

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

Toolkit

*Fostering Aboriginal Partnerships
and Cultural Competency
During your Point-in-Time Count*

ABOUT THIS *Resource*

This resource will support Canadian communities to develop cultural competency and foster partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities during the Homelessness Partnering Strategy's Coordinated Point-Time Count. Due to the significant overrepresentation of Aboriginal Peoples among homeless populations in Canada, Aboriginal communities should play a major role in all efforts to understand and address Canadian homelessness, including in PiT Counts. PiT Counts provide the unique opportunity for meaningful collaboration between mainstream and Aboriginal communities, enabling diverse groups to come together to better understand the needs and experiences of marginalized community members. PiT Count data can also contribute to a more comprehensive picture of Aboriginal homelessness locally and nationally, enabling governments to tailor policies, services, and funding to meet the needs of this population. This resource will provide the knowledge and practical skills that PiT Count Coordinators and PiT Count Committees need to achieve these goals.

Acknowledgements

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness is very grateful for the invaluable contributions of the Members of the Aboriginal Advisory Team: Cindy Sue Montana McCormack (SPRC of Hamilton), Dr. Yale Belanger (Associate Professor, University of Lethbridge, AB), Tina Slauenwhite (Executive Director, Tewegan Housing for Aboriginal Youth), and Jesse Thistle (Masters student, York University). The Aboriginal Advisory Team provided essential guidance and feedback during the development of this document. We thank the primary author, Kaitlin Schwan (PhD Candidate, University of Toronto), for developing and editing this resource in collaboration with Jesse Donaldson.

Table of CONTENTS

1.	Introduction: Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada	4
2.	Aboriginal Homelessness and PiT Counts in Canada	5
3.	Defining Aboriginal Homelessness	7
4.	Historic Causes of Aboriginal Homelessness	8
5.	Contemporary Causes of Aboriginal Homelessness	9
6.	Successful Approaches to Addressing Aboriginal Homelessness	11
7.	Ethical Research and the Historical Context of Research with Aboriginal Peoples	12
8.	Practical Strategies for Fostering Aboriginal Partnerships and Cultural Competency During your PiT Count	13
	<i>8.1 First Steps</i>	<i>14</i>
	<i>8.2 Methodology</i>	<i>16</i>
	<i>8.3 Implementation</i>	<i>18</i>
	<i>8.4 Post Count</i>	<i>19</i>
9.	Glossary	20

Fostering Aboriginal Partnerships and Cultural Competency During your Point-in-Time Count

1. INTRODUCTION: ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the extent and nature of Aboriginal homelessness in Canada, rigorous research leading to improved understanding is needed. PiT Count data can assist in achieving this goal. By participating in the HPS Coordinated Point-in-Time Count, your community will collect valuable data that will contribute to understanding and ending Aboriginal homelessness locally, regionally, and nationally. This module will provide the knowledge and practical skills your count committee will need in order to foster Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnerships and cultural competency during your count.

Aboriginal Peoples, the descendants of Canada's Indigenous groups, are the most materially, socially and spatially disadvantaged ethno-cultural group in the country. Aboriginal Peoples in Canada are [significantly overrepresented](#) among homeless populations, disproportionately at risk of becoming homeless, and face significant barriers to housing affordability. Comprised of three major groups (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), Aboriginal Peoples are incredibly diverse with respect to cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, languages, and geography. Experiences, understandings, and histories of homelessness vary considerably both between and among different Aboriginal Peoples.

Aboriginal People in urban spaces are 8 times more likely to experience homelessness than the general public — Source: Belanger, Awosoga & Weasel Head, 2013.

Aboriginal Peoples make up between 4 and 5 per cent of the total Canadian Population (Statistics Canada, 2011). However, an extensive literature review conducted by Caryl Patrick (2014) found that “[s]ome sources have suggested that Aboriginal homelessness in [major urban areas](#) ranges from 20 to 50 percent of the [total homeless population](#), while others have reported that the range may be much wider – [from 11 to 96 percent](#)” (p. 26). The disproportionate experience of homelessness among Aboriginal Peoples has encouraged many to argue for the recognition of an Aboriginal homelessness and housing crisis. Efforts to enumerate the extent of Aboriginal homelessness in Canada remain limited and different in scope, scale, and method (Belanger, Weasel Head, & Awosoga, 2012). However, the data that is available has shown that Aboriginal homelessness is increasing rapidly, particularly in urban settings (Belanger et al., 2013).

