforts to address the growing need for affordable housing in the Cowichan Region.

"I'm living in the RV park, I get cheap rent because I help out around the park. My legs are bad so I can't do too much. I only get \$377 out of \$510 from Social Services because they take pension off my assistance. I can't afford new clothes so I wear the same things every day. I can't afford good food so I come here to the food bank more often than I would like. I feel ashamed."

(Man, early sixties, Duncan)
excerpt from the *Inadequate Shelter* report.

Social Planning Cowichan has been working on issues related to homelessness and affordable housing since 2006. The report *Inadequate Shelter in the Cowichan Valley* prepared at that time began to explore the nature, scope and causes of inadequate shelter in the Cowichan Valley. Since that time RAHD has been operating as a sub-committee of Social Planning Cowichan and continues to do a lot of work around issues related to homelessness and affordable housing. Resolving affordable housing and homelessness in the Cowichan Region to make ours a more sustainable and resilient region requires ongoing efforts by many individuals and agencies. Social Planning Cowichan and the Housing Directorate value the energy and efforts provided by many people who continue to work towards creative solutions in this challenging area.

Jenn George – Chair Social Planning Cowichan
Brigid Reynolds – Co-Chair of RAHD
Ann Matheson – Co-Chair of RAHD

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The Cowichan Homeless Count could also not have been possible without the hundreds of volunteer hours of local residents and service providers in planning and conducting the count.

Social Planning Cowichan would also like to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following local businesses, agencies and individuals who provided food, space, equipment, or vouchers to assist with the Count: Bethel Tabernacle Church, Just Jakes, Lake Cowichan Community Services, Cobble Hill Country Grocer, Thrifty Foods, Duncan United Church, Island Savings, Community Kitchens, Jim Holland, Sandy McPherson, and True Grain Bread.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the February 2014 Cowichan Homelessness survey was to get a current estimate of the number of people who are living in “absolute” homelessness, the various ways homelessness is showing up in our community, and a window into the demographics and needs of those who are homeless in the Cowichan. This information will allow us to strengthen the case for governments and service providers to take further action to address homelessness. The Cowichan Homeless survey included participants from three groups:

1. **People who were absolutely homeless:** sleeping outside, in tents, sheds, barns or cars, or in shelters or transition houses or temporarily housed in a motel with a voucher from a government agency.
2. **People who were relatively homeless:** staying with friends or family (sleeping on couches or with permission and rent-free in unheated, uninsulated structures), temporarily sheltered in a holding cell, or in the hospital but with no fixed address.
3. **People who were precariously housed:** paying for temporary, insecure or unstable housing situations, including overcrowded housing or unaffordable rents, given their income.

From February 16 to 18 a homeless count and survey was conducted throughout the Cowichan Region. With the help of community service agencies and 40 volunteers 240 people were surveyed, 58 of those individuals were considered to be absolutely homeless.

Some examples of stories of loss of housing include:

- *Abusive relationship with an addict.*
- *Lost home in a fire.*
- *Lost job.*
- *Landlord increased the rent.*
- *No ID or housing references.*
- *Lost place when took seasonal work.*
- *Partner died.*
- *Released from psychiatric treatment.*
- *Can't find a place and not on Income Assistance.*
- *Evicted after broken window.*
- *Kicked off disability.*
- *Ran out of savings after retraining.*
- *Evicted from illegal suite when landlord died.*
- *Injured on the job last year – took 3 months to get EI. My landlord couldn't wait.*

Homelessness exists across the Cowichan region – not only in Duncan / North Cowichan.

Most surveys were completed in Duncan / North Cowichan (76%), where the majority of social services are concentrated. However, in each area of the Cowichan people experiencing either absolute or relative homelessness were surveyed, and service providers told of additional people who were not surveyed but were known by them to be homeless at the time we were conducting the count.

Absolute Homelessness	Relative Homelessness	Precarious Housing
<p>Where are they staying? Emergency shelter - Transition House - Motel with housing voucher - Car, tent or abandoned building - Outside</p> <p>How many? 58 counted 100+ known by service providers</p> <p>Demographics 79% Men; 21% Women Average age 49 26% Aboriginal</p> <p>52% Medical condition 36% Addiction 27% Mental health condition 40% Disability</p> <p>46% on Income Assistance/ PWD 24% working</p> <p>60% homeless for 1 year + 61% in Cowichan for 5 years +</p> <p>Lost housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% Couldn't afford rent 24% Addiction 18% Relationship breakdown 16% Family conflict 16% Eviction 14% Abuse 12% Health condition <p>What would help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% Affordable housing 55% Less discrimination 65% Outreach worker 44% Higher income 46% Damage deposit 40% References 	<p>Where are they staying? With friends or family – Temporarily sheltered at hospitals or holding cells</p> <p>How many? 76 counted 90+ receiving Income Assistance/PWD with no fixed address*</p> <p>Demographics 58% Men; 42% Women Average age 42 59% Aboriginal</p> <p>21% Medical condition 34% Addiction 34% Mental health condition 32% Disability</p> <p>53% on Income Assistance/ PWD 17% working</p> <p>59% homeless for 1 year + 81% in Cowichan for 5 years +</p> <p>Lost housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67% Couldn't afford rent 19% Addiction 17% Relationship breakdown 13% Family conflict 13% Eviction 9% Health condition <p>What would help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 73% Affordable housing 58% Less discrimination 54% Outreach worker 56% Higher income 20% Damage deposit 24% References <p>* Ministry of Social Development data</p>	<p>Where are they staying? Paying rent but living in unaffordable, overcrowded or inadequate housing, including buildings not meant for residence.</p> <p>How many? 125 counted 2,000+ estimated in Core Housing Need (housing is unaffordable, inadequate or unsuitable)*</p> <p>Demographics 58% Men; 42% Women Average age 48 24% Aboriginal</p> <p>53% Medical condition 28% Addiction 48% Mental health condition 47% Disability</p> <p>52% on Income Assistance/ PWD 23% working</p> <p>71% had once been homeless; 47% for 1 year + 78% in Cowichan for 5 years +</p> <p>Housing Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 71% Housing is unaffordable 18% Overcrowded housing 11% Unheated home 29% Landlord discrimination 20% Credit rating 9% No references <p>* Core Housing Need projection for 2011 by BC Non-Profit Housing Association</p>

WHY A HOMELESS COUNT?

Homeless counts have become increasingly widespread as communities work to increase awareness of and validate further action to reduce homelessness. Count data is used in policy development, planning, and prioritizing services to address the needs of people who are homeless. Homeless counts present not only an estimate of the number of homeless people in a region, but also insight into the local factors contributing to homelessness and the resources needed to assist people to transition from being homeless to being independently, safely and securely housed.

The purpose of the Homeless Survey was to get a current estimate of the numbers of people experiencing absolute homelessness, the various ways homelessness is showing up in the Cowichan region, and a window into the demographics and needs of those who are homeless in the region. This information can strengthen the case for governments and service providers to take further action to address homelessness.

Specific objectives include:

- Estimating the number of people who are absolutely homeless;
- Understanding more about the demographics of people who were surveyed or enumerated during the count (who is homeless, and what have their experiences of homelessness been);
- Investigating whether homelessness is experienced across the Cowichan region; and,
- Developing a baseline of data to identify long-term trends in the number and profile of people who are homeless.

DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness extends far beyond those visible on the street. Less visible forms of homelessness include people living in tents, sheds, cars, staying in emergency shelters, or couch surfing with friends and families. There are other people in our community living in an inadequate housing situation, where health and safety standards may not be met, or without safe and adequate heat and electricity. All of these situations increase mental, physical and emotional stress and risks for those individuals experiencing them – and put them at risk of homelessness.

As an overarching definition, we used the Canadian Homelessness Research Network's definition of homelessness:¹

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

¹ Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012). Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Available at www.homelesshub.ca

The BC Government developed a standardized methodology for communities to use in conducting homelessness counts. This provided guidance on how to do the count and who to count – building on the experience of many communities across Canada. RAHD chose to follow the approach of the guide, and supplement it by our community’s knowledge of those who are homeless and the best strategies to counting homelessness in our community.

The standardized methodology focuses on counting those who are described as absolutely homeless: sleeping outside, in tents, sheds, barns or cars, or in shelters or transition houses or temporarily housed in a motel with a voucher from a government agency. This was also the primary focus of our count – we hoped to have as accurate a number as possible of those who are absolutely homeless in our community, but it was still only an estimate.

However, we also surveyed people who were described as relatively homeless – those sleeping on couches of friends or family, temporarily sheltered in a holding cell or in the hospital but with no permanent address. We did not expect to get an accurate count of people who are relatively homeless; however, we interviewed as many people living in these circumstances as possible to have a better picture of their experience.

Finally, we also interviewed people who were living in unstable housing situations and who indicated that they were experiencing challenges with housing. They might be living in situations some might consider homeless – but they themselves do not – such as in an unheated and uninsulated trailer or boat. People in these situations were paying rent, site or moorage fees. Some lived in places where there were not enough bedrooms or beds for those who live there. By interviewing some people in these housing situations, we developed a better understanding of housing needs and factors which contribute to homelessness. We were not trying to count the numbers of people in this group and we provided a separate but similar set of questions for people who were precariously housed.

Our definition is expanded over the one used in the *Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities*². However, through the Count we collected and reported on standardized, comparable data, and also collected data describing a wider set of experiences of homelessness.

