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This report is respectfully submitted by: Rob C. Thiessen

Managing Director, HOPE FOR FREEDOM SOCIETY
Project Administrator

Introduction

Homelessness has become a very visible and disturbing burden to our culture. Our media, through print and broadcast images, show us on a fairly regular basis the extent of the homeless phenomenon. It seems incongruent that in one of the richest societies in the world we have people among us those that do not have a stable place to lay their head. As a culture, we feel a degree of guilt around this fact, and we generally find the whole thing unacceptable. Add to that, the apparent disturbing trend of a steady increase in the homeless population in the face a growing economy and a very positive employment environment. The question which needs to be answered is: why is this phenomenon happening in the midst of all this affluence?

This report will attempt to look that the statistical data gathered during the course of a 6 month project, as well as, the anecdotal history and experience of some of the homeless in one part the lower mainland of British Columbia. It should be noted that information gathered and conclusions drawn will only be relevant to the subject area. The experience and data in other regions of the province may be different from our experience and data here in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody.

It is our hope that this information will be used positively, by our society in general and all of the various levels of government, its agencies and para-agencies, to learn from this community what works best in terms of connecting with the homeless population and providing housing advocacy for their community. This report will not make any direct recommendations; it will provide data, make some observations and draw some conclusions, recommendations will be left to others who interpret this report. A future report will likely included some recommendation; it is our opinion that six months worth of data is not enough for us to make recommendations. This report may also, raise more questions than it answers.

Below is a breakdown of the start and finish of how, why and what was learned as we attempted to make a difference in the lives of the homeless population of the Tri-Cities. Definitions are provided at the beginning of each report breakdown in order to eliminate any misunderstanding and make clear what we were attempting to describe and achieve.

Impetus - a force that moves something along.

In early March of 2006 our organization, Hope for Freedom Society (herein called, HFFS), was approached by two representatives of the provincial Ministry for Employment and Income Assistance (herein called, MEIA). The agenda for that meeting centred around the desire of MEIA to launch a project focusing on the homeless in the areas of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Village of Anmore and Village of Belcarra. It needs to be noted that from the beginning, MEIA was the “push” for this project, to their credit they were the impetus.

It had been MEIA’s observation that representatives of HFFS had shown an interest in the homeless problem, as they were present at the various homeless task forces and committee meetings held in the Tri-Cities area, further they believed HFFS probably had some experience with the homeless sub-culture through their primary function of providing drug and alcohol

recovery in the City of Port Coquitlam. It is a common phenomenon that addiction eventually leads to homelessness for some of those struggling with substance abuse; therefore, HFFS would have dealt with many homeless individuals in the course of their recovery and treatment experience.

After an exchange of memoranda of understanding, it was agreed between MEIA and HFFS to initiate a 6 month homeless project in the Tri-Cities. Terms and conditions for this project were agreed upon, and MEIA, being the impetus for this initiative, provided HFFS with a grant to begin this unique process. Under the banner of **Hope for Freedom Outreach & Advocacy**, HFFS began its work in April of 2006.

Purpose – *that which is set before, as an object to be reached or accomplished.*

As agreed between MEIA and HFFS the principle purpose of this initiative would be to contact, establish relationship, trust, and work toward connecting homeless persons to official and un-official resources, with the expressed purpose of changing the trajectory of the existing homeless population of Tri-Cities to a more positive and acceptable living arrangement, one person at a time.

The secondary purpose was to gather statistical data from the homeless population which could be used to track trends, demographics, a hard census, and other facts which could be processed and interpreted and used to drawn conclusions that would be helpful in drafting a longer term strategy for this unfortunate trend in our society. It was understood that this would be a significant challenge, as the homeless culture is largely suspicious of “outsiders” entering their sub-culture.

It was not our collective desire to make homelessness comfortable for those that find themselves in this life style, but to provide and facilitate resources to help the homeless find a better way.

Method – *a systematic way of doing or accomplishing something.*

According to the “scope of work” document (see attached) submitted to MEIA during our preliminary discussions, the following process was developed to achieve our joint purpose. HFFS would collect data from our encounters and tabulate this information in a format that will allow us to analyze and break-down what we have learned, in order to establish credible statistics about homelessness in the subject areas.

Hope for Freedom Society would identify and train 4 outreach workers who would be our contacts with the homeless in the subject region. These workers would function in 2 teams of 2, and systematically cover all the 3 cities which are known as the Tri-Cities. The workers were chosen based on a criteria which included but was, not limited to, a personal experience with homelessness in their past, empathy for the plight of the homeless, graduates of our life skills, conflict resolution and anger management courses. This gave a certain “street cred” to our workers that proved invaluable to this project.

Based on preconceived ideas of homeless concentrations, it was determined the Shaughnessy Street in Port Coquitlam would be “ground zero”. From that “pebble drop” centre the strategy was to move out in circles until the entire 3 regions were covered. As this was in progress, the teams would double back from time to time and go over old territory to thoroughly cover the whole region. Typical sociological pathways and meeting places of the homeless were discovered and the teams positioned themselves in those pathways in order to make contact with individual members of the homeless culture. During the course of this project a constant repeat of this strategy occurred, in order to re-examine old territory in the way described earlier in this chapter.

In order to effectively cover all the areas and all of the sociological nuances of this sub-culture, it was determined that all days of the week and all hours of the day needed to be covered in order to establish a basic trend. This was accomplished by various team shift changes over the course of this project. Once a basic trend was identified, regular routines were established to cover those homeless that were nocturnal. In the process of all covering all times of the day and searching all areas of the 3 regions, concentrations of homelessness were observed. These “camps” were named and plotted on an area map and numbers of homeless in each camp was tabulated. Part of the routine was to visit these camps on a regular basis and observe changes. From time to time camps would draw the attention of regional by-law officers and would be purged. When possible, our workers would attend these events and try and reinforce, with the affected camp residents, the need to find a better way.