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

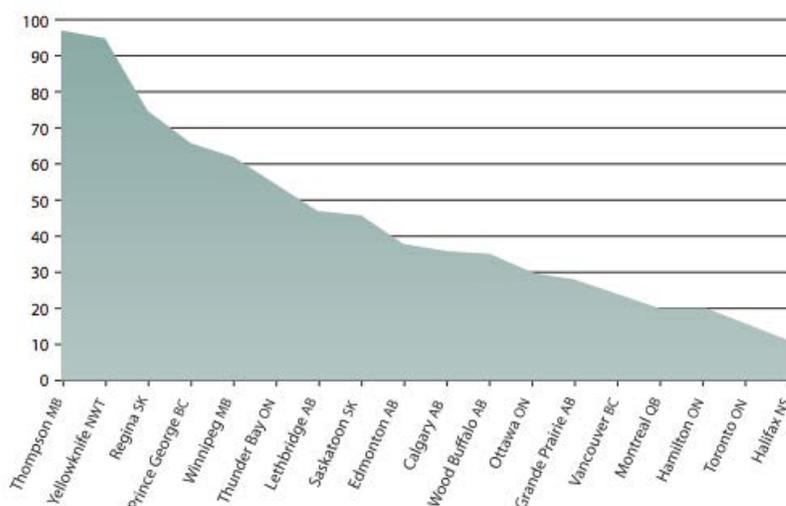
Cultural competency, a term often used in the context of human resources, non-profit organizations, social services, and government agencies, refers to the ability to “deliver professional services in a way that is congruent with behavior and expectations normative for a given community and that are adapted to suit the specific needs of individuals and families from that community” (Green, 1999, p. 87). Scholars often agree that the components of cultural competency include self-awareness, knowledge, skills, and practice (Sakamoto, 2007). Cultural competence should be seen as a *continual* process of building one’s capacity in each of these areas (see Child & Development Institute, 2007).

2. ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS AND PIT COUNTS IN CANADA

Despite the extent of Aboriginal homelessness in Canada, there exists limited national and regional data enumerating Aboriginal homelessness. Of the PiT Counts that have been conducted in Canada, Aboriginal Peoples were significantly overrepresented (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014; Chopin & Wormith, 2008; Hanselmann, 2001; Stroick, Hubac, & Richter-Salomons, 2008). However, a cross-country enumeration of Aboriginal homelessness has never been conducted, and many Canadian PiT Counts have employed different methodologies and definitions of homelessness that potentially exclude Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness (Echenberg & Jensen, 2008; Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012).

Research has shown that Aboriginal Peoples are likely to be significantly undercounted during PiT Counts. This is due to numerous factors including: their overrepresentation among hidden homeless populations (Distasio, Sylvestre, & Mulligan, 2005; Stroick et al., 2008), movement between urban communities and reserves (Belanger et al., 2013), and expressed unwillingness to participate in PiT Counts (Letkemann, 2004, p. 242; Peters & The Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services Inc., 2009). Both the lack of data and the identified methodological challenges make it difficult to estimate national and regional statistics on Aboriginal homelessness.

TABLE 5 Urban Aboriginal Homeless as Percentage of Overall Homeless Population, Select Canadian Cities¹¹



While acknowledging these obstacles, Belanger and colleagues (2013) have used available data to establish an approximate rate of Aboriginal homelessness in select communities across Canada, and they found:

- » The Aboriginal homeless population accounts for 29 percent of the overall homeless population in Canada
- » Of the total 70,200 urban Canadians who identified as being homeless, 20,358 were found to be of Aboriginal descent
- » On any given night, 6.97% of all urban Aboriginal people are homeless, compared to 0.78% of the non-Aboriginal population
- » On any given night, 1 in 15 urban Aboriginal people experience homelessness, compared to 1 out of 128 non-Aboriginal people

Given that these numbers do not reflect Aboriginal people at risk of homelessness or those who are provisionally accommodated, such as couch surfers, it is anticipated that Aboriginal homelessness is significantly greater than these data indicate. Based on these trends we can conclude that Aboriginal homelessness is endemic in Canada.



Source: Belanger, Y. et al. (2013). Homelessness, Urban Aboriginal People, and the Need for a National Enumeration. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2(2), 4-33.


www.homelesshub.ca

GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS

- » Limited data on the extent of Aboriginal homelessness in many regions
- » Limited quantitative knowledge about whether and how homelessness disproportionately affects particular Aboriginal people (e.g., First Nations, Aboriginal women, LGBTQ2ASS+ Aboriginal youth and adults)
- » Limited statistical data on what forms of homelessness are most pervasive among Aboriginal Peoples in different parts of the country
- » Limited statistical data on what forms of homelessness are most pervasive across different Aboriginal populations

HOW CAN A PIT COUNT HELP ADDRESS ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS?

- » Partnerships between mainstream and Aboriginal communities will improve Aboriginal participation in the count, and thus improve the count's accuracy
- » Strong data enables governments to tailor policies, services, and funding to meet existing needs and prevent homelessness
- » PiT Count data can assist communities in establishing milestones for ending Aboriginal homelessness that are evidence-based, measureable, and realistic
- » Findings can increase public knowledge about Aboriginal homelessness
- » Communities can use findings to advocate for increased funding for housing and supports for Aboriginal Peoples
- » Partnerships between communities can be mobilized in future efforts to address Aboriginal homelessness locally and nationally

3. DEFINING ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS

One limitation of the PiT Count methodology is that it may not capture the cultural or spiritual dimensions of Aboriginal homelessness. While we recommend using [COH's definition of homelessness](#) to guide your PiT Count, this definition may not reflect Aboriginal worldviews on homelessness, particularly because it does not reference cultural loss or colonial history. Aboriginal understandings of homelessness will also differ by community because each community has its own unique history and understanding of home, place, belonging, shelter, and land.

From an Aboriginal worldview “homelessness” is a combination of inter-related issues including:

- *History (including the historical loss of land and resources)*
- *Present day systemic and societal perspectives about Aboriginal people*
- *Cultural losses in the areas of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual balance*

Source: Thurston & Mason, 2010.