² Policy and Practice Branch, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Ministry of Labour and Citizens’ Services. *Counting Homelessness – Guidelines for a Standardized Method for British Columbia Communities*. Victoria: Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General Housing Policy Branch.

METHODOLOGY

The Cowichan Homeless Survey was primarily conducted over a 48 hour period, from February 16 to 18, 2014. Two exceptions included a count in Chemainus on February 14, to better match their community's key service day, and surveys conducted by a youth serving agency whose clients do not regularly come into their office, and who were followed up with individually over a two week period.

The standardized methodology advises communities to conduct the survey during late fall, winter or early spring as cold/wet weather shelter spaces are in operation, and shelter facilities commonly operate at maximum capacity during the poor weather months. It is also more likely during cooler weather that homeless people who sleep rough will need to visit service locations to seek some temporary relief. The survey was set in the week before income assistance cheques, with the expectation that this might increase the numbers of people at service locations, as funds would be tightest for those accessing government assistance.

A night count was used to identify those who were in emergency overnight accommodation, in accommodation for the homeless, in women's shelters, and those who were due to be released from institutions. Night count sites included:

- Warmland House – Emergency Shelter
- Somenos Transition House
- Cowichan District Hospital
- RCMP holding cells
- People staying in local motels on a Ministry voucher
- Nanaimo emergency shelters (those reporting living in the Cowichan)

During the day counts, volunteers were present at service locations and count sites across the region. Count site volunteers comprised teams of mixed genders. Count sites were concentrated in Duncan/North Cowichan, where most absolutely homeless people in the region stay. Day count sites included:

- Meals on the Ground (a tri-weekly community meal)
- House of Friendship – Breakfast Club
- Cowichan Valley Basket Society (soup kitchen and hamper program)
- Island Savings Centre – a community center/library facility
- Charles Hoey Park and Cowichan Green Community (special meals)
- Cowichan Neighbourhood House
- Duncan/North Cowichan Mobile Team
- Cowichan Lake Community Services
- Ladysmith Resources Centre
- Ladysmith Mobile Team
- CMS Foodbank, South Cowichan

In most service locations, volunteers approached those who came in and invited them to be part of the survey. In a number of locations service providers confirmed that some clients who were homeless did not want to complete the survey or did not come for services that day, and were therefore missed.

Appendix A provides a more detailed description of the methodological approach to the Cowichan Homeless Survey, as well as a number of recommendations to strengthen future homeless surveys.

REGIONAL PICTURE OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness exists across the Cowichan region - not only in Duncan/North Cowichan.

Across the Cowichan region, most people were surveyed or counted in the Duncan/North Cowichan community. This is where the majority of services for absolutely homeless people are concentrated, and where service providers suggested the majority of people would be counted. However, in each area of the Cowichan people experiencing relative homelessness were also surveyed. Appendix B provides a report of findings for each sub-region of the Cowichan.

Table 1. Percentages of each housing category by count area

Count Location	Absolutely Homeless	Relatively Homeless	Precariously Housed
South Cowichan	2%	5%	14%
Lake Cowichan	-	1%	4%
Ladysmith	2%	4%	18%
Duncan/North Cowichan	96%	90%	65%
Total Number Counted	58 (100%)	76 (100%)	125 (100%)

Table 2. Housing category as a percentage of those surveyed in South Cowichan

Housing Category	Number	Percentage
Absolutely Homeless	1	5%
Relatively Homeless	4	18%
Precariously Housed	17	77%
Total Number Counted	22	100%

Table 3. Housing category as a percentage of those surveyed in Lake Cowichan

Housing Category	Number	Percentage
Absolutely Homeless	0	0%
Relatively Homeless	1	17%
Precariously Housed	5	83%
Total Number Counted	6	100%

Table 4. Housing category as a percentage of those surveyed or counted in Ladysmith

Housing Category	Number	Percentage
Absolutely Homeless	1	4%
Relatively Homeless	3	12%
Precariously Housed	22	85%
Total Number Counted	26	100%

Table 5. Housing category as a percentage of those surveyed or counted in Duncan/North Cowichan

Housing Category	Number	Percentage
Absolutely Homeless	56	27%
Relatively Homeless	68	33%
Precariously Housed	81	40%
Total Number Counted	205	100%

ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS

Across the Cowichan region, 58 people were counted who were absolutely homeless on February 16. On that night, their shelter situations were:

- 31 at Warmland House – Emergency Shelter
- 4 at Somenos Transition House
- 3 in Nanaimo emergency shelters
- 8 in motels with temporary vouchers
- 4 sleeping in cars, trucks or tents
- 8 sleeping outside
- 1 sleeping in an abandoned building

Absolute Homelessness: Who we surveyed, Who we missed

Service providers knew of clients experiencing absolute homelessness in every area of the Cowichan in February.

In conversations leading up to the Homeless Survey, we talked with service providers across the region to understand who among their client groups were experiencing homelessness at that time. From these conversations, we expected to find over 100 people experiencing absolute homelessness in the Cowichan.

Table 6. Expected vs. counted people experiencing absolute homelessness

Subregion	Expected	Counted
South Cowichan	5	1
Lake Cowichan	2	0
Ladysmith	5	1
Duncan/North Cowichan	90	56
Total	107	58

We know we missed people

There are multiple reasons why we were not able to count everyone. Some people declined to be surveyed. Others did not come to service locations during the count. Mobile teams found evidence of people sleeping rough, without finding people. Several service providers described people who had found alternate shelter in the Cowichan due to high winds and rain from the week before the count, and would therefore have been counted as relatively homeless. Others noted camp areas that had recently been cleared.

Some people experiencing absolute homelessness who we missed but service providers described to us:

- *A couple living in a car*
- *A group staying in an abandoned building*
- *A person living in a backyard fort*
- *A couple tenting*
- *4 group tent sites*
- *Squatter in an abandoned building*
- *Motorhome parked long term in public lots*
- *Men living in the bush*

In 2013, there were at least 308 people who were absolutely homeless in the Cowichan.

Warmland House keeps statistics of unique individuals who stay at their shelter each year. In 2013, 308 individuals stayed at Warmland House, meaning at least 308 adults were absolutely homeless and live or stayed in the region at some point during the year. It should be noted that not everyone who is absolutely homeless stays in shelters, so this number is not a full count of those who were absolutely homeless in 2013.

ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS: Demographics

Most people surveyed who were absolutely homeless were men.

Three in four (79%) of those people we surveyed who were experiencing absolute homelessness were men, compared to 21% women.

The average age of those people we surveyed who were experiencing absolute homelessness was 49, most were over 50.

People experiencing absolute homelessness ranged in age from 22 to 68.

Table 7. Age range of absolutely homeless people surveyed, n = 49³

Age	Percent
20-29 years	9%
30-39 years	17%
40-49 years	17%
50-59 years	45%
60+ years	15%

One in four self-identified as Aboriginal.

26% of those people we surveyed who reported experiencing absolute homelessness identified as Aboriginal, First Nations or Metis.

Most were alone, but 16% had people with them, including one mother with children.

When asked who was with them, six people had partners with them, one person was with a friend, and one woman had children with her. Two people also had dogs with them.

³ Some individuals were only counted, not surveyed (e.g. those in the hospital, motels) and not everyone surveyed answered each question. N=the number of people who answered that question.

75% of absolutely homeless people we surveyed reported having at least one health condition. Examples of health conditions listed included recuperations from accidents or injuries, cancer, post-traumatic stress disorder and blindness.

Table 8. Health conditions of absolutely homeless people surveyed, n = 48

Health Condition	Percent
Medical condition	52%
Addiction	36%
Mental health condition	27%
Physical disability	40%
None	25%

The most common source of income was Income Assistance/Persons with Disability (46%). Many absolutely homeless respondents we surveyed reported multiple sources of income.

Table 9. Income sources of absolutely homeless people surveyed, n = 50

Income Source(s)	Percent
Income Assistance/PWD	46%
Disability Benefit	26%
Employment Insurance	2%
Pension	12%
Panhandling/handouts	2%
Recycling	16%
Employment	
• Part-time / occasional	18%
• Full-time	6%
Worker's compensation	-
Other	16%
No income	6%

Those who were employed reported work doing odd jobs and building maintenance.

Absolute Homelessness: Experiences of Homelessness

There are many contributing factors to homelessness – but the most common reason identified by absolutely homeless people we surveyed was not being able to afford rent (72%).

When asked what the main reasons were that they were without their own place to live, most people gave multiple reasons. Other common responses included:

- Addiction 24%
- Relationship breakdown 18%
- Family conflict 16%
- Eviction 16%
- Abuse 14%
- Health condition 12%
- Moving or stranded 8%
- Choice 4%
- Recently released from corrections or treatment facility 4%

Examples of some of the stories about loss of housing include:

- *Abusive relationship with an addict.*
- *Lost home in a fire.*
- *Lost job.*
- *Landlord increased the rent.*
- *Owned a boat, but couldn't afford moorage fees.*
- *No ID or housing references.*
- *Lost place when took seasonal work.*

Two in three (60%) had been without a place of their own for more than one year.

The length of time that those people who were experiencing absolute homelessness during the count had been without a place of their own ranged from 2 weeks to 54 years.

Table 10. Time homeless, those absolutely homeless, n = 42

Time without a place of their own	Percent ⁴
1 month or less	15%
2 months to less than 1 year	27%
1 year to 3 years	31%
More than 3 years	29%

One man described being taken from his home as a child, and never having a place of his own since then.