After a few months the teams became familiar with the majority of the pathways, meeting places and homeless camps prevalent in the 3 subject regions. This allowed our teams to become more efficient at establishing relationship, rapport and trust with homeless individuals and begin the process of opening client files for each of the people that were willing to give us some personal information. Our workers were supplied with some “creature comforts” which could be used to open dialogue with the homeless individuals. This included, coffee, some food, clean socks, and other small items which could be transported in the workers back packs. Part of the method was providing some comfort, while not making homelessness comfortable. There is a fine line between the two, and it was one of the continuing challenges throughout this endeavour.

Once familiarity was established and client files opened, individual needs and barrier assessments could begin (throughout this report, the use of the word “client” refers to homeless individuals for which files were opened). This process of assessing client need and barriers included the following defined list:

Needs – things that could be identified as immediate and critical to the individual’s well being outside of homelessness.

- medical care
- clothing
- clean water
- resource information
- access to resources
- dental care
- footwear
- personal hygiene products
- empathy and encouragement

Barriers – *beliefs and conditions which contributed to and impaired an individual's ability to find suitable residency.*

- substance abuse
- mental illness
- no financial resources
- familial abuse
- concurrent disorders
- arrest warrants
- urban myth

As the above were identified and assessed, efforts were made to help individuals overcome these needs and barriers if they were willing. The strategy for accomplishing this task was to connect with other agencies and resources, such as, but not limited to: drug and alcohol recovery; Mental Health services; dry stable housing through available housing or shelters; BC Employment and Assistance offices; access to free showers and/or laundry services (based on community availability).

During this process our outreach workers acted as advocates for the individuals while trying to address their needs and barriers. The intent was to “come along side” of the homeless act on their behalf and in their best interest. These included encouraging a person, with potential arrest as their barrier, to go to the local police detachment and have their name run in the system and face the consequences. The worker would come along with them for support. Workers were encouraged to accompany the homeless to all appointments made on their behalf. A major part of our strategy was to overcome barriers before we secured appropriate housing. If the barriers could not be resolved, any housing solutions would not last, and as a result the affected person's life would once again spin out of control and homelessness would resume.

In the last month of the project a concerted effort was made to count all the homeless population in the Tri-Cities area. Achieving a credible hard census was one of the more difficult tasks, as personal contact with all the people in that sub-culture was not possible. The census was achieved by recording physical descriptions, testimony of other homeless individuals about the existence of un-contacted persons, and other means of identifying people from afar. This data was then compared between workers to eliminate duplication.

Data & Information – *collection of facts from which conclusions can be drawn. Data on its own has no meaning, only when interpreted by some kind of processing does it take on meaning and become information.*

The following data is based on the personal and repetitive contacts made with 122 individual homeless people in the Tri-Cities area. Personal files were opened for each of the individuals contacted and hard data was collected on each person during the course of this 6 month project. Over the course of 23 weeks, 1562 man hours were spent on 1166 individual encounters with the homeless. From these observations and personal information was

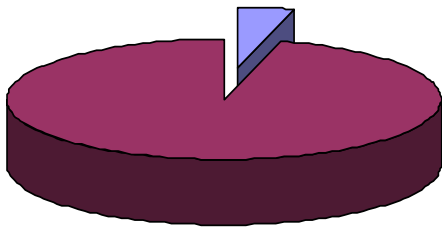
gathered and tabulated. It is from this individual information collected, we created the charts and graphs for the data section of this report. It was the expressed desire of the author of this report that all of the data reported would be collected and processed in the most scientific way possible, and would survive audit.

Some of the percentages reported below will add up to more than 100%, this is due to the fact that most individuals contacted had more than one barrier and more than one homeless living arrangement. That resulted in overlap in most of the barriers we tracked.

Where do they live?

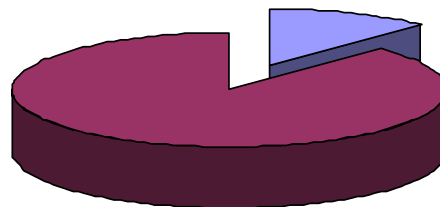
One of the challenges we faced was defining homelessness. It became immediately apparent that homelessness had many forms. Below are some of the forms we encountered. We broke down the various places homelessness occurred in the following manner and calculated the percentages of the total homeless population in those places. There is overlap in these percentages because of client movement during our study.

Abandoned Buildings 4%



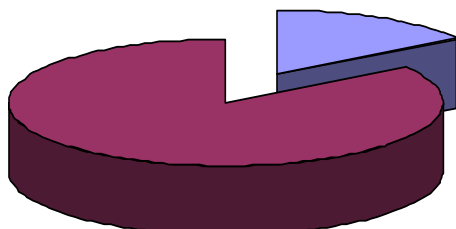
There are many empty and abandoned building and houses in the Tri-Cities area. These building are often accessed by the homeless and used until they are discovered and evicted. Homeless individuals can sometimes spend several months in these dwellings before they are discovered.

Camps 12%



Homeless camps are those places where there is more than one individual living in close proximity with another. Some camps had as many as 8 to 10 different people living together. Camps were found in forested areas throughout the region.

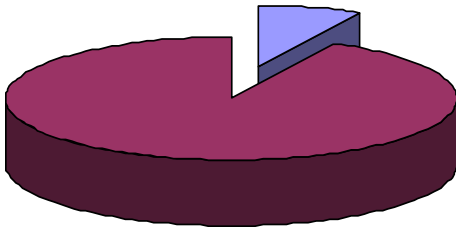
Crack Shacks 16%



Not all of the residents of drug houses are homeless. These types of houses always have permanent occupants, usually the people that run them and their “lieutenants”. The people counted in these types of dwelling were those whose

time there would be counted in days, not weeks or months.

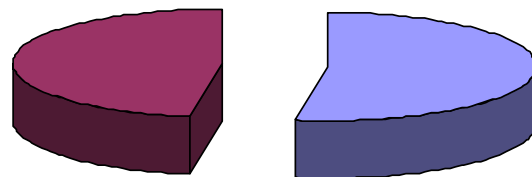
Parks 7%



City parks did not have the numbers of homeless expected. This is probably due to regular patrols that occur from Parks staff. Residence in parks would, therefore, be very short term.