Aboriginal scholars in North America and Australia have emphasized that Aboriginal homelessness should be understood in relation to the colonial disruption of centuries of social, spiritual, physical, cultural, and economic relationships with landscapes believed to be the source of creation (see Christensen, 2013; Bullchild, 1985). Many indigenous scholars and elders suggest that the physical and psychological displacement caused by colonial settlement has resulted in a spiritual rootlessness and homelessness for many Aboriginal communities around the world, and that history is reflected in the absence of adequate housing for many Aboriginal people. Menzies (2005) suggests that current definitions of homelessness mistakenly emphasize physical shelter over other factors. Instead, Menzies (2005) recommends that Aboriginal homelessness is better understood as “the resultant condition of individuals being displaced from critical community social structures and lacking in stable housing” (p. 8).

Given the cultural variability of definitions of homelessness, developing greater cultural competency will assist count organizers in appreciating the varied understandings of homelessness that diverse community members may have. PiT Count organizers should also recognize the inherent limitations of the place-based definition of homelessness that the PiT Count methodology requires.

4. HISTORIC CAUSES OF ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS

The causes and impacts of Aboriginal homelessness are multiple, complex, and intersecting. To understand the current crisis of Aboriginal homelessness in Canada, we must consider how Aboriginal Peoples have been impacted by their historical relationships with the Government of Canada, organized religion, and mainstream society. While acknowledging the particularity of these experiences for different Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal communities across Canada have shared histories of discrimination, violence, and oppression that are directly related to the contemporary high rates of Aboriginal homelessness we see today. Contemporary experiences of disadvantage, such as landlord discrimination or limited access to healthcare, stem from historic practices that have placed Aboriginal Peoples at increased risk for homelessness.

Colonial conquests and European settlement in Canada, beginning in the 17th century, were predicated on the destruction of Aboriginal culture and assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples. Following the passing of [The Indian Act of 1876](#), Aboriginal Peoples were relocated to reserves while Aboriginal children were placed in residential schools run by Christian churches (Menzies, 2010).

“Aboriginal children – literally and symbolically – had their ethnicity and cultures beaten out of them.” — Source: Patrick, 2014

The rampant [physical, sexual, and psychological abuse of Aboriginal children in residential schools](#) has been well-documented and has caused immeasurable suffering and trauma for generations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). During the 1960s and beyond, government child welfare agencies continued to enact harmful practices by removing significant numbers of Aboriginal children from their homes and adopting/fostering them out to non-Aboriginal families (often referred to as the “[Sixties Scoop](#)”) (Brown, Prevost-Derbecker, & Andrushko, 2007).

The Indian Act, the reserve system, the residential school system, and the Sixties Scoop all functioned to fracture families and kinship systems, destroy communities, and dispossess Aboriginal Peoples of their lands, ways of life, human rights, and spiritual and cultural practices. The imposition of these systems, combined with the contemporary marginalization of Aboriginal Peoples, has resulted in overwhelming poverty and health problems for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (Waldram, Herring, & Young, 2006).

HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY CAUSES OF ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS



Source: Thurston & Mason, 2010

5. CONTEMPORARY CAUSES OF ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

The high rate of Aboriginal homelessness across Canada can also be traced to the present-day marginalization of Aboriginal Peoples in political and social structures. There are multiple pathways into homelessness for Aboriginal Peoples. Aboriginal Peoples report experiences of discrimination, racism, and inequality in many domains of life, including [healthcare](#), [housing](#), [education](#), [employment](#), and [income](#). For many Aboriginal peoples, these disadvantages are further compounded by discrimination based on gender, sexuality, class, and other dimensions of identity. Aboriginal Peoples’ experiences of homelessness are thus inseparable from other experiences of disadvantage and oppression, such as [high rates of violence against indigenous women and girls](#) and [disproportionate representation in the prison system](#). Jurisdictional issues, such as debates about who is responsible for funding and supporting social services Aboriginal Peoples, further contributes to these disadvantages and complicates Aboriginal Peoples ability

to obtain adequate healthcare, housing, education, and employment. Individual “ruptures,” such as trauma associated with sexual assault, also significantly contribute to homelessness among Aboriginal Peoples.

HOUSING INADEQUACY AMONG ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

- » Aboriginal Peoples experience the most severe forms of housing insecurity and inadequacy of any group in Canada
- » A [significant proportion](#) of the housing occupied by Aboriginal Peoples is not adequate or affordable
- » Nationally, urban [Aboriginal homeownership and rental rates are lower](#) than those of mainstream Canada
- » Aboriginal Peoples across Canada tend to experience [housing discrimination](#) as renters, owners, and landlords, and as prospective renters or owners

ADDITIONAL FACTORS PREVENTING ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

- » [Lower income levels](#)
- » [Higher unemployment levels](#)
- » Lower education and training levels in urban centres
- » High levels of incarceration, as well as increased risk of homelessness following incarceration
- » High levels of sexual violence and violence against women, including specifically [high rates of missing and murdered indigenous women](#)
- » High levels of [interpersonal violence](#) of all kinds, including [Aboriginal youth gang violence](#) and violence against Aboriginal men
- » Experiences of historical and cultural intergenerational trauma, often resulting in tendencies towards depression, suicidality, and low self-esteem
- » [Higher likelihood](#) of having a personal disability (e.g., physical and mental health status, substance abuse), and [increased likelihood of victimization](#) related to that disability
- » [Three times](#) more likely to be victims of violent crime compared to non-Aboriginal Canadians

6. SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS

The determinants of Aboriginal homelessness mentioned above demonstrate some of the astonishing challenges faced by Aboriginal Peoples in securing adequate housing. Despite the breadth of these disadvantages, many Aboriginal communities demonstrate incredible community resiliency, socio-economic and environmental leadership, innovation, strength, and political resistances.