Just over half of people (52%) who were absolutely homeless had lost their housing in our community.

More than half of absolutely homeless respondents we surveyed last had a place to live somewhere in the Cowichan Region, though 48% had last been housed outside of our community.

18% had lived in the Cowichan their whole life, and over half 5 years or more.

Table 11. Length of time in Cowichan, those absolutely homeless, n = 40

Length of time living in Cowichan	Percent ⁴
< 1 year	18%
1-2 years	13%
2-5 years	10%
5-10 years	13%
10+ years	48%

⁴16% of those who were absolutely homeless either did not know how long they had been without a place of their own or did not answer this question. The percentages in this table are of the number who responded.

Absolute Homelessness: Housing Supports

When asked what would help them find housing, the most common responses were affordable housing, some form of outreach worker or advocate, less discrimination by landlords or higher/regular income.

Table 12. Supports to find housing, those absolutely homeless, n = 48

Helps to find housing	Percent
Affordable Housing	75%
Higher income	44%
Regular income	46%
Less discrimination about:	55% ⁵
• Pets	17%
• Children	9%
• Ethnicity/race	7%
• Addiction	9%
• Mental health conditions	7%
• Criminal record	7%
Information about housing/support services	50%
Outreach worker/advocate to help you access services	65% ⁶
• Housing search	44%
• Substance use	17%
• Mental health	17%
• Money issues	30%
• Other	15%
Mental health supports	21%
Detox services	17%
Damage/pet deposit	46%
Computer literacy	36%
Internet access	17%
Personal/housing references	40%
Phone/voicemail	36%
Personal ID	15%
Access to credit/better credit	19%
Bank account	7%
Transportation to see apartments	42%
Bus pass	55%
Don't want permanent housing	5%

Some examples of comments people shared about what would help:

Do not want a government handout, want cheaper prices.

Major problem is lack of income.

Waiting for disability reassessment.

Have a case worker and this is working well.

Detox services could be helpful if people are well trained or have been there.

Global Vocational has really helped me.

⁴ % shown here is that of respondents who indicated at least one issue with discrimination. As respondents may have indicated more than one issue regarding discrimination, the total of percentages in the list below will be greater than 100%.

⁶ % shown here is that of respondents who indicated at least one issue an outreach worker might help with and the total percentages in the list below will be greater than 100%.

Absolute Homelessness: Key Themes

Many service providers told us they were aware of individuals who were absolutely homeless at the time of our count, but who were not in service locations during the survey. When we tallied up these additional reports, we feel confident in saying there were over 100 people who were experiencing absolute homelessness in our community at the time of the survey. We were only able to count 58.

Of those individuals who were absolutely homeless in the Cowichan and whom we counted:

Far more men (79%) than women (21%) were experiencing absolute homelessness.

Almost two in three (60%) of absolutely homeless people were over 50 years old.

Many shared stories about how medical conditions had contributed to their homelessness, or how they now coped with these conditions while homeless. Over half (52%) had a medical condition and 40% a physical disability.

One in four (24%) reported that addiction had been a contributing factor to their losing their homes, but more than one in three (36%) now reported having an addiction. Some may have lost their homes for other reasons; others may have developed addictions while homeless.

Two in three (60%) had been without a place of their own for more than one year.

Just over half of people (52%) who were absolutely homeless had lost their housing in our community.

The most common things that would help:

- 75% Affordable housing
- 55% Less discrimination
- 65% Outreach worker
- 44% Higher income
- 46% Damage deposit
- 40% References

RELATIVE HOMELESSNESS

Those who are relatively homeless can also be thought of as the hidden homeless population. They include those who are temporarily accommodated with family or friends, those who are currently in institutions but have no permanent address to be released to, and those who on a regular and on-going basis, with permission and/or rent free, may be living in unconventional, unheated and uninsulated structures not generally intended as a permanent residence.

In the Cowichan, we know that there are many people staying with friends and family but who have no place of their own. Their position is tenuous - often staying in homes that are overcrowded. This experience of homelessness is the most common experience - yet it is the hardest group to connect with and count accurately.⁷

We had no expectations of accurately counting the numbers of people who were relatively homeless - our hope was to provide a window into their experience.

We did count 76 people experiencing relative homelessness, including those who were surveyed and those counted through the Cowichan District Hospital.

Cowichan District Hospital houses three categories of people who would be considered relatively homeless through the year. On February 16, there were:

- 13 Older people who simply have no other place to go - likely to need long term care, but first needing a full status assessment. Family may be unable to care for them, or they may not have any family.
- 11 Older people who are waiting for a bed in a long term care facility.
- 2 Hard to house patients who need institutional care, where the hospital can't find an appropriate institution that will admit the patients.

Relative Homelessness: Who we surveyed, Who we missed

We know anecdotally from service providers, who work closely with their client base and understand their housing situations that we were able to survey only a small fraction of those who are relatively homeless.

We have some quantitative evidence from the Ministry of Social Development, who provided us with numbers on those without fixed addresses who receive Income Assistance or Persons With Disability Assistance. In February 2014, 93 Income Assistance cases⁸ in Cowichan had no fixed address.

⁷ Library of Parliament, Defining and Enumerating Homelessness in Canada, 2008, www.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb0830-e.htm

⁸ These are only the number of cases. One case may include multiple people, such as a single mother with dependents or a couple where both adults receive income assistance. The number also excludes those in temporary housing or listing an alternate mailing address.

We know we missed people

Those who are relatively homeless may not use services where we surveyed, are less likely to identify as homeless, and may not have wanted to participate in the survey. We were not able to survey everyone in all locations, particularly food banks, where the volume of people and array of activities did not permit this at peak times. We were also unable to gather information on those in residential treatment facilities who often do not have permanent shelter.

Relative Homelessness: Demographics

Just over half of those experiencing relative homelessness were men.

58% of those people we surveyed who were experiencing relative homelessness were men, compared to 42% women.

The average age of those experiencing relative homelessness was 42.

People we surveyed who were experiencing relative homelessness ranged in age from 17 to 75, and most were over 40.

Table 13. Age range of relatively homeless people surveyed, n = 48

Age	Percent
Under 20 years	7%
20- 29 years	17%
30-39 years	23%
40-49 years	27%
50-59 years	15%
60+ years	13%

More than half self-identified as Aboriginal.

59% of those people we surveyed who reported experiencing relative homelessness identified as Aboriginal, First Nations or Metis.

Half (50%) had people with them, including five people with children.

When asked who was with them, 22% of people we surveyed who were relatively homeless said they had partners with them, and 10% had children with them. 8% had a pet staying with them.

85% reported having at least one health condition.

Examples of health conditions relatively homeless people we surveyed listed include depression, anxiety, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Table 14. Health conditions of relatively homeless people surveyed, n = 47

Age	Percent
Medical condition	21%
Addiction	34%
Mental health condition	34%
Physical disability	32%
None	15%

The most common source of income was Income Assistance/Disability Assistance (53%).

Table 15. Income source of relatively homeless people surveyed, n = 49

Income Source(s)	Percent
Income Assistance/PWD	53%
Disability Benefit	17%
Employment Insurance	1%
Pension	11%
Panhandling/handouts	7%
Recycling	4%
Employment	
• Part-time/occasional	15%
• Full-time	2%
Worker's compensation	2%
Other	19%
No income	13%

Relative Homelessness: Experiences of Homelessness

As with absolute homelessness, there are many contributing factors to homelessness – but the most common reason those we surveyed provided was still not being able to afford rent (67%).

When asked what the main reasons were that they were without their own place to live, most people gave multiple reasons besides not being able to afford rent. Other common responses included:

- Addiction 19%
- Family conflict 17%
- Relationship breakdown 13%
- Eviction 13%
- Health condition 9%
- Choice 7%
- Moving or stranded 5%
- Recently released from corrections or treatment facility 4%

Examples of some of the stories about loss of housing include:

- *Partner died.*
- *Released from psychiatric treatment.*
- *Can only find part time work.*
- *Can't find a place and not on Income Assistance.*
- *Evicted after broken window.*
- *Kicked off disability.*
- *Ran out of savings after retraining.*
- *Evicted from illegal suite when landlord died.*
- *Had a trailer but was evicted.*

Almost two in three (59%) had been without a place of their own for more than one year.

For those people we surveyed who were experiencing relative homelessness at the time of the count, the length of time that they had been without a place of their own ranged from 1 week to 20 years.

Table 16. Time homeless, for those relatively homeless, n = 43

Time without a place of their own	Percent
1 month or less	9%
1 month to less than 3 months	14%
3 months to less than 1 year	16%
1 year to 3 years	32%
More than 3 years	27%

Most of the relatively homeless people we surveyed had last had a place of their own to live somewhere in the Cowichan Region, though 28% had last been housed outside of our community.

One in three (36%) had lived in the Cowichan Valley their whole life, and 82% for more than 5 years.

Table 17. Length of time in Cowichan, for those relatively homeless, n=37

Length of time living on Cowichan	Percent
< 1 year	6%
2 – 5 years	13%
5 – 10 years	13%
10 – 25 years	34%
25+ years	34%

We did find some cross-over with absolute homelessness, with several respondents telling us they had recently been sleeping outside or in tents, but they were now staying with friends.

Relative Homelessness: Housing Supports

When asked what would help them find housing, the most common responses of people we survey who were relatively homeless were affordable housing, higher income, less discrimination by landlords or some form of outreach worker.