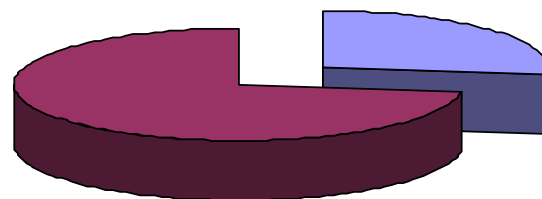
Roaming 52.5%

This was by far the largest category discovered by our study and it was one of the most surprising. 52.5% of the Tri-Cities homeless population move, on a continuing basis, through the other venues mentioned in this section and others not mentioned like “couch surfing”, short stints with family, shelters, porches, doorways, etc. Many homeless are constantly on the move. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent with those that have been out there in the beginning part of their homelessness. The “old timers” seem to settle in to a particular type of venue and stay there.

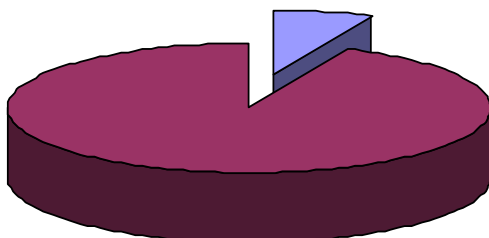


Woods & River 27%

This category includes wooded areas which are not parks, and areas along side the Coquitlam River, Fraser River and Pitt River. These areas were usually occupied by single individuals. Camps in these areas are part of the previous mentioned category.



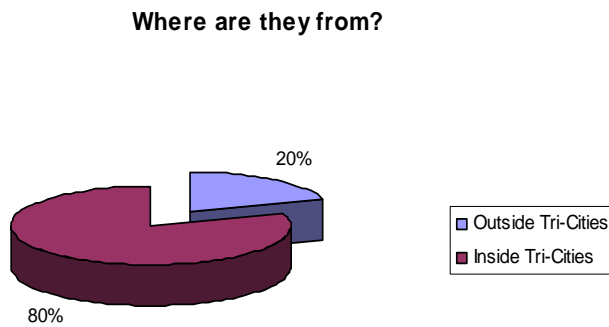
Vehicles 7%



This category represents cars, trucks, vans and abandoned trailers. Vehicles are relatively short-term places to live and sleep, with some exceptions.

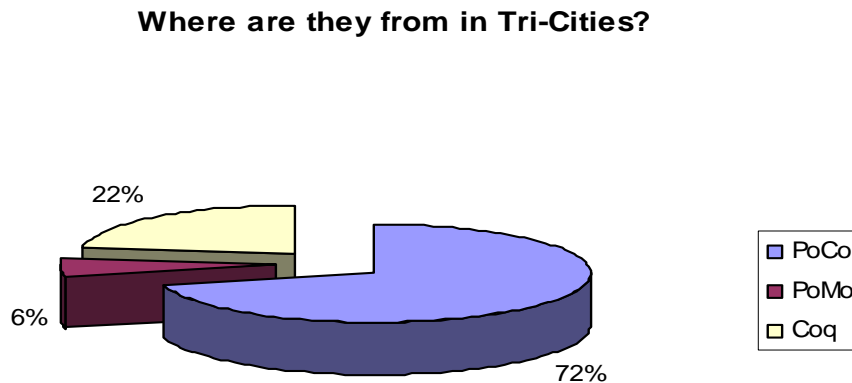
Where are they from?

In the process of getting to know our clients, part of our survey included the question. Where was your last permanent address? Since the lower mainland is claimed to be a comfortable destination for our nation's homeless, it was one the pieces of information deemed important to our project.



Of all the people polled, 80% claimed that their last permanent address was within the Tri-Cities area. 20% claimed to come from outside the region and the rest of Canada. One person polled came from Romania.

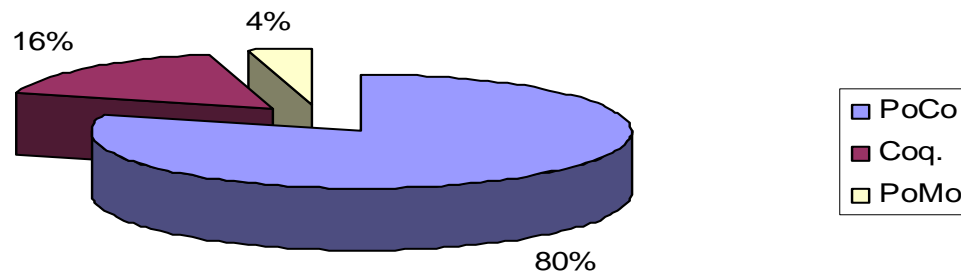
The individuals from inside the Tri-Cities were distributed through the subject region as follows.



Where are they now in the Tri-Cities?

From the census taken during this project, according to the method mentioned above, it is estimated that there are 177 homeless individuals in the Tri-Cities area, percentage error being about 8 percent. Based on this information, the homeless are distributed in entire region as follows:

Where are they in the Tri-Cities?

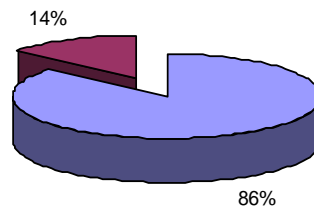


What are their Barriers?

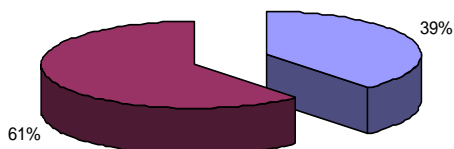
The following are some of the challenges faced by the clients encountered during our study. These barriers listed are not all of the beliefs and conditions that contributed to their homelessness, but they are the main issues we observed during the duration of this project. Most clients had more than one barrier, so there will be overlap in the percentage totals. One of the most significant data overlaps occurred with clients that had both mental illness and drug addictions as their main barriers. Data was collected and recorded for that specific dual barrier. We did not record other overlaps as they did not appear critical enough to include. Below are the conditions that had the biggest impact on our clients inability to sustain permanent housing.