Across Canada, there are many examples of promising practices and policies to address Aboriginal homelessness:

- » Many cities are fostering the creation of, and coordination between, multiple Aboriginal-focused services. For example, Winnipeg has a successful network of “Aboriginal-focused and self-governed social services” (e.g., literacy centres, homeless shelters, rehabilitation centres) to support urban Aboriginal people (DeVerteuil & Wilson, 2010).
- » In 2012, Calgary released a [Plan to End Aboriginal Homelessness in Calgary](#). It is the first plan of this kind in Canada.
- » In recent years, an increasing number of organizations support Aboriginal women who are experiencing homelessness. For example, [The Native Women’s Transition Centre](#) in Winnipeg is a long-term residence that provides care for up to 21 Aboriginal women and children. Its second stage housing facility, [Memengwaa Place](#), is an independent living program for Aboriginal victims of family violence.
- » There are increasing numbers of supportive and affordable housing developments for Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness across the country. For example, [Zhaawnong Gamik](#) in Toronto offers affordable housing for Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness in an Elder-run culturally appropriate setting that reflects First Nations cultures.
- » In 2014, the federal government renewed funding for the [Improved Urban Aboriginal Strategy](#), with annual funding of \$53.1 million in 2014-2015 and 2015- 2016. This program supports projects that increase Aboriginal participation in the economy (including programs addressing Aboriginal homelessness).

These are just a few examples of the important work being undertaken to address Aboriginal homelessness across Canada. Accurate PiT Count data will encourage the development of more programs and initiatives, while ensuring that existing programs are tailored to the needs of Aboriginal Peoples, as identified by Aboriginal people with lived experience of homelessness.

7. ETHICAL RESEARCH AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF RESEARCH WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

All research with Aboriginal Peoples, including PiT Counts, should be conducted with an understanding of the potential harm that can result from externally-driven research. Historically, research conducted by European settlers has harmed many Aboriginal communities and in many cases has resulted in intergenerational trauma. For many years, research was used as a tool to exploit and exert control over Aboriginal Peoples, both in Canada and globally (see Smith, 2012). The National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) (2007) identifies that past research practices by external researchers have been “disrespectful, damaging and stigmatizing to First Nations People” in Canada (p. 3). The [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#) (1996) similarly identified that “[i]n the past, Aboriginal people have not been consulted about what information should be collected, who should gather that information, who should maintain it, and who should have access to it” (p. 4).

More broadly, many Aboriginal scholars, leaders, and organizations have identified that Western forms of knowledge do not reflect Aboriginal worldviews. The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres identifies that even the concept and definition of “culture” is a Western construct that is “often conveniently used by others to authoritatively represent, label, compare and study Indigenous systems of knowledge and practice” (p. 6). These experiences have led many Aboriginal Peoples to feel significant distrust and resistance towards externally driven research (NAHO, 2007).

While the legacy of harm caused by research continues to effect many Aboriginal communities, research is also increasingly used to improve the welfare of Aboriginal Peoples. In recent years, scholars have endeavoured to establish respectful research approaches ensuring Aboriginal Peoples’ rights and dignity. Further, there has been increased use of methodologies that emphasize indigenous control, ownership, and partnership between researchers and Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal leaders, scholars, and communities have articulated approaches to research that can provide benefit to Aboriginal communities, reflect their interests and concerns, and are grounded in respect for Aboriginal values and worldviews (NAHO, 2007; OFIFC, 2012). Many of these approaches have been articulated in well-known ethical guides, toolkits, and frameworks (see Table 1).

Research practices must be informed by both this history of harm and the opportunities that well-conducted research can provide to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal Peoples across Canada. Given this opportunity, all PiT Counts must make demonstrable efforts to respect and foster the dignity, autonomy, self-determination, rights, and interests of Aboriginal Peoples. Count organizers must develop plans to carry out data collection in ways that mitigate the risk of harm, address issues of consent and confidentiality, provide benefits, return research to the community, and ensure that respect for participants is tantamount.