Table 18. Supports to find housing, for those relatively homeless, n = 47

Helps to find housing	Percent
Affordable Housing	73%
Higher income	56%
Regular income	34%
Less discrimination about:	58% ⁹
• Pets	9%
• Children	5%
• Ethnicity/race	13%
• Addiction	20%
• Mental health conditions	22%
• Criminal record	15%
• Other	15%
Information about housing/support services	39%
Outreach worker/advocate to help you access services	54% ¹⁰
• Housing search	32%
• Substance use	9%
• Mental health	22%
• Money issues	22%
• Other	17%
Mental health supports	26%
Detox services	15%
Damage/pet deposit	20%
Computer literacy	24%
Internet access	24%
Personal/housing references	24%
Phone/voicemail	24%
Personal ID	20%
Access to credit/better credit	17%
Bank account	17%
Transportation to see apartments	24%
Bus pass	26%
Other	9%
Don't want permanent housing	7%

Some examples of comments people shared about what would help:

Landlords do not want to rent to us because of how I look.

Ready to Rent is an awesome program.

PWD money is so tight, I can only live with my family.

Need more affordable housing for seniors and low income families.

Loosen up bylaws re: additional housing add-ons (trailers, suites).

More money from welfare - increase rates for everyone to reflect current costs.

⁹ % shown here is that of respondents who indicated at least one issue with discrimination. As respondents may have indicated more than one issue regarding discrimination, the total of percentages in the list below will be greater than 100%.

¹⁰ % shown here is that of respondents who indicated at least one issue an outreach worker might help with and the total percentages in the list below will be greater than 100%.

Relative Homelessness: Key Themes

Research on homelessness has established that relative homelessness is the most common experience of homelessness.¹¹ Government data indicates that at the time of the survey in the Cowichan there were close to 100 cases of households receiving Income Assistance or Persons with Disability Assistance and having no fixed address. Anecdotal information suggests there are many more individuals and families who are without a fixed address but who are supported by their family (i.e. many of these people are couch surfing).

Of those we interviewed, just over half were men (58%).

The average age of those surveyed in this group was younger than those who were absolutely homeless - 24% of those relatively homeless were under 30 years old.

Most (85%) had either a medical, mental health, addiction or disability challenge - only 15% did not.

Almost two in three (59%) of the people we surveyed who were relatively homeless had been without a place of their own for more than one year.

Most had last had a place to live somewhere in the Cowichan Region, though 28% had last been housed outside of our community.

One in three (36%) relatively homeless people we surveyed had lived in the Cowichan Valley their whole life, and 82% had lived here for more than 5 years.

The most common things that would help:

- 73% Affordable housing
- 58% Less discrimination
- 54% Outreach worker
- 56% Higher income
- 20% Damage deposit
- 24% References

¹¹ Library of Parliament, Defining and Enumerating Homelessness in Canada, 2008, www.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb0830-e.htm text:

PRECARIOUS HOUSING

People who are precariously housed include those who are living in situations of insecure and inadequate housing but still paying a monthly rental fee.

- They might be living in a situation some might consider homeless – but they themselves do not – such as in an unheated and uninsulated trailer or boat. There was a very thin line between those who were relatively homeless and those who were precariously housed – the distinction being that those people who were precariously housed paid something towards their rent, including moorage or site fees.
- They might be living in a home where they pay more than half their income for rent, or where there are not enough bedrooms or beds for everyone who lives there.

We interviewed people in these situations, for two reasons:

- People living in these housing situations are at high risk of homelessness; and,
- People move in and out of homelessness – many of these people have been recently homeless.

By interviewing 125 people experiencing precarious housing, we gained a better understanding of housing needs and factors which contribute to homelessness. Some survey questions differed for those in this group.

Precarious Housing: Who we surveyed, Who we missed

A common measure of those who are precariously housed in Canada is core housing need. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines a household as being in core housing need if “its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards.”¹² Relatively homeless people are rarely captured in these numbers, derived from Census data, and absolutely homeless people are not included at all.

*The BC Non-Profit Housing Association estimated that 2,072 renter households in the Cowichan Valley were in core housing need in 2011.*¹³

The lack of affordable housing is a central concern across the Cowichan, and like relative homelessness, those in precarious housing situations are present in every area of the region.

Service providers and residents shared many stories of people staying in overcrowded or inadequate housing.

- *A young boy in a single parent household lives in a decrepit mobile home.*
- *Young couple renting a room in a house which is unsafe due to drugs, alcohol and violence.*
- *Overcrowded houses where there are many more people than bedrooms.*
- *Women in abusive relationships not yet able to leave.*

¹² http://cmhc.beyond2020.com/HiCODefinitions_EN.html

¹³ www.bcnpha.ca/media/BC_Need_and_Demand_Reports/19_Cowichan_Valley_120921.pdf

We know we missed people

We did not promote the survey as one for those who were precariously housed, and focused primarily on reaching those who were experiencing absolute homelessness. We were not able to survey everyone in all locations, particularly food banks, where the volume of people and array of activities did not permit this at peak times.

Precarious Housing: Demographics

Just over half of those precariously housed were men.

58% of those we surveyed who were experiencing precarious housing were men, compared to 42% women.

The average age of those who were precariously housed was 48.

People we surveyed who were precariously housed ranged in age from 19 to 74, and most were over 40.

Table 19. Age range, precariously housed, n = 119

Age	Percent
19- 29 years	11%
30-39 years	17%
40-49 years	25%
50-59 years	30%
60+ years	19%

One in three self-identified as Aboriginal.

34% of those we surveyed who reported experiencing precarious housing identified as Aboriginal, First Nations or Metis.

Two in five lived alone and one in five with children.

Table 20. Living arrangements, precariously housed, n = 116

Living Arrangements	Percent
Alone	41%
With partner	18%
With children	22%
With friends	11%
With pets	22%
Other	15%

86% reported having at least one health condition.

Examples of health conditions listed included post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic pain, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, anxiety and arthritis.

Table 21. Health condition, precariously housed, n = 112

Health Condition	Percent
Medical condition	53%
Addiction	28%
Mental health condition	48%
Physical disability	47%
None	14%

The most common source of income was Income Assistance/Disability Assistance (52%).

Table 22. Income source, precariously housed, n = 117

Income Source(s)	Percent
Income Assistance/PWD	52%
Disability Benefit	30%
Employment Insurance	1%
Pension	10%
Panhandling/handouts	4%
Recycling	14%
Employment	
• Part-time/occasional	21%
• Full-time	2%
Other	12%

Precarious Housing: Main Housing Challenges

As with those who were currently homeless, the most common housing challenge amongst precariously housed people we surveyed was not being able to afford rent (71%).

When asked what where the main challenges they had with housing, many people identified multiple issues. Other common responses included:

- Home does not have enough bedrooms/beds for people in it (18%)
- Home is unheated (11%)
- Past evictions (8%)
- Landlords won't rent to me (11%)
- Landlords won't rent to families (8%)
- Landlords won't rent to those with pets (10%)
- No references (9%)
- Credit rating (20%)

Examples of some of the stories about current housing situations include:

- *Inherited a home, but have substantial difficulty paying property taxes, even without a mortgage.*
- *Had to go into debt to buy healthy, clean trailer with no mold or mildew.*

- Living outside of Duncan – can't afford Duncan. Six kids, and two people staying with me who have nowhere to go. Struggle to buy wood to heat home and food.
- Renting a run-down shack with no oven. Heat and cook with wood stove but had no dry wood.
- Will be homeless by the end of the month.
- Lost job in September – had no problems until then. Great landlord has been helpful.
- Landlord will not fix leaks in roof, or answer calls. Cannot afford somewhere else.

On average, people we surveyed who were precariously housed reported paying 64% of their income for rent.

71% of those in a precarious housing situation had been homeless at some point.

Table 23. Time homeless, those precariously housed, n = 68

Length of time homeless	Percent
< 1 month	6%
1 – 2 months	15%
2 – 5 months	18%
6 – 12 months	15%
1 – 2 years	22%
3 – 5 years	13%
More than 5 years	12%

The most common experience of homelessness¹⁴ was staying with family or friends (51%), followed by a shelter (32%), in a car/truck/tent (32%) and outside (29%). Examples of experiences of homelessness among those we surveyed who were precariously housed included:

- *Lived in a truck for two years. My son was with me for 7 months of this time.*
- *Injured on the job last year – took 3 months to get EI. My landlord couldn't wait.*
- *Homeless on and off for 8 years. My monthly income varies up to \$400.*
- *Chronically stayed with friends.*
- *Camped out since September.*

26% had lived in the Cowichan Valley their whole life, and three-quarters (78%) had lived here for more than five years.

Table 24. Length of time in Cowichan, those precariously housed, n = 108

Length of time living in Cowichan	Percent
< 1 year	6%
1 – 2 years	6%
2 – 5 years	12%
5 – 10 years	14%
10 – 25 years	26%
25+ years	38%

¹⁴ People reported more than one shelter arrangement from their experiences of homelessness.

Precarious Housing: Key Themes

In a report authored by the BC Non-Profit Housing Association¹⁵ researchers estimated that 2,072 renter households in the Cowichan Valley lacked either affordable, adequate or suitable housing in 2011.

Of those we interviewed, just over half were men (58%).

One in five (22%) lived with children.

Most (86%) had either a medical, mental health, addiction or disability challenge – only 14% did not.