Without a doubt addiction was the single biggest barrier faced the clients we surveyed. Individual stories varied, but it was apparent this was the major contributor to homelessness in the Tri-Cities.

Addicted 86%

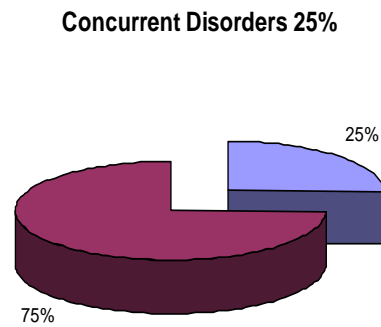


Mental Illness 39%

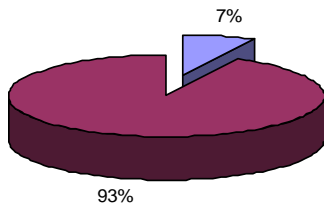


This data comes from direct testimony of affected clients, outreach worker observations, hearsay of others and information from mental health sources.

This is the data overlap that was worthy of recording. This pie chart represents those homeless individuals that had both mental illness and drug and alcohol addictions as their major barriers. All of these individuals were addicted, and 25% were also mentally ill.



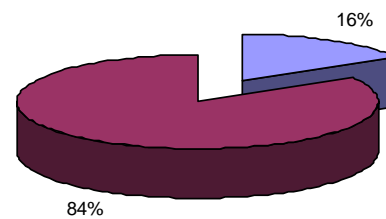
Familial Abuse 7%



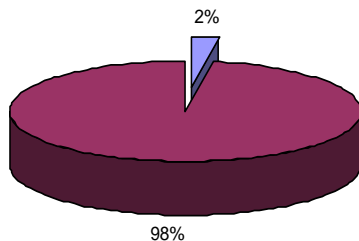
Acquiring this data was difficult and may not truly represent the experience of clients questioned. This issue is very sensitive and it is highly possible those interviewed did not wish to review family secrets. Actual numbers may be understated due its' sensitive nature.

This chart represents those that had no financial resources, or believed none were available.

No Resources 16%

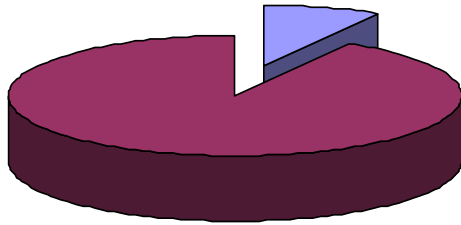


Arrest Warrants 2%



This statistic represents those that had arrest warrants, or believed they did.

Urban Myths 8%

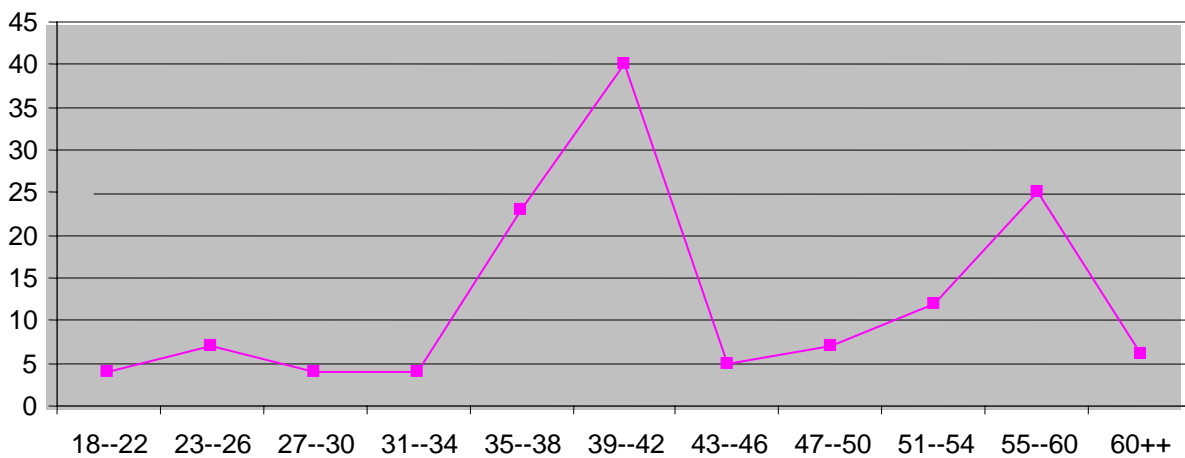


Some of the homeless believe that “something bad” would happen to them if they “came in out of the cold”. We referred to this phenomenon as, urban myth. Most of these beliefs appear to come from paranoia as a result of substance abuse or a mental health condition.

What is the age range?

Through our observations and gathered testimony from our clients, we encountered people from age 18 to 60 years old. Minors were not really a factor in the Tri-Cities. We came across 2 minor children in our last six months and those children were quickly re-united with their families. The average age of the homeless in the Tri-Cities is 43.5 years.

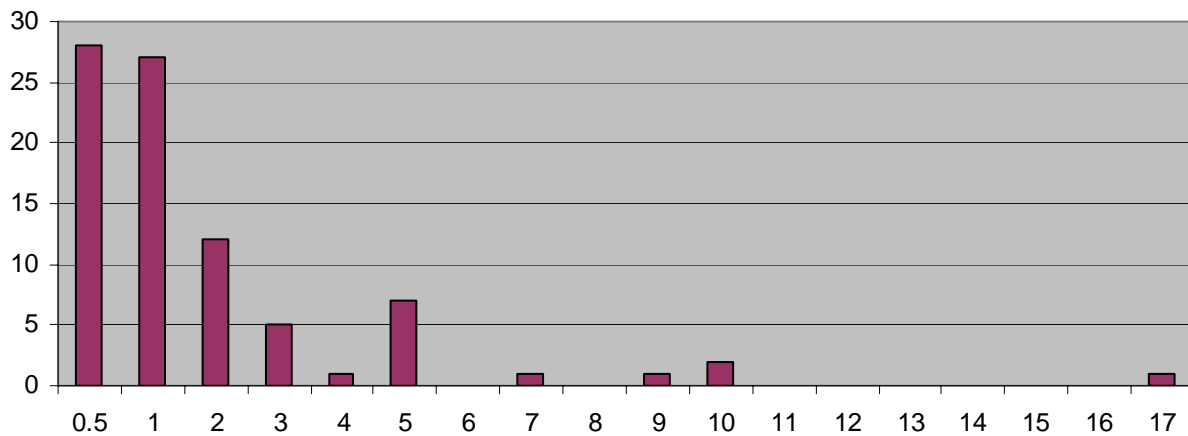
Age Range



How long have they been out there?