TABLE 1. **GUIDES TO ETHICAL RESEARCH WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

<p><u>Ownership, Control, Access and Possession or Self-Determination (OCAP) Applied to Research</u></p>	<p>In 2007 the National Aboriginal Health Organization authored a guide for conducting research with Aboriginal peoples. This guide emphasizes First Nations’ aspirations towards self-determination and self-governance as it relates to research. This includes “the right to make decisions about what, why, how and by whom information is collected, as well as how it will be used and shared” (p. 4).</p>
<p><u>USAI Research Framework</u></p>	<p>In 2012 the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centre’s developed the <i>USAI Research Framework</i>, which focuses on the principles of utility, self-voicing, access, and inter-relationality.</p>
<p><u>Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada</u></p>	<p>The Government of Canada’s guide for research with Aboriginal Peoples focuses on how the core value of respect for human dignity – expressed in the three principles of Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice – should guide all research with Aboriginal Peoples.</p>
<p>Guidelines for Conducting Research with Urban Aboriginal People who are Experiencing Homelessness</p>	<p>The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness will soon release a guide for conducting research with Aboriginal people who are experiencing homelessness. This will be the first guide of its kind in Canada.</p>
<p><u>Guidelines for Conducting Research with People who are Homeless</u></p>	<p>York University developed a tool to assist researchers in conducting research with homeless people. It may further assist in conducting research with Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness.</p>

8. PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING ABORIGINAL PARTNERSHIPS & CULTURAL COMPETENCY DURING YOUR PIT COUNT

Given the unique challenges and opportunities presented to PiT Count organizers who want to foster cultural competency and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnerships throughout the count process, practical strategies are needed to achieve this goal. This section proposes some practical tactics that communities can implement. The content for this section is broken into four sub-categories (*First Steps, Methodology, Implementation, and Post Count*) that mirror the [COH’s PiT Count Toolkit’s](#) layout, giving communities suggestions on how to develop more equitable partnerships at each stage.

8.1 FIRST STEPS

INFORM ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES ABOUT THE COUNT

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Build relationships with Aboriginal services, Community Advisory Boards, and umbrella organizations » Distribute information at Aboriginal cultural events and community/agency meetings » Distribute posters and pamphlets to organizations & agencies serving Aboriginal community members » Utilize social media and email to distribute information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aboriginal Peoples have the right to know about and be involved in research impacting their communities » Informing community members early will increase Aboriginal engagement, participation, and volunteerism

PARTNER WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Partnerships should begin early and be ongoing » Partnerships should be based in shared interests, benefits, & goals » Partner with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Aboriginal Community Advisory Boards › Aboriginal umbrella organizations › Aboriginal governments › Organizations/groups that represent the interests of urban Aboriginal Peoples › Agencies/ organizations serving Aboriginal community members experiencing homelessness › Aboriginally-owned businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increases Aboriginal participation and thus data quality and count accuracy » Partnering with multiple organizations and agencies will better reflect the diverse views of Aboriginal community members » Partnerships can be mobilized in future efforts to address homelessness

INCLUDE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY LEADERS IN YOUR PIT COUNT COMMITTEE

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aboriginal Peoples should play leadership roles in any count » Your PiT Count Committee should include as many Aboriginal community members as possible » The PiT Count Committee should include, or be lead by, an Aboriginal community member who is well-known and recognized by local Aboriginal communities » Partner with Aboriginal community leaders to plan and implement an Aboriginal Magnet Event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aboriginal leadership will likely increase Aboriginal participation » Aboriginal leaders are best positioned to anticipate and plan for methodological challenges in enumerating Aboriginal homelessness

ENSURE ABORIGINAL FEEDBACK

How?	Why?
------	------

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » During community consultations, communities should be asked how the PiT Count survey can reflect their concerns, and what questions about homelessness they would like the count to answer » Community meetings should be in a highly accessible location and provide childcare (may want to provide transit tokens) » Community members should have multiple ways of providing feedback on the count (phone, e-mail, office hours, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Assists organizers in identifying and addressing local Aboriginal communities' concerns about participation » Will help determine what additional questions should be included in the survey » Will help determine how count findings can provide benefits to both Aboriginal participants and local Aboriginal communities
---	---

ENSURE NO HARM TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES RESULTS FROM THE PIT COUNT

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Equitable partnerships with local Aboriginal communities is a key step in preventing harm » Key considerations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Mitigating any risks of harm › Consent and confidentiality › Providing benefits › Returning research to the community › Ensuring respect for participants » Count organizers should familiarize themselves with the available ethical guidelines for research for Aboriginal Peoples (see Section 7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increases Aboriginal control, ownership, interest, and benefits in the PiT Count

8.2 METHODOLOGY

UTILIZE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LOCAL ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS TO IMPROVE YOUR COUNT'S METHODOLOGY

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Consult with agencies, services, and frontline workers to better understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Where Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness are likely to be during the count › What sub-populations are likely to be undercounted (e.g. LGBTQ2SA+ Aboriginal youth and adults) and strategies to offset that risk › What methodologies are best suited for their specific communities › What tokens of appreciation would be most appreciated by Aboriginal participants (e.g., soft granola bars, Tim Hortons gift cards) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Helps prevent undercounting Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness, as well as particular sub-populations (e.g. LGBTQ2SA+ Aboriginal youth and adults) » Saves the committee time, energy, and funds

ENSURE ADDITIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONS REFLECT THE INTERESTS & CONCERNS OF LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Partner with Aboriginal Community Advisory Boards, umbrella organizations, and/or Aboriginal communities to create additional survey questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improves the quality of the survey instrument because it is adapted to reflect the concerns and interests of diverse community members

ENSURE THE SURVEY IS CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure the survey is pilot tested with Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness » Pilot test the survey with Aboriginal people from different communities and of different ages and genders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improves data quality and count accuracy because participants are more likely to answer all survey questions

SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY: ABORIGINAL MAGNET EVENT

An Aboriginal magnet event is a community-based event that features Aboriginally-focused cultural and spiritual activities, such as music, food, resources (e.g., gift tables, local program materials), and celebration. Count organizers should plan an Aboriginal magnet event the same day/evening of the count and create a private space for volunteers to collect survey information from participants. Ensuring your magnet event is held in an accessible location that is culturally safe and welcoming to local Aboriginal communities is essential to increasing attendance.