We estimate thousands of people in our community are one pay cheque, one accident, one disagreement away from homelessness. 71% of those we surveyed in a precarious housing situation had been homeless at some point, and of those, more than half (58%) had been homeless for more than one year. These experiences included absolute and relative homelessness.

26% had lived in the Cowichan Valley their whole life, and three-quarters (78%) had lived here for more than five years.

The most common housing challenges experienced:

- 71% Housing is unaffordable
- 18% Overcrowded housing
- 11% Unheated home
- 29% Landlord discrimination
- 20% Credit rating
- 9% No references

¹⁵ www.bcnpha.ca/media/BC_Need_and_Demand_Reports/19_Cowichan_Valley_120921.pdf

CONCLUSION

Homelessness exists in many forms throughout our region. Each person's story about how they became homeless is an individual one, but there are trends in these findings which reflect those in other communities.

Homelessness could happen to anybody. People who had homes, jobs and families shared stories of how illness, unemployment, abuse, and/or family conflict resulted in their losing their homes. When these events happened, faced with a lack of affordable housing in our community, or interventions to help people access and afford the existing housing stock, people could not find new homes, and so they became homeless.

Though not homeless – many people are living right on the edge of homelessness. People move in and out of homelessness as well as between absolute and relative homelessness situations. Three in four (71%) of people we surveyed who were precariously housed had been homeless once, more than half for over 1 year.

Visible homelessness is only the tip of the iceberg in our community as it is in others. While we surveyed 58 people who were absolutely homeless, the data indicates many more people go in and out of different stages of homelessness as they try to sustain themselves and their families through difficult times.

Recommendations

Establishing and maintaining affordable housing takes a community – all levels of government, non-profits, service clubs, and individuals. The Regional Affordable Housing Directorate is working to support the implementation of an Affordable Housing Strategy, including trying to establish a regional housing trust fund, i.e. an on-going source of funds dedicated to building new units, protecting existing housing stock, and providing services to prevent people from becoming homeless. The findings from the Cowichan Homelessness Survey could help to inform a Homelessness Strategy, as other communities have developed.

Here are some recommendations suggested by the data:

- There is an ongoing need for affordable housing in the Cowichan. More affordable housing would have a big impact – this can be supportive housing, second-stage transition housing, subsidized housing, or market housing. We need a range of options, and work is needed both to build new units and to protect existing ones.
- A range of supports are needed to keep people who are precariously housed from becoming homeless.
- Interventions are needed that increase people's incomes and make the existing housing stock more affordable; for example: BC Housing's Rental Assistance Program (RAP)¹⁶ or Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER)¹⁷.

¹⁶ www.bchousing.org/Options/Rental_market/RAP

¹⁷ <http://www.bchousing.org/Initiatives/Providing/SAFER>

RAP provides working families with incomes of \$35,000 or less with cash assistance to help with their monthly rent payments. SAFER provides monthly cash payments to subsidize rents for eligible BC residents who are age 60 or over and who pay rent for their housing. Many eligible families do not know about these programs.

- Over half of homeless respondents who said they could not afford housing were receiving Income Assistance or Persons With Disability Assistance. The shelter rates do not cover rental costs for many clients. Addressing this shortcoming would help many people locally and province wide.
- Landlord concerns and discrimination might be reduced through levers that help people gain access to housing such as the Ready to Rent program,¹⁸ Similarly, grants to help with pet or damage deposits might help people get into housing sooner.
- Outreach workers could help people access a range of supports and services; for example: helping people with literacy challenges to fill out housing applications, helping people find available rental housing, or providing supports for people struggling with substance use, mental health challenges or financial difficulties.
- Though well regarded mental health and substance use supports exist in the Cowichan, more are needed. Almost half of absolutely homeless respondents we surveyed were either experiencing mental health or addiction issues at the time of the survey.

¹⁸ www.readytorentbc.net/.



Appendix A: 2014 Cowichan Homeless Survey Methodology

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Rationale for a Count

Homeless counts have become increasingly widespread as communities work to increase awareness of and validate further action to reduce homelessness. Count data is used in policy development, planning, and prioritizing services to address the needs of people who are homeless. Homeless counts present not only an estimate of the number of homeless people in a region, but also insights into the local and societal factors contributing to homelessness and the resources needed to assist people to transition from being homeless to being independently, safely and securely housed.

The main purpose of the 2014 Cowichan Homelessness Count was to enumerate and learn more about those experiencing homelessness in the Cowichan region. Specific objectives include:

- Estimating the number of people who were absolutely homeless;
- Understanding more about the demographics of people who were surveyed or enumerated during the count (who is homeless, and what have their experiences of homelessness been);
- Investigating if homelessness is experienced across the Cowichan region; and,
- Developing a baseline of data to identify long-term trends in the number and profile of people who are homeless.

By adopting a standardized methodology the Regional Affordable Housing Directorate (RAHD) will be able to track trends over time in the homeless population in the region and make comparisons with other BC communities. The standardized approach that was adopted was supplemented by local knowledge of service providers who work with those who are homeless and appropriate strategies were developed that were conducive to counting homelessness in rural areas with limited services.

Challenges

Inherent count inaccuracy

Counts of those who are homeless are inevitably inaccurate. As homeless people must first be located and, depending on the count site situation, must agree to be counted. Thus a certain portion of the population will always be left out of a count. There will also be people who are just not around at shelters, service agencies, or other count locations on the day of the count, who will be missed.

As a point-in-time count, the Cowichan Homelessness Survey focused on estimating as accurately as possible the number of people who were absolutely homeless at the time of

the survey; however, it was not designed to count people who are periodically homeless – slipping back and forth between homelessness and housing.

While the standardized method for conducting homeless counts focuses solely on those people who are absolutely homeless (sleeping outside, staying at emergency shelters, or provisionally accommodated), this homeless survey adopted an expanded definition of homelessness that allowed us to also survey people who were relatively homeless to learn more about their experience as well. This included people who were “couch surfing” or staying with friends, and those who were living in temporary or unconventional structures. It is even more difficult to get an accurate picture of this population – this survey did not attempt to do that. Data for this group as well as those we surveyed who were precariously housed must be viewed as only a rough sketch that provides us with limited information as to the demographics and experience of people in these housing situations.

A Countable Definition of Homelessness

Homelessness extends far beyond those visible individuals on the street. Less visible forms of homelessness include people living in tents, sheds, cars, staying in emergency shelters, or couch surfing. There are other people in our community living in inadequate housing situations where health and safety standards may not be met or where they do not have safe and adequate heat and electricity. All of these situations increase mental, physical and emotional stresses and create risks for those individuals experiencing them. For the purposes of this survey, we used the broad Canadian Homelessness Research Network definition of homelessness:¹

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

This definition is expanded over the one used in the *Guidelines for a Standardized Method for BC Communities*². These guidelines provide a classification framework of homelessness which can be used within the above definition. This allowed the Regional Affordable Housing Directorate to collect and report standardized, comparable data, while still enabling collection of data describing a wider set of experiences of homelessness.

To capture that broader picture of homelessness in the Cowichan region, definitions in the standardized framework were used and additional categories were added to expand

¹ Canadian Homelessness Research Network. (2012). Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Available online at Homeless Hub.

² Policy and Practice Branch, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services. *Counting Homelessness – Guidelines for a Standardized Method for British Columbia Communities*. Victoria: Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General Housing Policy Branch.

the scope of the count. See Table 1 for the definition framework used in the Cowichan homeless survey:

- Categories 1 through 4 are from the framework for the standardized method.
- Categories 5 through 8 are an expansion of the standardized definition.

We used categories 5-7 to identify people who were relatively homeless in the Cowichan and category 8 to survey people who were precariously housed at the time of the count.

Table 1: Definition Framework for a Cowichan Homelessness Count

Operational Category		Living Situation		Generic Definition	Count Method
1	People sleeping rough	1.1	Public space or external structure not designed for habitation (doorways, bus shelters, cars, parkades, tents)	People who live in public or outdoor spaces without legal claim and without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters, or in structures not designed for habitation.	Public places (known locations) & service locations count
2	People in emergency overnight accommodation	2.1	Warmland House Emergency Beds	People with no usual place of residence who spend the night in an overnight shelter or low barrier shelter that does not allow participation in a daily routine, and required to live in public space during daytime hours	Shelter count
3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1	Transitional beds at Warmland House	People with no usual place of residence who have 24-hour shelter and are not required to live daily in public space. Period of stay is intended to be short term (less than 30 days). Includes people who are homeless due to fire, flood, landslide, etc.	Shelter count
		3.2	Temporary accommodation provided when shelter facility not available		
4	People in women's shelters	4.1	Somenos House	Women and children accommodated due to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term (<30 days)	Shelter count
5	People due to be released from institutions	5.1	RCMP holding cells	People who, at the time of count, are in holding cells or registered in the hospital and have no fixed address	Institutional count (shelter count)
		5.2	Cowichan Valley Regional Hospital		
6	People living in insecure accommodations	6.1	Temporarily accommodated with family/friends	People staying rent free in conventional housing, but not their own place of residence.	Service locations count
		6.2	Illegal (sub)tenancy	Occupation with no legal tenancy or illegal occupation of tenancy	
7	People living in temporary or unconventional structures.	7.1	Sheds/barns/boats	People who are living rent-free , with permission in temporary or nonconventional structures that are unheated and uninsulated, and not generally intended as a permanent	Service locations count

				residence.	
8	People living in insecure and inadequate housing	8.1	Trailer / Boat / Motorhome / Sheds	People who are paying rent (incl. site rental & moorage fees) to live in temporary or nonconventional structures that are unheated and uninsulated, and not generally intended as a permanent residence.	Service locations count
		8.2	Unaffordable or overcrowded apartment/house	People who are paying more than 50% of their income for rent, or living in overcrowded housing.	