All of the people we encountered in this sub-culture were asked about the length of time they had been homeless, the results of this survey is recorded below. The average length of time spent homeless by the people interviewed in the Tri-Cities was 2 years.

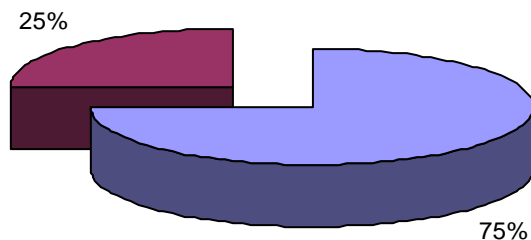
Homeless Longevity



What is the male/female breakdown?

The number of women in the homeless sub-culture was a surprise to this author, I did not expect this many women to be without permanent residence. Within this statistic, 14% were couples.

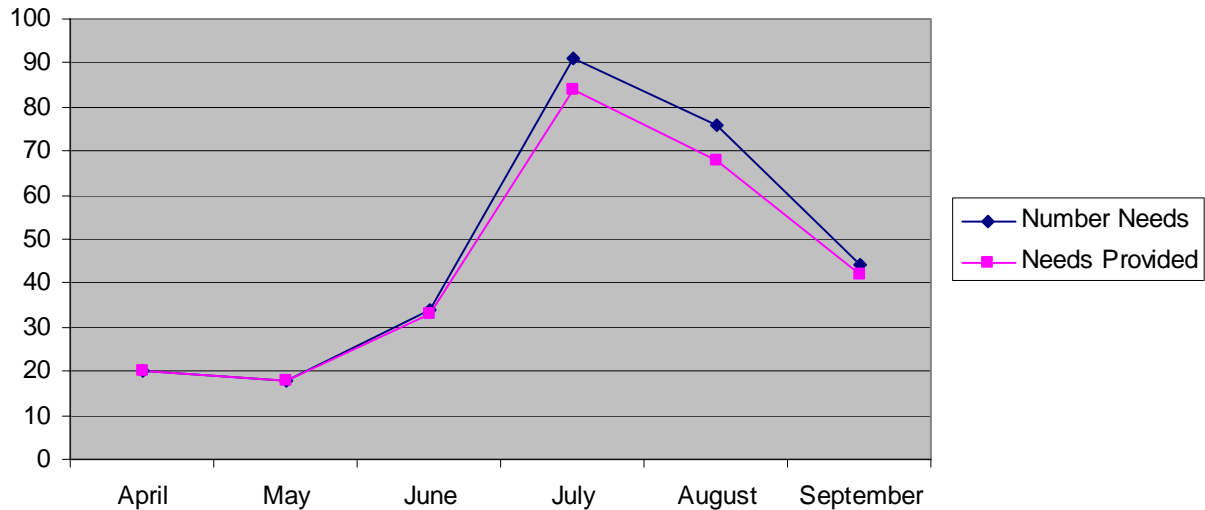
Male 75% Female 25%



Were some of their needs met?

As mentioned above, once contact was established and some trust and rapport earned, attempts were made to supply some of the critical needs we observed. Again, we did not want to make homelessness comfortable, but we did want to relieve some of the suffering and try to rebuild some human dignity. What was apparent was the relative ease that most needs could be provided. It is impossible to starve to death in the Tri-Cities, with the multiple food banks in the area, homeless can always find nourishment. Clothing also is not an issue, as there are several clothing banks in the region. Medical and dental attention is a more difficult need to

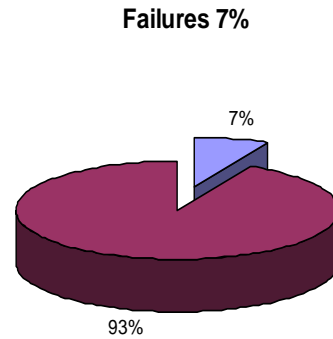
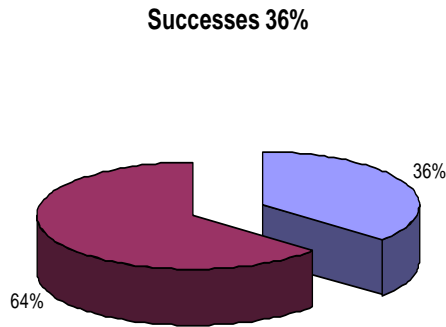
provide; however, it is possible with a little creativity. There are also places for the homeless to shower and get their clothing laundered, if they are willing to travel a bit. There were other more specific needs not listed above which we were able to meet, such as; bus tickets, food vouchers, a hot cup of coffee, etc.



Our Successes and Failures

Over the course of this project we were able to effectively move 44 individuals off the street and into something other than homelessness. We consider those 44 as our successes, as finding appropriate housing was our principle purpose. Of those 44 people, 19 of them found long term housing. The rest found accommodation in shorter term facilities, like drug treatment and recovery, shelters, etc. Of the 44, 9 have slid back into homelessness, these came from the group that found shorter term accommodations. We consider those 9 people as our failures, in spite of our best efforts. We continue to work with those people in order get them back on track. As we walked beside these clients that were spiralling up out of homelessness, we also wanted to stand beside those that spiralled down. Our workers began to care deeply for the people they met and sometimes it was difficult to maintain a profession distance from them.

Most of our successes came from informing our clients and following through with connections of existing community resources. It seems that they just needed a hand going through the process.