Why conduct an Aboriginal Magnet Event?

Conducting a count at an Aboriginal magnet event enables Aboriginal volunteers to administer surveys in a culturally-safe space, increases Aboriginal participation, and ensures Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness are not undercounted.

Aboriginal magnet events also provide opportunities for community members to come together, celebrate, and support one another. Hamilton's Aboriginal magnet event, for example, was titled "All We Need is Community." Providing a welcoming space in which many community members can come together and show their support for Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness can be a transformative moment for your community.

Strategies for Implementing Your Aboriginal Magnet Event

- » Ensure your event is highly publicized well in advance
- » Ensure all community members feel welcome, regardless of housing status
- » Recruit a sufficient number of volunteers based on estimates of attendance
- » Recruit as many Aboriginal volunteers as possible
- » Ensure Aboriginal community members hold leadership roles in planning and implementing the magnet event
- » Encourage volunteers to invite anyone they meet during the street count to attend the Aboriginal magnet event (regardless of housing status or ethnicity)
- » Ensure there is sufficient space for surveys to be administered privately
- » Have well-known Aboriginal community members contribute to the magnet event (e.g., have traditional foods prepared by a well-known Aboriginal cook or restaurant)
- » Provide attendees with connections to Aboriginal-specific housing services and other supports
- » Use the space as a "hub" for volunteers to rest, recharge, and debrief during the street count
- » If your magnet event is being held earlier than your street count, put methods in place to reduce duplication of the data (e.g., through unique identifiers, data cleaning, etc.)

8.3 IMPLEMENTATION

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES' ROLES IN THE COUNT

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Endeavor to recruit at least one Aboriginal volunteer per team » Where possible, Aboriginal community members who work in the homelessness sector should be Team Leaders » Where possible, people of Aboriginal descent should administer surveys to Aboriginal participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aboriginal communities should have a major role in all efforts to understand and address homelessness in Canada » Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness may feel more comfortable talking to an Aboriginal volunteer

INTEGRATE CULTURAL COMPETENCY INTO YOUR VOLUNTEER TRAINING

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Volunteer training should include education on the local historic and contemporary determinants of Aboriginal homelessness » Where possible, education should be provided by an Aboriginal community members and/or Aboriginality-run agencies serving Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness (ideally with past experience conducting PiT Counts) » Volunteers should be trained on how to approach and converse with Aboriginal participants with respect and sensitivity » Ensure you have developed a plan to protect the emotional and physical safety of Aboriginal volunteers and participants by (1) providing resources, supports, and counseling, and (2) adequately training volunteers on what to do if they encounter someone experiencing distress » Ask Aboriginal volunteers, or volunteers from agencies that serve Aboriginal community members, to wear any clothing or accessories (e.g., buttons, pins, hats) that display their Aboriginal community's emblem or their agency's symbol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » All participants and volunteers have the right to feel safe and respected during research participation » Reduces risk of emotional harm for Aboriginal participants » Increases cultural sensitivity and knowledge about Aboriginal homelessness among volunteers » Increases likelihood that volunteers will collect complete data » Increases likelihood that Aboriginal individuals approached to participate will agree » Adequately supporting volunteers will increase volunteer retention

8.4 POST-COUNT

SHARE FINDINGS WITH LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Work with mainstream and Aboriginal media to disseminate findings » Findings should be sent to all Aboriginal organizations, networks, and agencies that serve Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness » Translate findings into multiple report formats and languages (e.g. pamphlet, pdf, power point, video, website) to increase knowledge translation » Present findings at meetings of Aboriginal umbrella organizations, Aboriginal CABs, and Aboriginal governments » Host a public meeting to share findings and receive feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improves public knowledge about Aboriginal homelessness » Informs program and policy development » Findings can be used by organizations, advocates, and agencies to advocate for additional funding » Feedback on findings will inform future counts

PARTNER WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE MEDIA COVERAGE

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Partner with Aboriginal CABs and umbrella organizations to craft media messages » Ensure Aboriginal voices are included in media accounts » Use media to educate the public on the benefits of a PiT Count for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Media coverage will reflect the interests and concerns of Aboriginal communities » Media accounts will be able to offer a stronger analysis of count findings » Findings will reach a broader audience

ENSURE COUNT FINDINGS BENEFIT ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

How?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Consult with Aboriginal communities on how the data/findings should be used » Mobilize findings to advocate for resources for Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness » Partner with Aboriginal CABs and umbrella organizations to determine how best to change policy, programs, and services addressing Aboriginal homelessness » Provide count volunteers with information about how they can help address Aboriginal homelessness in their community » Link volunteers with opportunities to take action on Aboriginal homelessness » Host an appreciation event for volunteers following the count to share results (e.g. one page summary with graphics) and link volunteers to agencies/organizations seeking volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increases public knowledge and concern about Aboriginal homelessness » May increase funding and policy change to address Aboriginal homelessness » May decrease Aboriginal homelessness over time

GLOSSARY

Aboriginal: The term “Aboriginal” is appropriate when referring to matters that affect First Nations (Indian) and Métis peoples. The word is most appropriately used as an adjective (e.g., Aboriginal person).

Aboriginal CAB: The term “Aboriginal CAB” stands for Aboriginal Community Advisory Board. Funded through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Aboriginal CABs are the local organizing committee responsible for setting direction for addressing homelessness in the community or region.

Aboriginal Peoples: Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples -- Indians, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Aboriginal rights: Rights that some Aboriginal peoples of Canada hold as a result of their ancestors’ long-standing use and occupancy of the land, e.g., to hunt, trap and fish on ancestral lands. Legally, the existence of specific Aboriginal rights are determined on a case-by-case basis.

Aboriginal self-government: Governments designed, established and administered by Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal title: A legal term that recognizes Aboriginal interest in the land. It is based on a long-standing use and occupancy of the land as descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada.

Aboriginal umbrella organization: An Aboriginal umbrella organization is any organization that represents the interests of diverse Aboriginal groups within a region or community.

Bill C-31: The pre-legislation name of the 1985 Act to Amend the Indian Act. This Act eliminated certain discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act. Bill C-31 enabled people affected by the discriminatory provisions of the old Indian Act to apply to have their Indian status restored.

Comprehensive Claims: Comprehensive claims are based on the recognition that there are continuing Aboriginal rights to lands and natural resources where Aboriginal title has not previously been dealt with by treaty and other legal means. The claims are called “comprehensive” because of their wide scope such as land title, fishing and trapping rights and financial compensation.

Constitution Act (B.N.A. Act), 1867: Section 91(24) of the Act states that legislative authority for “Indians, and Lands Reserved for the Indians” rests with the federal government.

Cultural Competency: Cultural competency, a term often used in the context of human resources, non-profit organizations, social services, and government agencies, refers to the ability to “deliver professional services in a way that is congruent with behavior and expectations normative for a given community and that are adapted to suit the specific needs of individuals and families from that community” (Green, 1999, p. 87). Scholars often agree that the components of cultural competency include self-awareness, knowledge, skills, and practice (Sakamoto, 2007). Cultural competence should be seen as a continual process of building one’s capacity in each of these areas (see Child & Development Institute, 2007).

Custom: A traditional Aboriginal practice.

Elder(s): Aboriginal persons who are respected and consulted due to their experience, wisdom, knowledge, background and insight. Elder does not necessarily equate with age.

First Nation(s): A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian”. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. The term has also been adopted to replace the word “Band” in the naming of communities.

Indian Act: This is the Canadian federal legislation, first passed in 1876, that sets out certain federal government obligations, and regulates the management of Indian reserve lands. The Act has been amended several times, most recently in 1985 (see Bill C-31).

Indigenous: Generally used in the international context, “indigenous” refers to peoples who are original to a particular territory. This term is very similar to Aboriginal and has a positive connotation.

Inherent Right of Self-government: Derived from Aboriginal peoples’ use and occupation of certain lands from time immemorial.

Inuit: An Aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in the Northwest Territories, and in Northern Quebec and Labrador. The word means “people” in the Inuit language - Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

Land Claims: In 1973, the federal government recognized two broad classes of claims -- comprehensive and specific (see comprehensive claim and specific claim).

Métis: The term refers to Aboriginal people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis people, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.

Native: A term used to refer generally to Aboriginal peoples. The term “Aboriginal person” is preferred to “native”.

Off-reserve: A term used to describe people, services or objects that are not part of a reserve, but relate to First Nations.

Reserve: Land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of an Aboriginal group or Band. Legal title rests with the Crown in right of Canada.

Self-government: Self-government is the ability of peoples to govern themselves according to their values, cultures and traditions.

Specific Claims: Specific claims deal with specific grievances that First Nations may have regarding the fulfilment of treaties and grievances relating to the administration of First Nations’ lands and assets under the Indian Act.

Treaty: An agreement between First Nations and the Crown. Between 1871 and 1906, six “numbered” Treaties (Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10) covering what is now the Province of Saskatchewan were signed between the Crown and First Nations.

Treaty Rights: Special rights to lands and entitlements that Indian people legally have as a result of treaties; rights protected under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Tribal Council: An association of First Nation (Band) Councils.

REFERENCES

- Belanger, Y. D., Awosoga, O., & Weasel Head, G. W. (2012). Housing and Aboriginal People in Urban Centres: A Quantitative Evaluation. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2(1), 4–25.
- Belanger, Y. D., Awosoga, O., & Weasel Head, G. W. (2013). Homelessness, urban Aboriginal people, and the need for a national enumeration. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2(2), 4-33.
- Brown, J., Knol, D., Prevost-Derbecker, S., & Andrushko, K. (2007). Housing for Aboriginal youth in the inner city of Winnipeg. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 3(2), 56-64.
- Bullchild, P. (1985). *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Calgary Homeless Foundation. (2014). [Winter 2014 Point-in-Time Count Report](http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Winter-2014-PIT-Count-Report.pdf). Calgary, AB: Author. Retrieved from <http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Winter-2014-PIT-Count-Report.pdf>
- Child Development Institute. (2007). *Achieving Cultural Competence: Children's Mental Health*. Toronto: Child Development Institute.
- Chopin, N. S., & Wormith, J. S. (2008). [Count of Saskatoon's homeless population: Research findings](http://www.usask.ca/cuisr/sites/default/files/Homeless%20Count%20Report%20FINAL%20Website.pdf). Saskatoon, SK: Community-University Institute for Social Research. Retrieved from <http://www.usask.ca/cuisr/sites/default/files/Homeless%20Count%20Report%20FINAL%20Website.pdf>
- Christensen, J. (2013). “Our home, our way of life”: Spiritual Homelessness and the Sociocultural Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness in the Northwest Territories (NWT), Canada. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 14(7), 804-828.
- DeVerteuil, G., & Wilson, K. (2010). Reconciling indigenous need with the urban welfare state? Evidence of culturally-appropriate services and spaces for Aboriginals in Winnipeg, Canada. *Geoforum*, 41(3), 498-507.
- Distasio, J., Sylvestre, G., & Mulligan, S. (2005). *Home is where the heart is and right now that is nowhere...: An examination of hidden homeless among Aboriginal peoples in prairie cities*. Winnipeg, MB: Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg. Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/NRP_009_Hidden_Aboriginal_Homelessness.pdf
- Echenberg, H., & Jensen, H. (2008). *Defining and enumerating homelessness in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Parliamentary Information and Research Services.
- Green, J. W. (1999). *Cultural awareness in the human services: A multi-ethnic approach* (3rd ed.). Toronto: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hanselmann, C. (2001). [Urban Aboriginal people in Western Canada: Realities and policies](http://cwf.ca/pdfdocs/publications/September2001-Urban-Aboriginal-People-in-Western-Canada-Realities-and-Policies.pdf). Calgary, AB: Canada West Foundation. Retrieved from <http://cwf.ca/pdfdocs/publications/September2001-Urban-Aboriginal-People-in-Western-Canada-Realities-and-Policies.pdf>

- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (2012). [Understanding homelessness](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/understanding_homelessness/index.shtml). Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/understanding_homelessness/index.shtml
- Letkemann, P. G. (2004). First Nations Urban Migration and the Importance of “Urban Nomads” in Canadian Plains Cities: A Perspective from the Streets. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 13(2), 241.
- Menzies, P. (2005). *Orphans within Our Family: Intergenerational Trauma and Homeless Aboriginal Men*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Menzies, P. (2010). Intergenerational Trauma from a Mental Health Perspective. *Native Social Work Journal*, 7, 63-85.
- Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC). (2012). [USAI: Utility, Self Voicing, Access, Inter-Relationshipity Research Framework](http://www.ofifc.org/publication/usai-research-framework-utility-self-voicing-access-inter-relationshipity). Retrieved from <http://www.ofifc.org/publication/usai-research-framework-utility-self-voicing-access-inter-relationshipity>
- Patrick, C. (2014). [Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review](http://www.homelessnessresearch.ca/aboriginal-homelessness-in-canada-a-literature-review). Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
- Peters, E. J. The Prince Albert Grand Council Urban Services Inc. (2009). “Everything You Want is There”: The Place of the Reserve in First Nations’ Homeless Mobility. *Urban Geography*, 30(4), 1-29.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Looking forward, looking back](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115053257/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.html). Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Retrieved from http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115053257/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.html
- Sakamoto, I. (2007). An anti-oppressive approach to cultural competence. *Canadian Social Work Review*, 24(1), 105–118.
- Smith, L. T. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Aboriginal Peoples*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999.
- Statistics Canada. (2011). [Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations Peoples, Metis and Inuit](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm). Ottawa: Minister of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>
- Stroick, S. M., Hubac, L., & Richter-Salomons, S. (2008). [Biennial count of homeless persons in Calgary: 2008 May 14](http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Documents/homelessness/2008_count_full_report.pdf). Calgary, AB: City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Social Research Unit. Retrieved from http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Documents/homelessness/2008_count_full_report.pdf

The National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2007). [Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession \(OCAP\) or Self-Determination Applied to Research: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary First Nations Research and Some Options for First Nations Communities](http://www.naho.ca/documents/fnc/english/FNC_OCAPCriticalAnalysis.pdf). Retrieved from http://www.naho.ca/documents/fnc/english/FNC_OCAPCriticalAnalysis.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). [Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Exec_Summary_2015_06_25_web_o.pdf). Retrieved from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Exec_Summary_2015_06_25_web_o.pdf

Thurston, W., & Mason, C. (2010). [Aboriginal Homelessness Research: The Context, What We're Doing, and the Future](http://m.calgaryhomeless.com/assets/research/Aboriginal-HomelessnessWThurstonCMason.pdf). Retrieved from <http://m.calgaryhomeless.com/assets/research/Aboriginal-HomelessnessWThurstonCMason.pdf>

Waldram, J. B., Herring, A., & Young, T. K. (2006). *Aboriginal Health in Canada: Historical, Cultural, and Epidemiological Perspectives*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.