Questionnaire

The survey questions were drawn primarily from the Standardized Guide, but other questions were added to reflect particular interests and issues in the region.

Two sets of survey questions were provided: one for those who were either absolutely or relatively homeless and the other for those who were precariously housed. As a distinguishing characteristic, we used the marker of whether a person paid rent to determine if they belonged in the relative homelessness category (did not pay rent) or the precariously housed category (paid rent). This was originally a question at the beginning of the survey, but during the editing process, it was relocated to a later point in the survey.

RAHD/SPC staff and survey volunteers all contributed to reviewing and editing the questionnaire.

See Appendix D for the full questionnaire.

Outreach

Working Groups

In January, RAHD/SPC staff contacted individuals and agencies in different geographical areas to develop working groups that could support the homelessness count throughout the region. In Duncan/North Cowichan, RAHD drew on its existing committees and in Ladysmith the Emergency Aid Committee provided support. In Lake Cowichan a group of service providers and volunteers came together and in south Cowichan a one-time meeting brought key stakeholders together. These groups were indispensable for their knowledge of service agencies and the local homeless population.

Participants in these groups provided information on people they knew to be experiencing homelessness. These specific descriptions helped to set count locations, informed the questionnaire development, and provided reasonably reliable reference points for survey accuracy.

Shelter and Service Agency Outreach

In January, letters of introduction were sent to a range of identified service agencies and shelter locations, informing them about the count and inviting their participation. Follow up calls were made to discuss the count and how they could be involved.

Respondent Outreach

Some service providers felt it was important that people experiencing homelessness be made aware that the count was happening well in advance of the count day so that they could have the opportunity to be counted if they wanted to, or the opportunity to avoid being counted if that was their wish. This outreach primarily took place through service agencies and shelter locations. Posters were put up at these locations and at identified public spaces. Outreach workers were also very helpful in promoting the survey in advance.

Those who were living in insecure accommodations can be very difficult to reach through these methods, as they do not always access service providers on a consistent basis. Outreach to this group was accomplished through the methods above, as well as through a Facebook page created for the Count and information was disseminated as widely as possible.

Service providers strongly suggested that local print media was an important way to reach absolutely homeless respondents. Some thought was given to using the media as part of respondent outreach, but in the end, this option was not pursued.

Volunteers

Volunteer enumerators were an essential part of the counting process and close to 40 volunteers were recruited and trained. It was important that volunteers had appropriate skills and characteristics that would help them be effective in conducting a respectful count. Characteristics we emphasized in volunteers included:

- good people skills,
- an interest in social issues,
- respectful demeanour,
- ability to read non-verbal cues,

- familiarity with the geographic layout of the area, and
- a sense of humour.

Recruitment happened in several stages. Volunteers currently involved in RAHD committees and staff of local service agencies were approached first. Expanded recruitment of volunteers took place through groups such as the local faith community, as well as through the media.

Potential volunteers filled out an application which included a few simple screening questions to ensure they would be able to work with the homeless community in a respectful and appropriate manner. These questions were:

1. Why do you want to volunteer with the homeless survey?
2. What concerns you about homelessness?
3. What is your experience with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?

Volunteers with experience of street-involved individuals and/or with a background in drug and alcohol or mental health counseling were designated as site captains. They were asked to provide assistance and guidance during the survey process. One volunteer noted that he felt intimidated by questions about this type of experience being on the form; he worried that he might not have the qualifications required.

Volunteers were asked to provide a detailed schedule of their availability which was then matched to the shifts. Some volunteers took multiple shifts. Early morning and outdoor shifts were the hardest to fill. Volunteers were given 10 days notice of which shifts had been assigned to them and it was emphasized that it was essential they come on time. Volunteers were given their shift time in three ways: by email, in writing in a letter at the training session, and through a reminder call two days before the count. Where possible, shifts were slightly overstaffed to compensate for potential no-shows. Almost everyone came when scheduled, or called ahead to cancel.

Volunteers were required to attend a mandatory training event prior to count day. Training included a role-play, safety information, some pointers on respectful interactions, and a walk-through of the enumeration form. The Cool Aid Society of Victoria generously shared their 2007 training materials.

Four volunteer training sessions were held; two in Duncan, one in Ladysmith and one in Lake Cowichan. Feedback on the training sessions was generally positive; however, in a debriefing session after the Count, some volunteers from Ladysmith reported that after the training they still did not feel adequately prepared for the Count Day.

Count Method

Geography

This count was meant to capture a snapshot of homelessness throughout the Cowichan region. The geographic area included in the count was from the Malahat area in the south, to just above Ladysmith in the north, and west to Lake Cowichan. It was expected that the majority of respondents would be concentrated around the Duncan/North Cowichan area, where the majority of service providers are also located.

The funding received for this count was restricted to off-reserve First Nations lands. This geographic restriction along with the short timeframe did present challenges as to how best to ensure First Nations people were adequately included in the count. We were able to have a count site at Hiiye'yu Lelum House of Friendship and also had a First Nations person lead the mobile team in the Duncan/North Cowichan area. We also know that some First Nations people who are homeless do access Warmland Shelter and some First Nations women leaving abusive relationships use the services of Somenos House. While some people who were of First Nations heritage were included at various count sites, as mentioned earlier, we also recognize that any homeless count has inaccuracies and is more likely to be an undercount of the true homeless population.

Dates

The standardized methodology advises communities to conduct the survey during late fall, winter, or early spring as cold weather shelter spaces are in operation, and shelter facilities commonly operate at maximum capacity during the poor weather months. The Guide also notes that during cooler weather it is more likely homeless people will need to visit service locations to seek some temporary relief.

In the Cowichan, the main count was conducted from February 16 to 18, 2014. These dates were chosen to coincide with the open hours of a large number of emergency food service providers across the Cowichan.

The third week of February was also the week prior to income assistance cheque distribution (which is generally the fourth week of the month). The week before monthly cheques are issued is commonly a time when more people who are experiencing homelessness may be accessing service providers.

The count included a night-time shelter count on February 16th, a daytime count primarily on February 17 and 18, with some count locations on February 14 and 16 as well. Daytime counting was conducted at service locations and public or “known” spaces where people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness gather.

Two youth service agencies gathered count data from their clients in the week surrounding the count date. This was a way to access individuals who fit into one of the categories being counted, but who might not have been reached through the regular count methods and times.

The week before the count was very windy and rainy. Service providers were aware that a number of people who were homeless earlier in the month had found temporary shelter during the bad weather. Because these individuals had temporary shelter, they were not around during the count time, which contributed to the numbers being lower than expected for those who are absolutely homeless. Even if they had been surveyed, they would have been categorized as “relatively homeless” rather than “absolutely homeless” due to their temporary housing situation.

Night Count

The night count locations included Warmland House and Somenos House, as well as people with no fixed address who were either patients at the Cowichan District Hospital, in RCMP holding cells overnight, or housed in local motels through vouchers from the Ministry of Social Development .

- The RCMP and Cowichan District Hospital were asked to participate in the Count and they were provided with enumeration guidelines well in advance of the count. Reminder calls were made to each agency or count location two days before the count to ensure counting would take place and to ask if any further support was necessary. The data was gathered through follow-up calls the morning after the night count.
- We requested information from the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Children and Family Development about the number of people provided with emergency housing vouchers; however, we were told it would not be possible to provide this information. Instead, we gathered this data directly from several local motels. One motel refused to share this information.
- Somenos House staff completed the questionnaire with all residents who agreed to be surveyed. They only counted those who were housed on the night of the 16th, but they completed the interviews between February 16 and 18. Staff also tracked total residents and any turn-aways during this time.
- Homeless Count volunteers were present to conduct surveys at Warmland House on the evening of February 16. The numbers of residents and the gender breakdown for those staying at the shelter on the 16th was gathered, with Warmland’s permission, from BC Housing.

- All three Nanaimo shelters agreed to share information about any people staying at their shelter on February 16 who reported they were from the Cowichan. The New Hope Centre and Samaritan House did not usually ask that question; however, Tillicum Lelum does.

Day Count

On the two daytime count days, volunteers were present at service locations and count sites as noted below. Count site volunteers comprised teams of mixed genders. At most service locations, volunteers approached clients or potential respondents, identified themselves, and invited individuals to participate in the survey.

Duncan / North Cowichan	Date	Hours
Warmland House	16-Feb	11:00am - 7:00pm
Meals on the Ground	17-Feb	5:00pm – 7:00pm
House of Friendship	17 & 18 Feb	6:00am – 9:00am
Food Basket Society	17-Feb	10:00am - 4:00pm
Island Savings Centre	17-Feb	6:00am - 8:00pm
Charles Hoey Park	18 Feb	11:00am – 2:00pm
Cowichan Green Community	18-Feb	4:00pm – 7:00pm
Mobile Team	17-Feb	10:00am – 2:00pm

Chemainus / Crofton	Date	Hours
Cowichan Neighbourhood House Association	14 & 18-Feb	10:00am – 2:00pm

Lake Cowichan	Date	Hours
Cowichan Lake Community Services	18-Feb	10:00am – 2:00pm

Ladysmith	Date	Hours
Ladysmith Resource Centre Society	18-Feb	9:00am – 2:00pm
Mobile Team	18-Feb	9:00am – 2:00pm

South Cowichan	Date	Hours
CMS Foodbank	18-Feb	9:00am – 2:00pm

Incentives to Participate

In the working groups, we discussed offering incentives to participants such as a comfort kit with socks and toiletries. However, due to the short timeframe to prepare for

the count, we were unable to secure enough donations. We decided instead to have a number of meals to attract potential respondents; however, meals were not limited just to those who agreed to complete the survey. We also offered soft fruit, granola bars and water to participants at all count sites. We considered seeking donations of coffee cards but one local agency that uses these cards as a thank you for volunteers expressed concern that this would make it harder for them to receive donations

Two local grocery stores, a restaurant and a bakery donated food or vouchers. More donations could have been secured had there been a longer preparation period. Despite these donations, costs were higher than budgeted.