Conclusions – any thought or opinion one arrives at through pondering facts and information.

As mentioned in the introduction, this report is relevant only to the region of the lower mainland studied. Whether or not, the data gathered in the subject area can be assumed to be the same in other regions, is for others to decide. Another important consideration is the fact that this project occurred during the spring and summer months of the year. A full year's worth of data may affect the data reported above. The conclusions drawn from this initiative come from a consensus of opinion of HFFS and MEIA.

What jumps out dramatically, is the fact that most of the homeless are either drug addicted or mentally ill, or both. The other barriers encountered, appear minor in comparison with addiction and mental health challenges. There has been reported an increase in homelessness throughout the country. In part, could this be because of an increase in addiction and fewer resources for the mentally ill? Mental illness and addiction are far and away the biggest barriers to permanent residency our clients faced.

Discovering the barriers was not an easy task as many of our clients did not initially wish to be forthcoming. Since some of the barriers were observed and not confessed by our clients, it is our assumption that our barrier data could be understated.

Tracking the living conditions this sub-culture chose to adopt proved to be very difficult. There is considerable overlap to the various venues chosen by the individuals studied. Most of them appeared to be on the move much of the time. For this reason the largest group fell under the "Roaming" category in the data reported above. This is partly due to some of them being moved by the clean-up work of City By-Law officers. It was also, observed that this phenomenon was more prevalent among those that were in the early stages of their homelessness.

A surprising statistic was the origins of most of the homeless in the Tri-Cities. 80% of them claim to have had their last permanent residence in the region studied, only 20% claim to have come from other parts of the country. Perhaps framing the question differently would produce

different results, however, for now it appears that homelessness in this region is largely a home grown problem. It will be interesting to see how this statistic will change once a full year of data is collected.

What is clearly apparent is that the City of Port Coquitlam bears the brunt of the problem. This is partly due to the ideal nature of the geography of the downtown area of the city; it is flat and close to parks, woods and the Coquitlam River. As is evident with the data above, most of those that come from outside the studied region ended up in the City of Port Coquitlam. No homeless individuals were found in the villages of Anmore or Belcarra.

Age and homeless longevity is another piece of data that may be affected by the information gathered after one year instead of 6 months. Presently, Tri-Cities homeless are largely middle-aged and have spent 2 years on the “streets”. This statistic may change once a longer study is completed. It was this author’s original assumption that the median age would be a lot younger and they would have been “out there” a lot longer.

As mentioned in the data section of this report, most of our successes came from helping clients connect with existing resources. We believe that many of the homeless are not informed about the resources available to them. Some believed that income assistance was not available to them; we helped them discover that in some cases they were eligible for this type of assistance. Some believed that drug treatment was beyond their financial ability, we helped them discover that treatment was available if they were willing to wait for a bed. Unfortunately, the wait was too long and they lost hope. Clearly, this region needs help in shortening waiting periods. Some needed detox, and we could not provide that service. This author believes that keeping this homeless culture informed as what is available to them, would help move some off the streets.

Finally, one of things data alone cannot communicate is the general hopelessness and despair evident in the homeless sub-culture. Sometimes there is surface veneer of contentment, however, after continued contact that veneer vanishes and depressing malaise comes through. For many, their barriers seem too heavy to overcome and they believe that homelessness is their lot. Some of that comes out in the anecdotal stories recorded below. There are a few that could be considered incorrigible, and are determined to remain homeless, but those are a lot fewer than most of us think. Some of the homeless just needed a little empathy, help, love and encouragement in overcoming their barriers and once that help was given, they were able to change their trajectory. Homelessness is very complex issue, and certainly there a great shortage of resources which our culture probably needs to overcome. But this report is more about the homeless than it is about homelessness. Our experience in the Tri-Cities has shown us that it is possible to make a difference if we give them a little help, take the time to listen and walk along side as they try to overcome their barriers. This author is not sure of the hidden cost of homelessness, but it may just be worth while for society to pay the relatively small cost of continued homeless outreach and advocacy. However, this last conclusion is something for others to decide.

Below are stories written by one of our outreach field workers. These stories come from the personal interaction of this worker and the homeless; this worker has many, many stories. Names are not used to protect anonymity.

Stories by Darren Charuk, Hope for Freedom Outreach Worker
edited for punctuation only, not content.

THE POWER OF ADDICTION

Imagine, being in a muddy, slimy, dark deep pit trying desperately to get out. You claw your way inches from the top and to freedom and just when you think your there you slip back down again and again. That is how I can describe this man's addiction. He has been homeless now for over three years and uses drugs daily. This man tried recovery once this year and stayed clean for 4 days before he gave in to the Power of the addiction.

We see him now and then and we'll stop, talk briefly and give him some words of encouragement. But until he surrenders to the fact that he is an addict, nothing can be done. Today, the man reminds me of an x-ray as he is so thin and physically beaten I'm amazed that he is still alive.

ALL I NEED IS A PLACE

We, as outreach workers, hear this phrase time and time again. At times we also here " ALL I NEED IS A JOB " and in this story its about a mother of two who was so adamant that a place would solve her problems that we decided to help her get on Social Assistance and see if she could find a place and get off the drugs. At this point her kids are with her mother as this woman has been living out of a parked van. May 25th 1:30 pm was first contact when this lady came up to me and asked for some money. I wouldn't give her any but I did ask her a few questions and she mentioned she was homeless and wanted help but not yet. This lady disappeared for two months and re-surfaced at the end of July. She had been using a lot of drugs so we tried to suggest recovery but she said all she needed was a place and all would be o.k. Even though we knew from experience that it would never work we got her onto Social Assistance and she started looking for a place. Today, Sept. 12th this 37 year old mother of two is still homeless, still on drugs, but the saddest thing of all is that she truly believes that she will be fine once she gets a place.

BEAUTY WITHOUT THE BEAST

Here's a story of a young attractive blonde girl who at the age of 23 has experienced more than most her age. Our first contact with this young lady was when her mother called us desperate for help. You see, the girl had relapsed and was now in the company of a very violent man. A day after the man physically assaulted her and left cuts and bruises on her we met for an assessment of how we could help. The beast in this ladies life was not only the abusive boyfriend but another called HEROIN. We decided { my partner and I } that until she made a decision to clean up all we were prepared to do was find a shelter for her and encourage her to get well. On Aug.7th we received a call from this lady and she told us that she could get into detox tomorrow. Totally excited, we picked her up at 7:00 a.m. the next day and drove her to Maple Cottage detox in Burnaby. A week later there was life back in her eyes a bounce in her

step and hope for the future. Today, this girl is in a healthy relationship, off drugs and working.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

There are many times that I ask myself this question, but with this one particular client I'm afraid only God has the answer. Since May of this year we have been working with this woman and just when we think we're making progress she runs. This lady is around 40 years of age and has a daughter of 10. She has been homeless now for over two years and to see her you would never guess it. She has lived in abandoned sheds, tent cities and even alone in the bush. During the past five months we have gotten her into a recovery house (which she left), on social assistance so that she could have medical and a few dollars for food and personal care. We also had a bed reserved at a shelter that would have provided a program for helping her get well but every attempt made she either ran or told us she's not ready. Her mother died suddenly in August and since then she seems to be lost in a different world. We still see her weekly at the food bank as well as God Rock, but mostly we see her biking around town on her old 10 speed that has no brakes, a basket out front that is decorated with flowers and a sadness written on her face.

What will it take?

What I do know is we will not give up.

TILL DEATH DO US PART

Marriage, a sacred union that has been watered down over the years so that when hard times come (and they do) it has been made far too easy to get a divorce. The couple that I'm going to tell you about has been married for over 32 years and for the last 2 they have been homeless. Imagine if you can, having a business, home, cars one day and before you know it you're living in a tent under a tarp. First contact with these folks was early in the project when another one of our teams laid the groundwork in what was to become a huge success. Day after day, night after night they would go and pick up cans and bottles to make enough to just survive. Regardless of the weather, regardless of their health they had to go to "work". Throughout all this they stayed together and never gave up. After we got them on assistance the process of restoration was in motion. Currently, teeth are being made for the woman and they have just been approved to rent a one bedroom apartment in Port Moody and we are hoping to move them in on Oct 3rd. They both want to return to the workforce and once they move in we will help them with furniture that we get donated to us.

OUT OF TOUCH

Denial, it's a powerful, powerful, closed way of thinking.

The dictionary defines denial as: "TO REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE". In this man's case he either would not or could not face up to the fact that he has any part in his homelessness. He has the illusion of Grandeur and can't understand that he needs to partake in his recovery and his re-integration back into society. He minimizes his drug use and says he rarely uses, but it's hard to conceal the rapid weight loss. From the time we met this man we have offered numerous

resources to help him, as in Recovery house services to shelters to treatment. We even found him a room but he turned it down as it was in Maple Ridge and he didn't want to be that far away from his fourteen year old daughter. He talks about being the perfect_father, husband and employee, but when he gets asked as to how_he became homeless he becomes very defensive and elusive. At times he also mentions about being followed and watched from different agencies and when he speaks about them he's deadly serious. This individual is also quite intelligent as he has looked up portions of the law and will be confrontational with officials when they come around. At the city works yard camp, he bragged that they were going to bring in a portable toilet and a water tank. Reality was, the city moved him and others a few days later. The past six months have been a challenge as we've seen him go to Jail, hospitals and walk around with severe infections on his legs. However we will not give up.

TWENTY TWO

This is perhaps the most touching and rewarding story that I have the privilege of sharing with you. Sometimes, just sometimes people come into your life and leave a lasting impression, and this is exactly what this young couple did to me. I would love to tell you their whole story but what I am going to tell you is the transformation that took place in just a short period of time. On July 27th at 12:45 pm we responded to a call about some homeless people and when we arrived we found them in an abandoned house. There were four young people { 2-men & 2-women } and needless to say I knew them all. They were all high on drugs and the place was trashed with no concern about the property or whom it belonged to. At the time there was no reasoning with them, but before I left I told them that there is a better way so I gave them a couple of our cards and left it at that. All I could do was pray for them. A week later, one of the couples phoned and was asking for help. At this point they were going down fast. They were running out of couches to surf, cars to steal and sleep in, but most of all they were losing their sanity. We met with them, developed a plan and put it into action. On August 7th my partner and I took the young lady to Maple Cottage detox, where after a week she regained a lot of her health and thinking ability. I can also tell you this that throughout all this the mother was in constant contact with us as she needed to know how things were going with the recovery process. We re-united her and her boyfriend after the week and for the next week they stayed at a safe place. They then found their own place and have since moved. The N/A program talks about Jails, Institutions and Death and both of these 22 year olds have experienced the first two on numerous occasions. It's been over two months since the Crack Shack incident and I am thrilled to tell you that they are both working, have set goals and are extremely motivated to succeed. I talk to them regularly and I am so proud of the work they have done to get well.

FOR THE LOVE OF DOGS

Personally, I don't own a dog but I do know people that do and I can tell you that they treat them like kids. Usually people may have one or two and sometimes more, but this little short story is about a lady who ended up homeless and had with her 16 dogs albeit there were newborns (11) and 5 full grown adults. This lady must have been a breeder as they were all Boxers. Now, news travels extremely fast on the street and within days of her becoming homeless we were informed of the situation and one of our teams responded. It took a little bit

of trail breaking and a lot of mosquito bites but she was eventually located near the Coquitlam river. Upon first contact we knew something had to be done with the puppies as they were near the age of adoption. Well, once the word got out that there were puppies involved in this case people started asking how they could purchase one. The next thing I heard is that the whole bunch of them got bought up and then she moved camp. This time she moved to the south side of the bridge on Pitt River Road and it seemed that she thought she was safe there as it is Indian Reservation land if I'm not mistaken (please don't quote me). However, once again she was discovered and asked to move once more and what she did this time was to move North, but still on the river in the Parks and Rec. side of the Bridge. OK, I hope you're following this because now another dog has just given birth to another litter of puppies so the count is back up to 15 or 16 again. At this point the City was aware of the problem and when it came time for the removal of the camp the S.P.C.A. was present as well as the Fire Dept. Parks and Rec. and the Police. On that day we were also there to observe and to provide support if necessary. Earlier in the day she must have had a friend take the Puppies away as there was only the 5 adults there when we were there. However within an hour she and her dogs had disappeared saying that they had a place to go. My partner and I entered the camp for the first time and what I saw was, to say the least mind blowing. Imagine if you will, you're walking down a wooded forest and on the side of the trail there's a bookshelf full of weathered books and beside it lying on the ground a dead Boxer Puppy. Your standing there amongst a persons whole life, dishes, pots, pans, towels, living room lamps, a box of videos, ornaments { some broken some not } bikes, and I could go on and on but I think you get the drift. This lady loved her dogs so much that she would rather live outside to be with them than to have shelter and turn her dogs to anyone. Before I wrap up this story I want you to understand that the reason the dogs weren't taken away sooner is that they were not abused, mistreated in any way and they were in perfect health. Where is she now? There are rumours that she has been seen in places as Belcarra, Anmore and someone even said that they heard from a friend of a friend that she might be in Surrey.

Well, all I know is we haven't seen her.

But if you happen to hear of any Boxer puppies for sale we would like to know how she is doing.

THE COWBOY

I can only imagine what it must be like for people living today that are over sixty in today's world. The man I'm going to tell you a little about is a loner and the most important thing left to him is his appearance. When I first met this man I could not for the life of me believe that he lived outside. This was not a homeless man. He had on the full gear, cowboy hat, cowboy boots western shirt with tie, blue jeans and a western buckle and he was almost "SPOTLESS". This man is not just an alcoholic but suffers from a mental disability as well. He is very childlike and when he doesn't get his own way he has a tendency to run rather than be held accountable. This has made him a flight risk for any type of housing as he has bolted on numerous occasions.

After he had spent a month in a shelter, we found him a room in Maple Ridge. Almost like clockwork, this man phones me everyday complaining of something or another and I listen and listen and after he has vented I tell him I love him and that he's doing well even though he thinks he isn't. He now has been in the same place for over three months and that is a miracle

in itself. I go out every Saturday to bring him his medications and some food from the food bank and we sit on his balcony smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee and I listen to his tales of the old days when streets were one lane and Malls, well ... were rare.

OFFICE WITH A VIEW

Do you work in an office? Well, right now I am and the air in here is stale.

By the time you finish reading this story you should know who I am writing about. This man's office has an abundance of fresh air, non-stop people traffic and is located in the heart of downtown POCO. Yes, he refers to his spot outside the liquor store as his office. He's been there for years and on most occasions he's very well mannered except when he drinks to much Colt 45. It wasn't always like this though, years ago (I don't know how many) he was beaten very badly and has been disabled ever since. He was a successful man with a wife and kids but after that incident he began drinking a lot and family and things disappeared. I asked him once about life on the street and he says it's getting worse with young people getting violent toward him and others but there's no place that will take him as a tenant as he will not quit drinking. In the winter he goes to the shelter every night but returns to his "OFFICE" every day as he has kept it open for many a year. I recall him telling me once that he was being robbed every night for a week straight and in every case he would scream out at his assailant "DO YOU THINK IF I HAD ANY MONEY I WOULD BE LIVING ON THE STREET!" He has a lot of friends that live on the street and they try and watch out for him as best they can and I and my partner, well, we try to stop and visit with him at his Job, share some laughs, give him some food and check out his health. OH, one final note that keeps me sane is he refers to his shopping cart as his Winnebago.

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Coquitlam Alliance Church

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Port Moody Police Department

Tri-Cities Housing Coalition

Tri-Cities Homelessness Committee

Salvation Army

Alouette Outreach & Advocacy

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Scope of Work for Homeless Outreach and Advocacy Pilot Project

Overview:

Hope for Freedom Society (herein called, HFFS) agrees in principle to provide the resources to accomplish the Proposed Goals outlined in Terms of Reference document discussed on February 23, 2006 with Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (herein called, MEIA). It is understood that these goals may be in a state of flux and may be revised as this project moves forward. HFFS understands that this project is specific to Tri-Cities, Fraser Region 3, and its' duration is 6 months.

Scope of Work Outline:

1. HFFS will identify and orientate 4 individuals to complete the fieldwork necessary to satisfy this project. The 4 workers will make up 2 teams of 2 and will be dispatched to the subject areas 5 days a week.
2. Orientation will include input from outside agencies and individuals with experience in this type of work. Orientation will, also, include dress code issues, protection and safety, approach and introduction, extra-ordinary incident protocol, "on the fly" data gathering, data entry, use of tracking sheets, and other issues yet to be identified.
3. HFFS will develop a database to track the data gathered by field workers. It is understood by HFFS and MEIA that the data required will be an identified by both parties to this project and tracking data fields and reports will be a joint effort. Further to that database, HFFS will provide geographical information that will track "pockets" of homelessness in the Tri-Cities area. This map data will be part of our shared information with MIEA.
4. HFFS will contact, establish trust, and work toward connecting homeless persons to official and un-official resources, with the expressed purpose of changing their situation from homelessness to a more positive living arrangement. HFFS will attempt to connect with all agencies and resources mentioned in the MIEA Terms of Reference document mentioned above.
5. HFFS field workers will "come along side" people that are willing to change their homeless situation and assist them in accessing available resources, this includes accompanying subject people to arranged appointments with supporting agencies and resources.
6. HFFS will continue to track individuals after they have connected with various resources and report that data to our database.
7. HFFS will strike a budget specific to this project and will track costs against that budget. It is understood that these costs may be subject to audit by MEIA.
8. HFFS will administer this project through its office in Port Coquitlam and Rob Thiessen will be the administrator

It is understood by Hope for Freedom Society that the data and information collected during the span of this project is the property of both HFFS and MEIA.