Volunteers also had cigarettes and/or candy to offer those answering the survey. These were offered only to survey participants and were a popular incentive.

Minimizing Duplication

Keeping to a short period of survey collection helped to minimize duplication, a serious concern for homelessness counts.

An additional step taken to minimize duplication was through inclusion of a survey question where participants were asked to provide their mother's initials. This information was combined with their birth year to create a code for each respondent which could be checked for duplication but removed during data analysis. There were no duplicate surveys identified during the analysis.

Data Analysis

An Access database was created and all surveys and count information were entered into the form. Care was taken to ensure there was no duplication between the known count numbers at a particular location and the number of surveys completed. For example, this meant making sure the number of surveys completed at Warmland matched the number of residents recorded stayed there that night.

Data analysis began by counting and grouping surveys within the three respondent groups. Key decisions were required regarding classifying respondents. These included:

- Twenty-three people who reported no housing challenges and who had answered the precariously housed survey were excluded.
- Those who were staying in motels on a voucher were categorized as absolutely homeless and those paying for their stay directly were categorized as precariously housed.

- People living in unheated RVs and boats were categorized as relatively homeless if they stayed there rent free, but precariously housed if they paid rent or moorage fees.

During data analysis, it was clear that a handful of surveys had been filled out incorrectly. Some respondents who were paying rent answered the survey questions applicable to those who were not paying rent and were absolutely homeless. Some of these surveys were self-administered, while others were incorrectly completed by volunteers.

Finally, this report was prepared after the count data was analyzed. It includes the statistical findings from the survey, anecdotal information gathered about those experiencing homelessness in the Cowichan at the time of the survey, and contextual data from the Ministry of Social Development, BC Housing and the BC Society for Non-Profit Housing.

What We would do Differently, and Why

- Holding the count in late September, when summer transient residents have moved on, but absolutely homeless people have not yet moved inside for the winter, might have resulted in a more accurate count of those who are absolutely homeless for part of the year.
- It could be beneficial to time the survey to coincide with a Day of Service, such as the one RAHD coordinated in the fall of 2013. This might attract more potential participants.
- Adding a question on the survey for those who are experiencing homelessness about places they have stayed in the last year would provide more information on the continuum of homelessness.
- A stronger focus on engaging volunteers and organizers in the sub-regions, especially South Cowichan, could have increased community awareness and likely respondent numbers. South Cowichan also could have benefited from a second site and a mobile team.
- Achieving agreement earlier as to the respondent outreach plan, so that posters and flyers promoting the count could be distributed sooner could also have increased the number of respondents.
- Volunteer training could have provided more information on confidentiality and more opportunities to practice with the questionnaire.

- The project budget could have better anticipated costs related to survey implementation, such as clipboards, pens, and volunteer identification.
- A clear donor recognition plan would have made it easier to secure contributions from businesses (e.g. recognition in the media).

Appendix B: Sub-Regional Reports

Ladysmith

Who was counted

People experiencing all three categories of homelessness were counted during the Homelessness Survey in Ladysmith. Please interpret percentages with caution as the number of those surveyed was relatively low (26).

Most people we surveyed in Ladysmith were precariously housed; however, 4 people who were homeless were surveyed, including 1 person who was absolutely homeless.

Table B.1 Housing category as a percentage of those surveyed or counted in Ladysmith

Housing Category	Percentage
Absolutely Homeless	4%
Relatively Homeless	12%
Precariously Housed	85%
Total # Counted	26

This reflected similar results to a survey conducted in September 2013, where 35 people were interviewed, including three people who were homeless.

Interestingly, 17 of the 26 people we surveyed in February 2014 in Ladysmith who were precariously housed had been homeless at some point in their lives.

Of these, most had been homeless for between 2 months to one year.

Table B.2 Time homeless, those precariously housed as a percentage of those surveyed in Ladysmith

Time homeless	Percentage
Less than 1 month	2%
2 – 12 months	8%
1 year or more	3%

Only two of the people surveyed who were experiencing relative homelessness shared how long they had been without a place of their own – both said this was for more than two years.

We know we missed people – here are some reasons why

On the Count Day, community residents rallied at the Ladysmith Resource Center to provide and promote a special meal offered on that day. The survey also happened on the same day as food bank distribution, which brought over two hundred people living on low incomes to the survey site.

There are multiple reasons why we were not able to count everyone who was homeless or precariously housed in the Ladysmith area. First, on the day of the count there was heavy rain which may have deterred some people from coming out to access services. Surveying began later than scheduled but did run for several hours. A mobile team travelled around to key sites in Ladysmith looking for people who might be homeless. While they found some evidence of camp sites that may have been where people who were homeless stayed, they did not encounter anyone who was sleeping rough at the time. Requests had been made to have an additional count site at a private camp ground, but permission was not granted, which meant those staying there (many of whom could be viewed as precariously housed) would have had to travel a long distance in order to be surveyed.

Some descriptions of people experiencing homelessness in recent months in Ladysmith who we missed:

- *Two young girls couch surfing*
- *2 group tent sites near town*
- *Some people living on boats just off shore*
- *A few students know to be couch surfing*

As in other areas across the region, absolute homelessness in Ladysmith is likely to be more common in warmer weather. In the past, there have been people reported to be camping out near a local beach. The Ladysmith Emergency Aid Committee, many of whom volunteered in the survey, suggested that September is a better time of year to hold a count, as a highly transient summer homeless population have left by the time winter rains had settled in. They suggested a number of people live outdoors until the weather gets bad.

Transportation to shelters in cold weather or a Ladysmith emergency shelter

Of particular interest to the Ladysmith Emergency Aid Committee was whether people who were absolutely homeless in Ladysmith would use transportation to Nanaimo shelters in cold weather, or would use a Ladysmith emergency shelter if there was one. In September when

these questions were asked, the two people who were absolutely homeless had mixed responses – 1 said yes and 1 said no.

In February, only two people who were relatively homeless answered these questions. Both said that they would use a Ladysmith emergency shelter if there was one, or use transportation to a shelter in Nanaimo.

In February, the one absolutely homeless person counted from Ladysmith was counted at a Nanaimo shelter. It is not known how she got there and she was only counted, not surveyed. Two other men from the Cowichan area were in Nanaimo shelters, but they were also only counted, not surveyed and it is not known where in the Cowichan they were from.

South Cowichan

Who was counted

People experiencing all three categories of homelessness measured during the Homeless survey were counted in the South Cowichan. Please interpret percentages with caution as the number of those surveyed was relatively low (22)¹.

Most people we surveyed in South Cowichan were precariously housed; however, 5 people who were homeless were surveyed, including 1 person who was absolutely homeless.

Table B.3 Housing category as a percentage of those surveyed in South Cowichan

Housing Category	Percentage
Absolutely Homeless	5%
Relatively Homeless	19%
Precariously Housed	78%

We know we missed people – here are some reasons why

There are multiple reasons why we were not able to count everyone who may be homeless and staying in the South Cowichan. We only had one count site in the South Cowichan and this was

¹ The demographics of people experiencing absolute homelessness, relative homelessness and precarious housing are not expected to be substantially different in South Cowichan from people in the region overall whom we were able to survey. For more information on the demographics and housing supports, please see the full Cowichan Homeless Report.

at a local food bank. Services are only available once a week. Some clients did not come to obtain services during the count time and some people chose not to participate. South Cowichan is a large, predominantly rural area. There are many places that homeless people could camp out and few people might know they are there.

Some descriptions of people experiencing homelessness in recent months in South Cowichan who we missed:

- *Some people tenting in a park near Shawnigan Lake*
- *A man who was living in his car down by Cowichan Bay*
- *People temporarily housed in a motel where we were not able to count them*
- *A squatter found in an old abandoned building on someone's property*
- *Some students in the K-12 system are known to be living with friends because they can't be at home*
- *Some people are living on unheated boats*

As in other areas across the region, absolute homelessness in the South Cowichan is likely to be more common in warmer weather. In the past, there have been people reported to be sleeping rough on the beach near Mill Bay village, and we have also had reports of veterans and others camping in the bush.

Lake Cowichan

Who was counted

Very few surveys were completed in Lake Cowichan. Please interpret percentages with caution as the number of those surveyed was so small (6)².

Almost all of the people surveyed in Lake Cowichan were precariously housed, though one person was relatively homeless.

Table B.4 Housing category as a percentage of those surveyed in Lake Cowichan

Housing Category	Percentage
Absolutely Homeless	0%
Relatively Homeless	9%
Precariously Housed	91%

² The demographics of people we surveyed who were experiencing relative homelessness or were precarious housing are not expected to be substantially different in Lake Cowichan from the region overall. For more information on the demographics and housing supports, please see the full Cowichan Homelessness Report.

We know we missed people – here are some reasons why

There are multiple reasons why we were not able to count everyone in Lake Cowichan who may be experiencing some form of homelessness. We were not able to access the main service provider (the food bank) in town for the count day as they were not open. The food bank did let clients know about the count and that a meal would be served at the count site. However, the survey was held a week after this referral. There were likely some food bank clients who might have been homeless or precariously housed, but they did not access services the week before and thus did not know about the Count.

Some descriptions of people experiencing homelessness in Lake Cowichan around the time of the survey who we missed:

- *A couple and a child staying with a precariously housed family*
- *A man living out of his truck*
- *A couple living in a car*
- *Someone living in a small outbuilding not meant as a residence*

In the past, there have been people reported staying at a resident's cabin on the lake while there was no one there or tenting in the bush, but no one was known to be doing so at the time of the survey.

Many more would have been expected to be in precarious housing situations in Lake Cowichan. Housing in Lake Cowichan is more affordable than in many other parts of the Cowichan and service providers report that it is common for people receiving Income Assistance or Persons with Disability Assistance to look for housing in Lake Cowichan.

Appendix C: Cowichan Supports for People Experiencing Homelessness

Any individuals looking for a first step to do something to address homelessness might consider connecting with one of these local groups working to address homelessness, housing and poverty:

- Warmland House, <http://cowichanvalley.cmha.bc.ca/how-we-can-help/employment>
- Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, www.cwav.org/
- Meals on the Ground
- Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society, 106-5264 Trans Canada Hwy, Duncan, <http://hofduncan.org/>
- Cowichan Valley Food Basket Society, 5810 Garden St., Duncan, www.cvbs.ca
- CMS Food Bank, 2740 Lashburn Road, Mill Bay
- Chemainus Harvest House Food Bank, 9814 Willow, Chemainus
- Cowichan Neighbourhood House Association, 9796 Willow St, Chemainus
- Cowichan Lake Community Services, 121 Point Ideal Dr, Lake Cowichan
- Lake Cowichan Food Bank, 2315 Madrill Rd, Lake Cowichan
- Ladysmith Resources Centre Association, 630 2nd Avenue, Ladysmith, www.lrca.bc.ca
- Social Planning Cowichan - Regional Affordable Housing Directorate, www.socialplanningcowichan.org/housing.html

APPENDIX D: Homeless Survey Questionnaire

Surveyor Initials: _____

Location: _____

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING ISSUES SURVEY

Hi! I am <name>. We are conducting a confidential survey with people in our community who are experiencing homelessness or having trouble finding housing that feels safe and stable.

Are you experiencing homelessness or any challenges with housing? Yes **CONTINUE**

If No or No Response **END**

Would you be willing to complete this survey? It should take about 5-7 minutes to complete. You can skip a question or stop the survey at any time. *Offer a cigarette, candy, or food for during or after the survey.*

YES **GO TO Q.1**

IF NO OR NO RESPONSE **END**

1. Just to check, have you already done this survey?

YES OR NO RESPONSE, **END**

No **CONTINUE**

2. Where did you stay last night?

- Shelter (e.g. Warmland House)
- Women's Transition House (e.g. Somenos House)
- Friend or family's place
- Outside/parkade/alley/laneway/sidewalk/transit shelter
- Park/woods/trail/riverbank area
- Abandoned building / container
- Car / Truck / tent
- Shed / barn
- Other _____
- No response

IF ANSWER IS ABOVE, GO TO PAGE 2 (WHITE)

- My apartment/house/room
- RV / boat / trailer/ camper van

IF ANSWER IS ABOVE, GO TO PAGE 4 (YELLOW)

3. What year were you born?

19 _____ No response

4. (If born in 1995 or later): Are you currently living away from your parent(s) or legal guardian?

- Yes
- No
- No response

5. I'd like to ask who is with you – are you: (Please check all that apply)

- Alone
- With a partner/spouse
- With children: ages _____
- With friend(s)
- With pet (specify dog / cat / etc.) _____
- Other _____
- No response

6. There can be many reasons people are without their own place to live. What are the main reasons you are without your own place (read out - please check all that apply)

- Couldn't afford rent
- Evicted
- Moving or stranded
- Abuse
- Addiction
- Relationship breakdown
- Family conflict
- Recently released from corrections or treatment facility
- Health condition
- By choice
- Other _____
- No response

7. How long have you been without a place of your own?

_____ days
 _____ weeks Don't know
 _____ months
 _____ years No response

8. In what community did you last have your own place to live?

_____ No response

9. How long have you lived in the Cowichan Valley?

_____ days
 _____ weeks My whole life
 _____ months Don't know
 _____ years No response

10. Do you have any of the following health conditions? (read out - please check all that apply)

- Medical condition
- Addiction
- Mental health condition
- Physical disability
- Other _____
- No response

GO TO PAGE 3 AFTER GENDER AND CODE BELOW

GENDER male female transgendered unknown

CAN YOU PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR MOTHER'S INITIALS TO HELP US AVOID DUPLICATE SURVEYS? _____

11. We are interested to know how people are able to support themselves. Will you tell me where you get your money from? Which one of these is your main source of income? (underline main source; check all others that apply – prompt with “anything else?” after question is answered)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare / Income Assistance/PWD (provincial) | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability Benefit (federal or private) | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasional / part-time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment Insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pension | <input type="checkbox"/> Worker’s compensation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Panhandling / handouts | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recycling (binning, bottle collection) | <input type="checkbox"/> No Income |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> No response |

12. Do you consider yourself to be an Aboriginal , First Nations or Métis person?

- Yes
 No No response

I have one more question about supports to find housing, but it takes a few more minutes. Would you have time to tell me a little about what supports would help you find housing? I have a list I can read, and then you can tell me if there is anything else.

13. What would help you find housing? (*Would you prefer to check the boxes yourself, or have me read this to you?*)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health supports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Income | <input type="checkbox"/> Detox services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular income | <input type="checkbox"/> Damage/pet deposit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less discrimination about: | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer literacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pets | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal / housing references |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity / race | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone / voicemail box |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal ID |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to credit/better credit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal record | <input type="checkbox"/> Bank account |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation to see apartments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about housing / support services | <input type="checkbox"/> Bus pass |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach worker / advocate to help you access services: | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing search | <input type="checkbox"/> Don’t want permanent housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance use | <input type="checkbox"/> No Response |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money issues | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

<p>3. What year were you born?</p> <p>19_____ <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>	<p>8. Have you ever been homeless or in-between housing?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes GO TO 9 <input type="checkbox"/> No GO TO 11 <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>
<p>4. (If born in 1995 or later): Are you currently living away from your parent(s) or legal guardian?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>	<p>9. How long were you without a place of your own?</p> <p>_____ days _____ weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know _____ months _____ years <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>
<p>5. Where do you live?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Apartment / condo / townhouse <input type="checkbox"/> House <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile home <input type="checkbox"/> RV / Trailer <input type="checkbox"/> Boat <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>	<p>10. Where did you stay while homeless or in-between housing? (Please check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Transition House <input type="checkbox"/> Friend or family's place <input type="checkbox"/> Outside <input type="checkbox"/> Car / truck / tent <input type="checkbox"/> Shed / barn / abandoned building <input type="checkbox"/> RV / boat / trailer <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>
<p>6. What main challenges, if any, do you experience with housing? (read out – please check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No housing challenges [THANK YOU, END SURVEY] <input type="checkbox"/> Rent / mortgage is more than I can afford <input type="checkbox"/> Home does not have enough bedrooms for all the people that live there <input type="checkbox"/> Home is unheated <input type="checkbox"/> Past evictions <input type="checkbox"/> Landlords won't rent to me <input type="checkbox"/> Landlords won't rent to families <input type="checkbox"/> Landlords won't rent to those with pets <input type="checkbox"/> No references <input type="checkbox"/> Credit rating <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>	<p>11. How long have you lived in the Cowichan Valley?</p> <p>_____ days _____ weeks <input type="checkbox"/> My whole life _____ months <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know _____ years <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>
<p>7. I'd like to ask who is living with you. Do you live: (read out - please check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Alone <input type="checkbox"/> With a partner/spouse <input type="checkbox"/> With children: ages _____ <input type="checkbox"/> With friend(s) <input type="checkbox"/> With pet (specify dog / cat / etc.) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No response</p>	<p>GENDER <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> transgendered <input type="checkbox"/> unknown</p>
<p>CAN YOU PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR MOTHER'S INITIALS TO HELP US AVOID DUPLICATE SURVEYS? _____</p>	

12. Do you have any of the following health conditions? (read out - please check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health condition | <input type="checkbox"/> No response |

13. We are interested to know how people are able to support themselves. Will you tell me where you get your money from? Which one of these is your main source of income? (underline main source; check all others that apply – prompt with “anything else?” after question is answered)

- Welfare / Income Assistance/PWD (provincial)
- Disability Benefit (federal or private)
- Employment Insurance
- Pension
- Panhandling
- Recycling (binning, bottle collection)
- Employment:
 - Occasional / part-time
 - Full-time
- Other _____
- No Income
- No response

14. Approximately how much is your monthly rent / mortgage?

\$ _____ No response

15. Approximately how much is your average monthly income?

\$ _____ No response

16. Do you consider yourself to be an Aboriginal , First Nations or Métis person?

- Yes
 No No response

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME