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# The Reality of Supporting People Facing Homelessness with Pets: A Package Deal

Dear CCP readers,

If you are returning for more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

Today's post will provide an overview of the integral role of animal companionship in the lives of people facing homelessness, namely youth facing homelessness, and systemic and social barriers present for many attempting to access resources and services designed to aid people facing homelessness and/or mental health troubles.

## The Benefits of Animal Companionship

If you are fortunate enough to often find yourself in the company of a loving animal in the comfort of your own home, it should come as no surprise that owning a pet is good for both your mental and physical well-being. To reap these benefits in the safety and security of an indoor space you call home is a blessing often taken for granted. With 1 in 5 Canadians currently living with a mental illness, animal companionship has perhaps never been more of a cornerstone in building a healthy and accountable society.

## Mental Health & Social Well-Being

The first and most obvious way in which animal companions support a healthy lifestyle is by providing a sense of unconditional love and friendship, even and especially during the loneliest chapters of our lives. For many, simply taking their dog for a walk can provide a

reason to leave the house and get some fresh air and exercise. It's like having an accountability partner who is simply grateful to be in your company with food, water and an abundance of loving attention in return. What more could any of us ask for? Owning a pet undoubtedly provides structure to any caregiver's day. Even in our most anxious, depressed, frustrated, dissociative or otherwise melancholic states, caring for an animal motivates people to connect with their external environment for the sake of their most prized companion. Puppy dog eyes earned their name for a reason—one look from your dog or innocently demanding meow from your cat and you're up and feeding your pet before yourself, taking them outside and likely collecting many smiles from passersby in the process. Animals, namely dogs, often serve as a social icebreaker and can facilitate social contact even when we're not actively looking for it. You might not otherwise stop to get to know the people living right in your own neighbourhood. It seems that our animals often know what we need before we even do, whether it's the comfort of soft fur and unconditional love, or starting your morning with an unexpectedly positive social interaction that may set the tone for the rest of your day.

### Physical Health Implications

The benefits of owning an animal extend to our physical well-being as well. Walking and playing with a pet on a daily basis provides a baseline form of exercise. Exercise is essential in reducing the risk of diabetes, heart disease and early death, and as it turns out, some studies have shown that dog owners have more than a 50% greater chance of achieving adequate exercise levels and require fewer medical visits to remain in good health. The stress reduction, decreased and regulated blood pressure, and endorphin releases conferred to humans by their animal companions provides a sense of both physical and psychological safety. The physiological benefits of owning a pet protect us not only from stress but also from heart disease and other potentially fatal conditions. While dogs are often praised for their warm and caring nature, some studies have demonstrated that owning a cat was strongly correlated with a 40% reduction in the odds of dying of a heart attack and a 30% reduction in the odds of dying of any cardiovascular disease, including stroke, heart failure and chronic heart disease. This held true over a 20-year study taking into account other risk factors for heart disease and stroke, including age, gender, race, blood pressure, and smoking. Overall, pet ownership has consistently been shown to ease physical and mental pain and even improve immunity.

### Who Takes Care of Who?

Given the wealth of health benefits that our animal companions offer and the seemingly natural tendency for them to take notice of our well-being, you might be left wondering who is really doing the caretaking. The reality is, this mutual bond may be all a person has left when they are faced with the uncertainty of losing everything that they own, along with much of their social and tangible support networks. Owning a pet can provide a sense of purpose, physical and emotional security (since people are generally more likely to empathize and positively interact with people facing homelessness when they have an animal companion and their animal may be their only consistent bond) and accountability, while simultaneously decreasing the use of drugs and alcohol along with other high-risk behaviours. On the flip side, people often aren't joking when they say their pet is like their child. Rain or shine, people facing homelessness consistently choose to sleep on the street and brave sub-zero temperatures during cold Canadian winters or swarms of bugs during humid summers over leaving their pet unattended to stay in a shelter. Just as parents may often place their children's needs above their own, they also tend to choose feeding their pets before themselves when the means to do both are not accessible. For some youth leaving troubling or abusive home circumstances, their animal may provide their only sense of home and they may live in fear of being separated from their animal or having their pet's safety threatened if left unattended.



## Does Animal Companionship Stabilize or Destabilize the Lives of People Facing Homelessness?

While animal companionship is often likened to playing an equally vital role to that of a best friend in many people's lives, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that it is not simply the animal facing homelessness and their owner being unable to provide. Viewing a person facing homelessness and their animal companion separately from one another does not adequately address the fact that once the person has a place to call home, so too will their animal companion. While having an animal inseparably by their side may limit access to many services targeted towards helping homeless populations, many report that their animals act as social facilitators and provide them with a sense of safety, two key factors in maintaining a foundation for internal and external stability while experiencing homelessness and obtaining help. Given that many youth who find themselves lacking a safe place to stay—especially one that would accept them and their animal companion together—have experienced some form of trauma and may even be living with a depressive or substance use disorder, PTSD, anxiety or another form of mental illness, the stress-relieving presence of an animal with whom they have an established familial bond can very often mitigate risks leading to dangerous behaviours or worsening physical and mental health. Aside from companionship, a person's animal is a consistent factor in their life that provides familiarity amidst uncertainty and an incentive for them to take care of themselves, even if only to ensure that they can take care of their beloved pet.

### Accessibility Barriers for People Facing Homelessness with Animal Companions

While not an exhaustive list, below are some of the most common barriers to accessing help when facing homelessness with an animal:

- Public attitudes about homelessness, panhandling & myths regarding causes and behaviours associated with homelessness
- Lack of pet-friendly emergency shelters/facilities to safely create more spaces for people facing homelessness with animals
- 'No pets' policies in rental housing and other legal barriers to independent housing for people who have a low income and their animals
- High costs for basic veterinary care, including essential vaccinations and maintenance + even higher costs when animal requires medication(s)
- Connection to community and/or government-based public services that are feasible to access with a pet present (e.g. medical and mental health services)
- Public opinions questioning the suitability of the owner as a caretaker of their animal - losing one's animal or the thought of it can lead to declines in mental health and/or dangerous behaviours, including suicidal ideation and substance use
- Lack of resources/services available that recognize the integral role of pet ownership in stabilizing mental health, particularly for people facing homelessness, and advocacy for the diverse needs of this population
- Gaps in educational programming addressing harm reduction and mitigation strategies among both people facing homelessness—namely youth—and their animal companions
- Failure to recognize the key role of animal companionship in physical and mental well-being beyond service animals for visible disabilities - marginalizes those living with invisible or less visible disabilities

### Supporting People with Pets: A Package Deal

The reality of supporting people facing homelessness with pets is that despite all efforts to cultivate effective community supports in terms of mental health, education and food and shelter resources and services, without addressing the reality that a person and their animal companion(s) are a package deal and that for many, their animal truly is their lifeline during one of the most uncertain times in their life, systemic gaps and barriers will continue to leave between approximately 2,800 and 6,650 Canadians with animals out on the streets each night, with no place to go nor any means to feed and take care of both themselves and their animal.

Homeless Hub proposes a multi-level framework of actionable ways to reduce the mutual burdens of community, as outlined below. While many of these strategies still need to be expanded upon and broken down into more detailed actionable steps with clear responsibilities assumed by both government and community supports, this framework provides actionable and categorized starting points for addressing the root issues involved in the lack of animal-focused homelessness-resolving supports and policies.

Many of the root issues at the core of the homelessness crisis in Canada involve systemic accessibility barriers that follow people from youth through adulthood, namely involving the marginalization of diverse vulnerable populations with a lack of supports to match this diversity, namely in housing, mental health and healthcare as a whole, including veterinary care for those with animal companions. To continue learning about these issues, stay tuned for future blog posts, uploaded weekly.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

#### Resources

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# The Importance of Reading and Literacy for Youth

Research -  Importance of reading - research

Dear CCP readers,

Literacy rates in youth have seen a dramatic increase in the past 30 years ([ref](#)), but we want to know, how does this relate to youth affected by homelessness, and how can we support this group of youth to develop workplace skills needed for success?

Today's post will provide an overview of the importance of reading and literacy for youth to help develop workplace skills, namely youth facing homelessness.

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## Why Reading Is Important

The abundant and lifelong benefits of reading have become so widely recognized that we can recognize someone who is “well-read” by a mature vocabulary. New parents may be scouring book stores and the internet for a conclusive answer on just how early to start reading with their children to ensure that they optimally reap these benefits during their most formative years. While the intellectual value of parents reading to their children in the womb may be difficult to measure at times, there is no question that routine reading from a young age sets the stage for a child's healthy learning and development. In fact, doctors often recommend that parents start reading with their children during infancy and continue to do so through their elementary school years to promote and facilitate language acquisition, family bonding, communications skills, self-esteem building, and overall positive associations with reading. However, children coming from dysfunctional families or those who have been through the foster care system are unlikely to have made these essential associations between reading and social connections. Some social connections include but are not limited to empathy gained from reading fictional content, strong theory-of-mind—the ability to understand the inner worlds of others and ascribe mental states to them.

Creating connections in reading promotes neuroplasticity, particularly in youth, as demonstrated by the increased brain connectivity—namely in the somatosensory cortex, which responds to physical sensations such as movement and pain—observed in fMRI brain scans while individuals are reading and for days afterward.

## How Can Reading Help Us?

Along with developing more social connections and gaining a higher level of emotional intelligence, reading can prevent age-related cognitive decline, reduce stress, and aids in establishing healthy sleep hygiene (ie. bedtime reading). Additionally, the strong connection to characters in books also provide a sense of safety and reduce feelings of estrangement

from others. One study concluded that on average, people who read more than 3.5 hours every week are 23 percent likely to live longer than those who didn't read at all. Aside from a mental health aspect, students who started reading regularly from a young age tend to develop larger vocabularies, expanding their communication abilities and often as a result, their social networks, job opportunities and even increasing standardised test scores in many cases.

### **Reading Helping our Job Prospects**

Many youth facing homelessness need the opportunity to succeed, access to career-building resources and job training opportunities is crucial, as a stable income and employment is essential for self-sufficiency. Working towards establishing programs and opportunities for at-risk youth to get a foot in the door of a stable career of their choice would be most beneficial for long-term self-sufficiency and success among these youth.

### **Helping Youth Facing Homelessness**

For many youth facing homelessness, their income or employment status is likely a result of a lack of access to education, both formal and numeracy education, or informal education listed on their resume. Connecting youth with jobs that specifically target this issue & are willing to train at-risk youth is key.

Potential difficulties in developing this type of education, training and employment program for youth facing homelessness:

- lack of permanent address (for pay stubs, T4, other important mail or government tax forms, etc.)
- Inability to maintain proper hygiene in a shelter
- Inconsistent access to adequate and healthy nutrition (food insecurity leads to inconsistent or consistently low energy levels, making work less efficient at times)
- Following shelter rules or getting back to the shelter on time to secure a bed while attempting to maintain employment and adhere to employer's needs
- Physical and/or mental health and addictions issues

Beyond job training, programming must include education on the process of job searching, securing, and maintaining employment through not only job readiness training, but also life skills, financial literacy and management training for one's personal life, including budgeting, shopping for essentials, such as food and a place to live, cooking, and other basic life skills to ensure stability and consistency in a person's life.

Personal life events can be catalysts to homelessness. Among the homeless population, youth with cognitive impairments are more likely to be at-risk. It is important to recognize developmental and learning disabilities for education & job-related training in particular! Navigating these complex social issues can begin with filling the gaps of information and education available to communities with youth experiencing homelessness, or are in the shelter system.

### **Where to Find Help**

[Eva's Initiatives](#)

Eva's Phoenix Employment and Training Program to provide youth facing or at risk of facing homelessness with skills-based experiential training and career goal development assistance to help youth secure stable employment with hands-on training so that they can transition to interdependent living.

Skill targets in this program, as listed on the Eva's Initiatives website:

- Develop personal action plans on how to meet employment goals

- Learn job readiness skills, including resume and cover letter writing, and interview skills
- Assistance with job searching, applications for employment, and training programs
- Connecting with industry specific training programs and build technical skills
- Access trainings including WHMIS, Smart Serve, Food Handlers, and other relevant trainings
- Access on-the-job training placements and/or entry-level employment through job development support
- Receive follow up support for a minimum of six months once employed

### [Blue Door](#)

Construct GTA by Blue Door provides in-class training, on-the-job work experience, and supports to help individuals to acquire a long-term, well-compensated career in construction. It is a primary pillar of Blue Door's to reduce homelessness, break down barriers for people to find employment, and to guide youth in their search for affordable housing.

### [Canadian Courage Project](#)

CCP is working alongside Newmarket Public Library to build community libraries to be set up at shelters across the York region to promote literacy among the residents. Newmarket Public Library and Markham Public Library have both donated a variety of books ranging from 2SLGBTQ+ related readings, youth/children's books, mystery books, fitness books, fiction books, non-fiction books, and all other general reading! These books will be donated to Blue Door to build five community libraries that are already being set up!

**How does weather changes affect people facing homelessness?**

Climate change is real, and its impact has become increasingly apparent in recent years. However, some are unfairly more impacted than others, most acutely, those facing homelessness. The least fortunate among us frequently bear the brunt of the effects of extreme weather, which climate change is causing in unpredictable ways. Unlike so many of us, people facing homelessness cannot retreat to the comforts of our homes in times of extremely high temperatures, torrential downpours, or ash from nearby wildfires. Mortality (life expectancy) and morbidity (life quality) of people facing homelessness are affected not only due to extreme hot and cold temperatures but other seasons and natural calamities as well.

Today's post will provide an overview of how changes in weather and climate are affecting people who are facing homelessness.

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[Globally estimated 100 million people are homeless today and 1.6 billion people lack adequate housing.](#)

Different seasons come with various problems for individuals experiencing homelessness.

### Summer Seasons

We just saw record-breaking high temperatures in North America this year. Extreme heat can be dangerous to anyone, but people living on the streets are more vulnerable as they often don't have access to air conditioners and clean, cool drinking water, causing them to be more susceptible to heat strokes, heat cramps, and heat exhaustion.

Shelters often report "Summer Surge," a phenomenon that increases demand for shelters in the summer months. Applications can increase up to [25 percent](#). There are various reasons behind this; for example, landlords may be more willing to evict families when it isn't dangerous to remain outside during the summer, or relatives may not be able to accommodate children when they're out of school in those months

Diseases transmitted to humans or animals by vectors like rats, ticks, and mosquitoes are known as vector-borne diseases and may be impacted by climate change. Factors like temperature, humidity, and rainfall can affect these organisms and the pathogens they carry. Greater disease transmission may arise from increased vector and pathogen populations, more

vector breeding sites, and increased humidity and rainfall brought on by warming temperatures.

Heat-related sickness may develop when a person's body cannot respond to the rise in temperature and cannot effectively cool off. This can also be called hyperthermia, when the core body temperature rises too high. It is hard to find free water and shelter where they will not be asked to move away. Many public places such as Tim Hortons and shopping malls are good options to escape the excessive heat outside, but families facing homelessness are not welcome to stay overnight.

## Winter Season

The first yellow leaf marks the season of the fall. People gather together for thanksgiving dinners to embrace their beliefs and show gratefulness. It is the perfect time for hot chocolates and cosy blankets to stay inside, but only for those who have homes to go home to. For people experiencing homelessness, winter is no wonderland.

People facing homelessness frequently don't have access to essentials like warm shelter and insulating winter clothing. This is particularly true at night, when it can get very cold. [More than 100 unhoused people died in Toronto this year. Some say the shelter system is 'crumbling quickly'](#). This is a CBC news headline from December, 2021. One can imagine this is very much possible in the upcoming winter season or maybe even more adverse. Cold weather can cause hypothermia - when your body loses heat more quickly than it produces heat. [According to the CDC, a low body temperature less than 95 degrees Fahrenheit can affect the brain and symptoms like memory loss, body shivering, slurred speech, drowsiness indicate hypothermia.](#)

Frostbite is another risk for those in the cold for long periods of time. It can affect various parts of the body such as the ears, nose, fingers, and toes. The affected part can look like a lump of black coal and severe cases can even lead to amputation. Moreover, overcrowded congregate shelters always have a risk of outbreaks of flu and viruses.

## Spring Season

While many people associate spring with fresh starts, individuals facing homelessness face new difficulties. When you think about the worst weather, winter comes to the mind of most of us. In reality, spring could actually be worse.

As springtime approaches, more and more city roadways are lined with orange construction cones. With flowers blooming and trees blossoming, people are also spending more time outside. People are cleaning out their decks, bikes, and patio furniture. This sudden increase of people using the outdoors after long winters results in more visibility to individuals facing homeless. The season that, for many people, lifts them out of the emotional gloom and misery of winter, frequently does the opposite for them.



The most exposed and vulnerable people in the city are those who face homelessness. To ensure their survival throughout the night, they sleep all day long, remaining awake when the city sleeps to safeguard themselves and their possessions. However, with the overcrowded streets in spring season, it is difficult for people sleeping on streets to have peaceful rest during the day.

Surprisingly, people become less sympathetic towards the equity deserving folks during this time. During the winter and the holidays, people try to help by donating clothes, food, and time. However, in the spring season, people become less charitable and less compassionate, but the struggles do not decrease for those facing homelessness.

We cannot forget other disastrous natural calamities, such as hurricanes, storms, floods, and excessive rains. Last weekend on Friday evening, 23rd of September, Hurricane Fiona hit Atlantic Canada with winds of up to 160 km/hour with trees, power lines and even houses in a few towns that got washed away by the sea. People overfilled their pantries and took extra precautions. Individuals facing homelessness generally do not have the means to take the required protection. For example, [Daniel Hovey](#)'s tent in Spryfield, Nova Scotia was flooded, and his belongings were soaked. As a visually impaired man facing homelessness and not knowing anyone in the city, it's such a difficult task to start over. It is evident more support is needed for this population.

The city and government provide care, but there is always a lack of shelter options for people facing homelessness. Especially in these increasingly extreme weather conditions, a clear and articulate mobilisation plan is required.

Resources:

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4- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, February 8) Prevent Hypothermia & Frostbite. <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/hypothermia.html>

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Photo by [Jon Tyson](#) on [Unsplash](#)





Photo by [Nathan Dumlao](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# The Impact of Living in a Food Desert: A Lack of Adequate Access to Nutritious Food

Dear CCP readers,

Food insecurity is a public health issue that has been growing in scale both internationally and here in Canada. [Around 1 in 10 people](#) experience food insecurity around the world; and in Canada, [1 in 8 households are food insecure](#). The leading cause of inadequate or insecure access to food is financial limitations. There are varying levels of food insecurity that many households face, but adults and children who experience homelessness certainly suffer immensely from inadequate access to food. Those who are food insecure experience hunger, poor general health, reduced ability to learn and focus, and decreased mental health.

The goals of the CCP include supporting youth facing homelessness and providing resources to mitigate community-level issues that they might face, including, food insecurity. The prevalence of individuals who remain hungry is too high, and this issue is not one we want to be overlooked. Our team is dedicated to contribute to a healthier society, including remedying social and environmental issues that have an impact on the physical and mental well-being of youth.

Today's post will provide an overview of food insecurity in Canada, and more specifically, the impact of one's health while living in a food desert.

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## What is a food desert?

A [food desert](#) is a geographic location where there is a significant lack of substantial grocery markets with healthy food options, like produce, within a reasonable distance. This inaccessibility to nutritious food is what makes an area a food desert. There is a misconception that food deserts solely exist in rural areas with no nearby grocery stores, but food deserts are commonly found in urban areas as well.





Link: [Boston corner shop - Food desert - Wikipedia](#)

In Toronto, there are many supermarkets, yet [there are almost 31,000 households in Toronto's lowest income areas that are more than 1km walking distance to a supermarket and 9,000 of which are more than 1km away from any type of food outlet](#). For many of us, we cannot imagine buying groceries for meals at a liquor store, but for people that are living in a food desert, this might be their best option and their everyday reality. In a food desert, the food that is available is unhealthy and lacks nutritional value. In lower income areas with food deserts, the food available for the community must be affordable and have long shelf-lives. Processed foods and fast food perfectly fit into these categories. The lack of nutritious food including fruits and vegetables, are not commonly found in urban food deserts, leading to a poorer general health in these communities.

### **The effect of poor nutrition on health and well-being**

Proper nutrition is vital for human health and well-being. Eating nutritious foods daily not only provides us with greater clarity and energy, but it is vital for the continuation of a clean bill of health. The food we put into our bodies affects both our mind and body, so the effect that poor nutrition can have on the human body is tremendous. [In children](#), food insecurity can impact their long-term physical and mental health, increase their risk for conditions like depression or asthma, and it reduces a child's ability to succeed in school due to lack of focus. Adults face similar issues including [increased chronic conditions like diabetes, depression, and heart disease](#).



Link: [What Is Food](#)

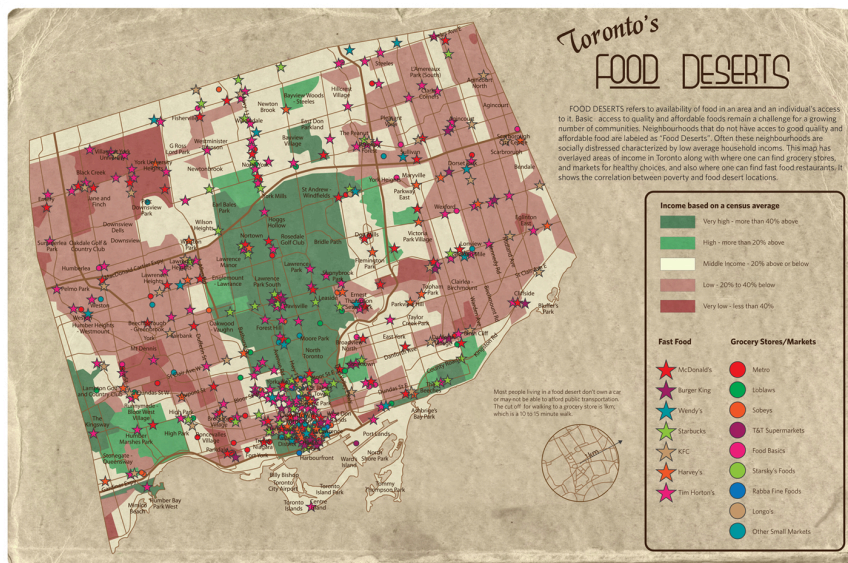
### [Insecurity and How Does It Affect Diabetics? – Diabetics Weekly](#)

A 5-minute documentary called, "[Feeding Nunavut](#)," highlights food insecurity in Northern Canada in the Inuit community. The documentary describes families who must rely on the prepared food available at the local stores that do not normally fit within the Inuit diet. The area has faced a large socioeconomic shift and people struggle to pay for their meals in northern Canada. People who are food insecure have an additional stress of how many meals they can afford to feed their families per day, which is a privilege enjoyed by many. *Feeding Nunavut* is an important short documentary that provides the reality of living in a food desert and the difficulties it specifically creates coming from an ethnic minority background. Aside from the physical and mental implications of eating an unhealthy diet and irregular meals, there is a social element to the equation as well. In the northernmost territory of Canada, the Inuit are forced to eat outside of their normal cultural diet in order to survive. This sacrifice is one that food secure groups do not have to make.

Promoting food security will boost the livelihood of many and restore the well-being of the whole person.

### **Why is there limited access to nutritious foods in these areas?**

The answers to this question are different when analysing limited access to nutritious foods in rural areas versus urban areas. In rural areas, limited access to nutritious food is typically due to distance and the [high expense to export foods to rural destinations](#). The higher the price of shipping costs, the higher the groceries will be for the local customers. [In urban areas](#), limited access to nutritious food can be due to affordability of healthier food items, poor urban planning, inadequate food distribution systems, retail company decision making, and the walking distance length to a local market.



Link: [LaRocque\\_Rachelle\\_Food\\_Infoposter.jpg \(1500×1017\) \(sustainontario.com\)](#)

Since food insecurity is a major public health concern, the government and private organisations have been focusing on how to remedy this widening issue.

### The future of food insecurity in Canada

Although the government of Canada has [a well-established network of social programs](#) that provide support to people and families in financial hardship, these programs are not targeted directly at food insecurity.

Some communities have [suggested](#) local community gardens and farmer's markets to provide healthy foods at a lower cost to help eliminate food deserts. These initiatives are beneficial, but do not fully address the main issues that a food desert causes. Food banks and private initiatives to end hunger have been carrying the weight of combating food insecurity, but this is not sustainable.

In Toronto, the public health department [created six themes](#) to promote healthy changes: 1. Healthy food access; 2. Community building and inclusion; 3. Food literacy; 4. Community economic development; 5. infrastructure/supply chain; and 6. Improving the food environment. These themes encompass the various issues surrounding the idea of food insecurity. With appropriate attention to the matter, the local government in partnership with private initiatives, can eliminate food deserts in the Toronto area and end hunger in the community.

The Canadian Courage Project aims to alleviate food insecurity by means of education, and also providing material resources to members of the community. We continue to [partner](#) with organisations who donate food and products for our care kit donations and meal drop-offs with local partnering shelters.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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# **Pet Before Self: Relationship between people facing homelessness and their pets**

[Terence, a street-involved youth, describes his relationship with his dog as “unconditional love.”](#)

"There's a strong, enduring bond between homeless people and their pets," said Daly. One in four homeless people has a pet in Canada, according to anthrozoology professor Beth Daly at the University of Windsor. "They derive a lot of support and purpose from having their pets."

## **What does the term homelessness encompass?**

It's crucial to remember that homelessness is more than simply a lack of safe and readily available housing; it also refers to inadequate income, limited access to social service assistance and healthcare, and social marginalization. People facing homelessness have a lower average life expectancy and are more likely to fall ill from various diseases. This is frequently connected to the social determinants of health, which include preventable illnesses caused by a lack of access to primary healthcare, such as standard immunizations, poor nutrition, cigarette use, and other addictions.

## **Why do people facing homelessness prefer having pets?**

People who live on the streets are lonely. Their pets provide them company, security, assistance in avoiding danger, and a sense of purpose. Pets can provide psychosocial advantages for their owners. Owning a pet can improve social, emotional, and physical well-being. For instance, having a pet helps reduce the occurrence of depression. Pets may also decrease risky behaviour, drug and alcohol use, and the likelihood of being locked up. [Research](#) has shown young people prioritize their bond with their pets when making decisions, a phenomenon known as the "[pet before self](#)" effect. For instance, they would rather sleep on the street with their pet than in a shelter that would not accept them. Research suggests that being there for their pet also is correlated to abstaining from drugs and trouble with the authorities.

A [cross-sectional study](#) conducted on the impact of pet ownership on the mental health status of street-involved youth was conducted in 2011 in Ontario, Canada. 189 street-involved youth aged 18 to 24, some of them pet owners and some not, were surveyed in four large cities - Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, and Kingston. 89 participants owned pets. Of the pet owners, 52 were male, and 35 were female. A total of 121 pets were owned by youth in this study. According to the study, 64.5% of the study's street-involved young participants reported having depression, however, adolescents who did not own pets were three times more likely to be depressed than youth who did, even after adjusting for gender and drug use. Although the researchers mentioned that this is a point-in-time analysis and cannot be used for making causal inferences, this research can aid with policy implications for people facing homelessness.

## **Implications of pet ownership for people facing homelessness: exacerbating the problem**

Despite efforts by homeless service providers that encourage and/or demand people to separate from or give up their dogs, to increase their chances of receiving shelter, they rarely do. Pets can be dangerous to other people in shelters and can likely cause bites and scratches. The shelter staff are not trained or experienced enough to care for pets. Shelters can lack resources and funds even if they want to welcome both owners and pets. Access to animal vaccinations, figuring out food and shelter, and caring for pets' safety and needs can be challenging for people facing homelessness.

The link between humans and animals is so strong that many people facing homelessness won't live apart from their pets, which means they can't or won't use services like emergency shelters if their pets can't go with them. To fully understand the needs of the large proportion of people facing homelessness with animal companions we require a structured, system-wide strategy to collect data to begin to mitigate their challenges.

**Here are a few resources that can be helpful for people facing homelessness.**

### **City of Toronto**

The [city of Toronto](#) and the [Toronto Humane Society](#) provides the following free pet services:

- **Spay and Neuter:** prevent health problems such as tumours and behavioural problems such as inappropriate urination and aggression. Also prevents unwanted kittens and puppies
- **Vaccination:** annual shots prevent diseases and keep your pet healthy
- **Microchip:** helps reunite you with your pet if they get lost
- **Flea Control:** makes your pet more comfortable by preventing and removing fleas
- **Health Exam:** keep your pet healthy by taking them to see a veterinarian at least once a year.

### **Community Veterinary Outreach (CVO)**

Community Veterinary Outreach (CVO) is a registered charity. Its mandate is to improve the health of homeless and vulnerably housed communities through veterinary care for their pets and to connect their humans with health and social services. CVO clinics are present throughout Canada, including Vancouver, Kelowna, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, and York.

Their programs include,

- **Full-service clinics** offer preventative care, including an examination, vaccinations, parasite treatment, and implantation with permanent identification (microchip), and owners receive education and advice on nutrition, dental care, and behaviour.
- **Pet Fairs** include pet health education, pet dental education and supplies, grooming and nail trims, and access to pet food and supplies.

### **Fred Victor's Bethlehem United Shelter**

The only long-term shelter in Toronto that permits pets to stay with their owners is [Fred Victor's Bethlehem United Shelter](#). This 70-bed wheelchair-accessible shelter at Caledonia Road and Lawrence Avenue is open to all genders, singles and couples. This shelter is a joint project between Fred Victor, Bethlehem United Church (Apostolic) and the City of Toronto.

While at the shelter, residents have the opportunity to meet with staff to draw up a plan of action so they can move forward. Case managers work one-on-one to help people fill in the

necessary paperwork and forms to access healthcare, housing, employment and income support. This is a friendly approach and beginning for someone who wants to end homelessness.

Canadian Courage Project is Canada's first non-profit organization to support youth facing homelessness and their animal companions; we strive to promote the mental well-being of youth through mindfulness, education and resources.

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# Abuse in Homelessness: Victims of Domestic Violence

Dear CCP readers,

During the month of October, people worldwide recognize domestic violence awareness month. [Domestic violence awareness month \(DVAM\) was introduced in 1981, by the National Coalition Against Domestic violence.](#) DVAM was created to help raise awareness of issues relating to domestic violence, and provide visibility of resources for victims in need. Abuse is common in the homeless population, and sometimes victims and their children become homeless after fleeing an abusive household. Victims of domestic abuse may find themselves left with a [difficult choice between remaining with an abuser for financial stability or becoming homeless or impoverished for safety.](#)



Picture link: [Bringing Attention to Domestic Violence Awareness Month Blog | South University](#)

The Canadian Courage Project (CCP) aims to raise awareness on topics relating to the issues that people facing homelessness endure and aims to provide resources to combat such issues. [Domestic violence is pervasive in Canada](#) and is considered one of the main causes of homelessness. As such, it is important to understand and recognize abuse cycles. Our mission includes providing education and support for youth facing homelessness and our surrounding communities. Today's post will discuss how victims of domestic violence and their children often find themselves in a state of financial insecurity leading to homelessness, and how we can help victims of domestic violence.

If you are returning for more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest

in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

## **What is domestic violence and is it prevalent in Canada?**

[Domestic violence](#) (DV) can be any of the following: physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse, as well as by other family members or by one's partner's family members. There is a great stigma that surrounds the concept of DV that perpetuates the cycle of abuse. The belief that DV is only physical is a false representation that harms victims and provides miseducation. This could lead to victim blaming and self-doubt. Yearly, around [10 million people experience DV, which is also equal to around 20 victims per minute](#). Discussing DV is not easy, but with these numbers in mind, it is clear that this issue should be recognized with more gravity and education and awareness needs to be enhanced.

Although Canada is one of the safest countries in the world, it is not exempt from problems like domestic abuse and intimate partner violence. These problems affect around [1 in 25 women](#) in Canada. The Canadian Women's Foundation provides a great amount of statistical evidence that portrays the magnitude of DV in Canada, including the fact that [almost every six days, a woman is killed by their intimate partner](#). It is important to note the prevalence of DV in Canada, to acknowledge that more action needs to be taken for prevention and the further support for victims.

## **The threat of homelessness experienced by victims of domestic violence**

Each night in Canada, [3,491 women and their 2,724 children](#) sleep in shelters because it is not safe for them to sleep in their home. The aftereffects of intimate partner violence are all-encompassing: physical, mental, and emotional. The act of leaving an abusive situation takes a great deal of bravery, and can be an incredibly emotional experience. Parents leaving an abusive home are left to find resources that will keep them and their children safe. Victims are left to provide for their children independently, leading to a larger population of people experiencing homelessness.

Programs dedicated towards supporting unsheltered women and children who have experienced DV can undoubtedly be strengthened in Canada. The supportive housing system in Canada for DV survivors is [overcrowded and underfunded](#), leading to fears of financial insecurity and homelessness for those trying to escape an unsafe home. Victims are forced to make a decision between staying in an abusive relationship and potential homelessness. For those who choose the latter, they must navigate safely on the streets if shelters are closed for availability, which, unfortunately, is the common case. The courage to leave an abuser can unfortunately be stifled due to a lack of financial security and shelter.



Picture link: ["Art Against Abuse" presented by The Gallery – Carrollwood Cultural Center \(carrollwoodcenter.org\)](http://carrollwoodcenter.org)

Victims who leave with children or who may be pregnant may also choose to not leave out of consideration of their child's future livelihood as well. The choice lies between continuing to raise a child in an abusive household or raising a child in a homeless shelter, and sometimes unsheltered.

Research has proven that [children experiencing trauma during their youth are more likely to end up homeless](#). This difficult decision should not be worsened by the idea that a child who has witnessed domestic violence may become homeless and experience more trauma in their life. Avoiding these types of decisions would be ideal. The reality is that domestic violence is far from being eliminated and so is homelessness, but the severity of this safety decision can be alleviated. Prevention and education are key. Means of prevention include preventing violence to begin with, homelessness thereafter, and preventing the cycle from occurring again. Education is crucial for families who experience violence within their home and for other members of society who have not experienced domestic violence. Education should be provided to greater society on the various types of domestic violence and how they might present themselves, the prevalence of DV in society, how to safely escape an abusive home, and how to educate children on what a healthy relationship should look like. We hope that as we work towards reaching these goals of prevention and education, DV victims and survivors can find peace and safety from their abusers with the current resources available.

## **Where can victims and survivors of domestic violence find help?**

Intimate partner violence against women and children is a global public health concern, and is a problem that exists in every country around the globe. [The United Nations \(UN\) has included several sustainable development goals \(SDG\) for 2030](#), that are dedicated towards eliminating violence and harm that affect children, including, domestic violence, child



marriage, female mutilation, trafficking, and sexual violence. The UN Secretary General conducted a study on violence against children and found that around [275 million children](#) are exposed to violence in their homes globally. The UN has recognized the impact that domestic violence has on women and children, and countries should follow suit.

Victims and survivors of domestic violence can find help through [various paths](#), such as, government programs, non-profit shelters, crisis lines, health centers, and [more](#). For victims who are facing a situation of homelessness, emergency shelters and shelters created specifically for victims of domestic violence are places that can provide immediate safety.



Picture link: [Various forms of violence against women | The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News — Guardian Woman — The Guardian Nigeria News – Nigeria and World News](#)

Our team at the CCP partners with several shelters, including [Anova](#), an organization that provides a safe place, shelter, support, counselling, and resources for women and their children who have endured abuse. We are proud to partner with amazing organizations that provide healing to individuals and families who have faced oppression. We hope to continuously improve the livelihood and well-being of those facing homelessness. If you would like to join the conversation and help us complete this mission, [contact us here](#).

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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# Employment challenges for people facing homelessness.

Dear CCP readers,

If you are returning for more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

Today we'll be discussing the challenges in finding employment for people facing homelessness. People often have the perception that individuals who are facing homeless do not want to work. However, [research has shown](#) that people facing homelessness are actively trying to find work.

No stable roof on one's head, means no address to put on resumes, no number to get calls back from companies, or a safe space to prepare for interviews. Research conducted by [Raising the Roof](#) shows nearly 700 youth experiencing homelessness in three Canadian cities found that 73% were not employed. Similarly, in a study with 360 homeless youth in Toronto, only 15% identified paid employment as their primary source of income".

There may be many reasons behind these stats, the perspective of employers being one of the barriers that prevent youth facing homelessness from finding employment. If a potential candidate doesn't have stable housing, some companies may be reluctant to hire them - perhaps the hiring manager may worry that these individuals' lives may not be stable enough for them to keep the job, or due to the negative stereotypes surrounding people facing homelessness. Participants from a [research](#) study in Calgary found that people facing homelessness felt ashamed of putting their shelter address or having to explain why they do not have an ID or a bank account. Most of them do not want to disclose these details which makes the hiring process very stressful for them.

There is a long list of barriers that people experiencing homelessness have to face in finding employment:

Individual Barriers	Social Barriers	Organizational Barriers
Lack of education	Lack of resources and support	Lack of experience
Physical disability	Limited access to transportation	Discrimination in hiring process
Mental health issues	Lack of computer literacy	Lack of vocational training
Substance use	Criminal justice involvement	Interview costs (e.g. buying business attire)
Criminal record	Inhospitable labour market	Discrimination at work place

Youth experiencing homelessness face increased difficulties when it comes to finding a job such as age discrimination and lack of life skills and experience, such as time management, budgeting, or conflict resolution. Since they are not left with many options without formal work, they often adopt dangerous survival strategies to make ends meet. This could include dealing drugs, stealing, panhandling, or sex work. For example, a [study](#) found out that youth who have dropped out of high school are more likely to get involved in squeegeeing or panhandling.

### Minimum wage and its reality

In many situations, the issue of homelessness cannot be resolved by having a minimum wage job. Despite working, a person may not make enough money to cover their fundamental requirements. This is especially for people living in big cities with greater living expenses and a shortage of affordable homes. For example, the minimum wage in Ontario is **\$15.50 per hour**. On this wage, a person would earn \$2480/month if they are able to work full-time for 40 hours every week. According to Numbeo, the world's largest cost of living database, it would cost an estimated \$4,828.39 CAD per month for a family of four to live in Toronto without having to pay rent. A single person's estimated monthly costs are \$1,323.50 CAD without rent. With the high costs of rent in urban cities, it is evident that it would not be possible to sustain a comfortable lifestyle in Toronto on minimum wage.

### Intervention Strategies

While the issue of homelessness can be overwhelming, particularly when it comes to employment, there is hope. However, the solution lies on a fundamental shift in ideology that acknowledges the structural obstacles to employment for the people facing homelessness.

There are several interventions available to help people experiencing homelessness who have debilitating problems like mental health and substance use as well as physical health and disability concerns. Measures like social enterprise intervention, individual placement and assistance, work skills training programmes, and transitional jobs programmes are four promising interventions that can be adopted by organisations to help out street-involved individuals.

However, debunking the myths that keep employers from hiring people who are facing homelessness can be done in large part through education and public awareness. Business leaders may identify the special abilities, skills, and experiences that people who have experienced homelessness can contribute to the organisation by increasing their attention on the positive effects of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Similar to this, a coordinated effort to greatly expand public financing for housing the individuals facing homelessness will have enormous positive effects and remove many of their employment-related obstacles. With the help of this financing, they can receive employment training, including instruction on how to build their resumes. Job prospects will have a physical address and, most likely, more dependable phone access if housing is more widely available. Additionally, they will always have access to bathrooms and laundry facilities. These requirements are essential to getting and keeping a job.

A cycle of stable housing, dependable employment, and consistent healthcare can be substituted for the vicious cycle of homelessness, unemployment, and insufficient medical treatment.

[CONSTRUCT](#) is an employment social enterprise managed by Blue Door, that fosters labour market attachment for individuals facing barriers to employment in York Region. CONSTRUCT is a solution for the intersection of two challenges; growing demand for skilled employees in the construction industry and vulnerable low-income individuals needing low barrier jobs and a higher income to achieve housing stability. Their program is designed to help break down barriers to employment and provide direct connections to employment opportunities and careers. They provide transportation, safety equipment and meal support as well during the training.

Blue Door is CCP's charitable trustee, we partner with them and provide wellness kits, mental health educational workshops and animal stations. We support Blue

Door's mission by providing support to individuals moving out from shelters into independent housing. To be a part of this cause, you can contribute towards our care packages, wellness kits or support our goals [here](#).

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers. See you next week!

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# Substance Abuse and Harm Reduction in the Homeless Population

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung & Anya Bhopa

Dear CCP readers,

According to the [Without a Home](#) survey on young people experiencing homelessness across Canada, 20% of the homeless population are young people ages 13-24, and each year, there are at least 35,000-40,000 people experiencing homelessness. In Canada, [many studies have proven that youth experiencing homelessness have an increased risk of poor nutrition, victimisation, substance use and abuse, and limited access to healthcare](#). In this article, we focus on these risks that homeless youth experience and how they are linked to a higher likelihood to addiction to illicit substances. There is an inherent link between substance abuse/addiction and mental health.

One of the goals for the Canadian Courage Project (CCP) is to promote the mental well-being and health of youth experiencing homelessness. We actively host youth shelter workshops with the goal of educating the youth on the importance of mental health and mindfulness. Hundreds of youth have participated in these workshops, and we hope to continue these efforts to educate more of our community as well. Our organisation also hosts career-oriented workshops in school classes for youth to educate them on 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. We have had the privilege to host this workshop with 74,000 youth so far. Each of these programs instill confidence in our youth and highlight the importance of connecting within one's community.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

## **Substance Abuse as Causation or Result of Homelessness in the Youth?**

The factors that lead a young person to homelessness vary from those that are causations for adults experiencing homelessness. Studies have shown that [40-71% of street-involved youth abuse alcohol and/or other drugs](#). It has also been found that substance abuse rates are [10% higher in youth males and 17% higher in youth females](#) who are homeless than those who do not experience homelessness. For some, substance abuse might lead to homelessness, and for others, substance abuse might have come about as a coping mechanism due to homelessness. It is a common misconception that people facing homelessness are primarily those with drug addictions. This is a harmful misconception, as there are many other reasons that someone may find themselves homeless, and it also adds a stigma to those dealing with addiction. In a systematic review of causes of youth homelessness in developed and developing countries, “delinquency” was the least frequent cause for homelessness (Embleton et. al, 2016). On the other hand, the most common reasons for “street involvement” in youth experiencing homelessness were poverty and family conflict (Embleton et. al, 2016). It is important that this misconception is defeated and we learn to have compassion for those facing homelessness, and compassion for those dealing with substance abuse issues as well.

As previously mentioned, youth who are experiencing homelessness are more prone to drug exposure while living on the street. [Substance use may seem attractive](#) to these youth as it can provide a sense of community, relief, and survival. On the other hand, substance use is linked to many physical and psychological issues, including addiction, infectious diseases, criminal behaviour and violence. The [table below](#) quantifies the effect that substance use has on youth facing homelessness, and it also connects substance use to social and mental health behaviours. It is clear that risk prevention and education is needed to help youth living on the streets avoid temptation to get involved in drug use.

Substance Use Behaviours and Mental Health, by Gender			
	Total (N=150) # (%)	Females (N=75) # (%)	Males (N=75) # (%)
Substance Use in Last 30 Days			
Tobacco	136 (91%)	68 (91%)	68 (91%)
Alcohol*	106 (71%)	47 (63%)	59 (80%)
Marijuana*	109 (73%)	48 (64%)	61 (82%)
Hallucinogens	50 (34%)	25 (34%)	25 (34%)
Amphetamines	24 (16%)	10 (13%)	14 (19%)
Cocaine	35 (24%)	18 (24%)	17 (23%)
Crack	16 (11%)	6 (8%)	10 (14%)
Heroin	7 (5%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%)
Number of Drugs Used in Last 30 Days – Mean (SD)	2.3 (1.6)	2.1 (1.5)	2.5 (1.5)
Drug dealing in last 12 months*	64 (43%)	26 (35%)	38 (51%)
Ever received a mental health diagnosis	63 (42%)	32 (44%)	31 (41%)
Concurrent mental health and substance use problems	36 (24%)	21 (28%)	15 (20%)
Ever self-harmed**	64 (45%)	40 (56%)	25 (34%)
Suicidal ideation in last 12 months	41 (27%)	28 (37%)	13 (17%)
Suicide attempts in last 12 months*	23 (15%)	19 (25%)	4 (5%)

Gender differences: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/11KIRSTweb.pdf>

## The Link Between Substance Abuse, Mental Health, and Homelessness

Increased substance abuse in youth comes with more drug-related harms, including issues with one's [mental health, which are two times higher in youth facing homelessness](#) versus non-homeless youth. There is a strong link between struggling with one's mental health while being homeless and substance use. Homelessness and substance use are separately individual risk factors for worsening mental health, but some people experience the overlapping disadvantages of dealing with both of these issues. The CCP is working towards the goal of improving the mental health of youth facing homelessness, and we aim to educate them on [finding healthy coping mechanisms](#) to deal with mental health challenges that they are experiencing.

As seen in the [table above](#) from the study performed through the Youth Pathways Project (YPP) conducted by researchers at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the University of Toronto, 24% of the youth were found to have concurrent mental health and substance abuse problems. Twenty-seven percent of the studied group also reported

experiencing suicidal ideations in the past 12 months. These statistics are disappointing, and prove that there is a clear correlation between substance abuse and increased issues with one's mental health.

Peter Saunders (also known as “Rabbit”) filmed a [video](#) depicting his “day-in-the-life” of someone experiencing homelessness and an addiction to fentanyl and other opioids. In his video documentation, he explains how he wants to have a future life that is more than being homeless. He explains how much he does not like his life, yet once he gets high, he goes from “feeling terrible, irritable, anxious, frustrated, to normal and blissful and happy.” Drug use is often used as an escape from reality and to feel something outside of a negative surrounding. Although this video is difficult to watch, Saunders highlights the pervasiveness of addiction and how it has played a part in his story of homelessness. Unfortunately, Saunders passed away in November 2019, but his story lives on as an example of someone who was actively asking for help and wanted freedom from his addiction and from homelessness. We must do better to understand the unique challenges our peers face while living on the street. It is unfortunate that there are not enough resources to aid in prevention and education to help others dealing with similar issues to Saunders.



<https://bc.ctvnews.ca/homeless-shelter-portrayed-as-drug-den-in-dispute-between-province-penticton-council-1.5351151>

## **Reducing Abuse and Harm in the Homeless Population**

Reducing abuse in the homeless population ties into our core principle of promoting mental well-being and physical health. Harm reduction is also important, as it provides other options that are geared towards creating an experience that is ideally, the least harmful possible. Some [harm reduction ideas](#) include: intervention, safe injection sites, supply distribution, overdose prevention and treatment, motivational interviewing, and more.



How can you help?

- Fight the stigma on substance abuse by continuing to educate those around you.
- Spread resource guides for those in need.
- Have conversations with children about mental health and drug use.
- Support safe environments for safe injections of medicines.
- Support a better healthcare infrastructure that includes programming meant to keep youth away from the streets and remain drug/alcohol free.

[This link](#) serves as a guide of resources and centres that can help Canadian youth experiencing homelessness. For anyone experiencing addiction or substance abuse, please also refer to the [Canada Drug Rehab](#) site.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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# Debunking myths related to homelessness and what can you do to help?

Dear CCP readers,

If you are returning for more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

In this blog post, we will be discussing some of the myths and misconceptions related to the situation of homelessness and individuals facing homelessness.

25,000 to 35,000 people could be experiencing homelessness on any given night in Canada. [More than 235,000 people in Canada experience homelessness in any given year.](#) These high numbers reflect an inability to solve a nearly [four-decade-old national crisis](#). What specifically led to such high levels of homelessness in Canada? Some people have brought up the lack of employment and domestic violence. Others have criticised the cost of urban housing as well as reductions in government funding for affordable housing. It is also common to blame people facing homelessness excuses like making poor decisions, abusing drugs, or preferring a life on the streets. Regardless, homelessness in Canada is becoming a booming epidemic.

Primary examples of homeless situations include living on the streets or in areas that are not intended for habitation. Other situations include staying in temporary or emergency shelters, hotels, hostels, or rooming houses. Another situation known as “hidden homelessness” involves residing with friends, family, or strangers, commonly known as “couch hopping”.

In this blog, we are going to debunk some of the most common myths associated with homelessness.

## **Myth - Majority uses drugs and alcohol.**

**Fact** - It is very common for people to believe that the majority of the individuals facing homelessness are on drugs, but the reality is actually very different. A [survey](#) was conducted from 2016 and 2018 in various communities facing homelessness in Canada, and it was found that a quarter of the individuals were addicted or substance use. It is very easy for

people who have roofs on their heads and the means to read this article to jump to conclusions.

**Myth -They are dangerous and violent.**

**Fact** - Someone walking on the streets sees an individual lying on the side of the street, would tend to walk away, protect their stuff and children or even maybe change their routes. We often assume that people living on streets could be dangerous. However, more often than not, those who are facing homelessness become the target of violence. In most of the situations, any violence committed by these individuals is in self-defence. In fact, some individuals facing homelessness may use violence in situations other than self-defense, but this rarely results in harm to those who aren't experiencing homelessness.

**Myth - People choose to be homeless.**

**Fact** - Facing homelessness is not easy or comfortable. It is dangerous, stressful and may feel humiliating. Sometimes people prefer to sleep on streets rather than staying in shelters, mainly because of various shelters' unfriendly policies relating to pets, belongings or perhaps the environment could be unsafe. Shelters may also have screening programs, which could leave the most vulnerable people on the streets. Another reason could be domestic violence - people may need to leave their homes because of unsafe situations at home.

**Myth - Homeless people lack ambition**

**Fact** - It is often assumed that people facing homelessness are lazy and do not want to work. People who face homelessness are frequently exhausted, cold, wet, and ill. They can be spending the entire day travelling to get to eat before they need to look for a safe place to sleep, all the while attempting to keep their personal belongings secure, especially if they have no means of transportation and limited money. In addition, a large number of people experience the trauma of homelessness while suffering from incapacitating disorders such as severe mental illness and chronic medical diseases. Moreover, with the rising cost of living every year, specifically in cities like Toronto and Vancouver, and with a minimum wage, it is almost impossible to pay bills.

**Myth - They are criminals.**

**Fact** - A person who is homeless is no more likely to be a criminal than a housed person. They are more likely to be associated with criminal justice intervention as they are often involved in minor offences like trespassing, loitering or littering. In fact, a person facing homelessness is more likely to be the *victim* of a violent crime, especially if they are a woman, teen, or child.

**MYTH: It is a waste of public resources to provide homeless services to certain people who don't "deserve" them, such as addicts.**

**Fact** - Homelessness is a result of systemic issues. It is a result of structural and economic factors such as a lack of affordable housing, a high cost of living, low-paying jobs, limited access to health care, and a lack of assistance for mental health and chemical dependency.

The concept of deserving and undeserving is harmful, none of us do have the right to decide for it.

Hopefully, revealing the truth against these myths gave you some insight into the perspectives of people facing homelessness. We cannot just wait and watch for the government and for organizations to take action. We need to step up. This is a global and complex problem, which can be reduced to a great extent from combined efforts from all of us.

### **Practical ways to help homelessness:**

**1 - Donation** - Every shelter homes and individuals on streets, appreciates groceries and monetary donations. You can think outside of the box when making donations. Try asking the individuals and organizations what they need specifically. Think about the season, while giving away summer or winter clothing, depending on the time of year. Consider toiletries and personal goods for personal hygiene (i.e., undergarments, and socks).

**2 - Educate yourself** - There are various reasons behind being homeless as highlighted above. Try understanding the stereotypes associated with them and learn about people facing homelessness in your own community.

**3 - Offering aid** - Helping individuals facing homelessness in getting out of the state of homeless, can possibly be the best help you can give. Here are few things you can do:

- Help them find the right shelter, according to their needs, pets, belongings and family.
- Help them navigate the employment process, if they are interested.
- Involve local businesses to organize food and clothing drives.

**4 - Volunteer your time** - Monetary or material donations are not only the only ways to help out. Volunteer your time at the nearest shelter - shelters are often running on low budgets and serve a lot many families at one time. Children at shelters look for normalcy - if possible you can take children for an outing for example to a park nearby. You can even tutor these children in skills you are proficient in.

**5 - Raise awareness** - Shelters and organisations that support individuals facing homeless survive on donations. You can help them out by publishing information about them and the work they do. You can even handle the social media accounts of shelters and agencies to raise awareness. Overall you can endeavour to educate those in your own community.

**6 - Call 311** - 311 provides residents, businesses and visitors with easy access to non-emergency City services, programs and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week in Canada. 311 can offer assistance in more than 180 languages. Also, the Salvation Army outreach team drives around the city looking for homeless people out in the cold, delivering blankets, gloves and other essentials.

The Canadian Courage Project is Canada's first non-profit organization to support youth facing homelessness and their animal companions, we strive to promote the mental well-being of youth through mindfulness, education and resources. Our mission is to support

youth transitioning out of shelters into independent housing with the different programs and services we offer and by increasing the awareness of the United Nations 17 Sustainable development goal. You can learn more about us through our instagram and website. We often have volunteer opportunities which are usually posted on instagram, so always keep an eye out for it. You can also support us through donations, purchasing care packages or our merchandise.

## 7 WAYS TO HELP HOMELESS FOLKS SLEEP SAFE



National Sleep Awareness Week is celebrated every March.

Sleep is a basic necessity for all humans, yet people who are homeless often suffer from extreme sleep deprivation - due to safety concerns, criminalizing or harassing policies, or shelter policies or environments.

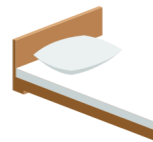
### 1 LEND A HELPING HAND

Participate in clothing and blanket drives to make sure your homeless neighbors have the supplies they need to cope with the elements outside. You can also raise money for organizations that do this work on a regular basis.



### 2 ASK FOR MORE SHELTERS

No city in the United States has enough shelter beds to serve their entire homeless population. Challenge your community to provide beds for every man, woman and child in your community.



### 3 FIGHT CRIMINALIZATION

Stand up and advocate for sensible alternatives to criminalizing the activities that people experiencing homelessness have to do every day to survive, such as sleeping or sharing food in public spaces.



### 4 PROTECT PUBLIC HOUSING

Let your local government know that you value public housing as a resource for preventing and recovering from homelessness for individuals and families, and make sure that all public properties are used for the benefit of all.



### 5 DEMAND MORE VOUCHERS

Contact your lawmakers at every level and tell them that you want your community to provide enough housing vouchers for everyone who needs them.



### 6 PUSH FOR HOUSING DOLLARS

Ask your Federal representatives in the House and Senate to increase funding for HUD housing and homeless programs and the National Housing Trust Fund, and be sure the funds protected from misappropriation.



### 7 STOP HATE CRIMES

One of the worst threats homeless sleepers face is violence from the housed community. Petition your city or state to add protections for people experiencing homelessness to their existing hate crimes legislations.



For more information on how you can help people who are facing or experiencing homelessness in your community, please visit our website: [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)

References: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/>

<https://rewire.news/article/2018/09/27/sleep-deprivation-is-an-unrecognized-problem-for-homeless-people/>

## [7-ways-to-help-homeless-folks-sleep-safe-2](#)

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

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## PRECARIOUS LIVES: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF HOMELESS YOUTH TRANSITIONS TO INDEPENDENT HOUSING

Varleen - social determinants of health

Lauren - classism

Personal accounts of youth (interview participants)

# **Cyclical Structural Oppression & Classism**

## **A Review on “Precarious Lives: A Critical Examination of Homeless Youth Transitions to Independent Housing” by Naomi Thulien**

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Our next couple of posts of the CCP blog will be reviewing various aspects of Naomi Thulien's 2017 thesis paper on the lives of homeless youth and the various implications of the welfare system and why youth experiencing homelessness have difficulty transitioning out of homelessness as adults. Over the next month, our team aims to highlight Thulien's incredible research study, as it reveals many truths regarding the reality of homelessness for youth in Canada. For her thesis, “Precarious Lives: A Critical Examination of Homeless Youth Transitions to Independent Housing,” Naomi Thulien conducted her own research study with nine study participants, between the ages 16-24 at the beginning of the study, and those who were transitioning into independent housing.

In this blog post, we aim to focus on the socioeconomic system within our society, and more specifically, “classism,” or the inadvertent use of class ideology. The CCP wants to encourage and inspire youth by helping educate them on both careers and community change. We find value in filling the gaps of our societal system, especially, educational disparities that underprivileged youth face.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

### **Socioeconomic Differences**

One's socioeconomic status has become a determinant of someone's prospects of life including many factors: their health, career, family, and housing situation. In society, usually there are defined and undefined ways of identifying different social and economic classes. In



Canada, there are [three main classes](#): the owning class, middle class, and traditional working class. From a sociological point of view, it is possible for people to transition between classes, but it is difficult for those who are in the lowest class to shift upwards.

Canada defines the [poverty line](#) as an annual income below 12,880 CAD. In Ontario specifically, the poverty line is an annual income below 19,930 CAD. Thulien's study subjects were all living below Canada's low income cut-off with a range of salaries from 7,872-19,200 CAD (Thulien). Of these nine participants, only one of them was employed, and none of the participants who were reliant on welfare benefits at the baseline interview were able to gain stable employment during the 6-9 month research study (Thulien). Thulien discusses how those living below the poverty line are often stuck in poverty due to a lack of financial resources available to higher class levels. These resources make it more plausible for social mobility within our societal system, and the lack of them further create the case of poverty entrapment for those living under the poverty line in Canada.

### **The Child Welfare System**

Another important aspect of Thulien's study was child welfare involvement. The child welfare system in Canada is different from many other affluent countries, including the United States, because it has no federal oversight. The Canadian government looks to each province to create their own child welfare system. Although there is no federal oversight, Canada is committed to protecting children nationwide. One example of this is universal medical care for all children and the general concept of protecting children from abuse and maltreatment (Gough). The focus of Thulien's study is to better understand the challenges faced by homeless youth as they transition to independent housing outside of the system or sheltered living. Thulien cites the Evenson study that studied 689 homeless youth from various cities in Canada, and found that 68% of the participants came from foster care, group homes, or youth centers (Evenson; Thulien). A major conclusion of Thulien's thesis is that many youth who grew up within the child welfare system were later homeless and stuck below the poverty line. She also explains how other longitudinal studies that studied youth leaving foster care, showed that 31%-46% of young people experience homelessness at least once by the age of 26 (Thulien). There is a pattern of oppression that derives from the structure of our class system. Some of the reasons Thulien discovered in her literature review for this cycle of poverty are the following:

1. Youth leaving the welfare system before the age of 21.

2. A failure to help youth deal with trauma they might have experienced while living at home.
3. Inadequate preparation for adulthood including education and life skills understanding.

Each of these reasons are valid and are something that we at the CCP aim to better understand and educate our readers on, so that we can better approach providing services for youth experiencing homelessness in our area.

### **The Power of Classism**

Classism can be [defined](#) as “a belief that a person’s social or economic station in society determines their value in that society” and “behavior that reflects this belief: prejudice or discrimination based on class.” There is power in individuals and common societal beliefs that enforce this class ideology that some are better than others because of their position in society. The more powerful groups that are able to enforce this ideology are those in the owning class (upper class) and those in the middle class (Thulien). Society has allowed these classes to define the lower class, which invokes challenges for potential upward mobility.

Thulien explains the “drastic income and wealth disparity” between the nine study participants and the rest of residents living in Toronto. There are many parts of her experiences and interviews she has with the participants where she is even shocked at how the participants live. There is a clear and stark depiction of how those who live in the lower classes due comparatively to those with financial resources in the upper classes. In one of Thulien’s interviews with Ashley, the one study participant who was employed throughout the study, Ashley explains how she is able to visualize the class gap between her and others in society frequently. When asked by Thulien about how she feels seeing these successful people in public, she explains,

“I feel like it’s not fair because...I’m...I have to work harder to be able to have fun and they can just easily, like..., going out drinking after work, or like, people my age that they’re working and they’re going to school, but at the same time they have all this money, you know?...I just feel sometimes you know, I just feel like really...I don’t know... I guess you can say jealous, but I wouldn’t put it like that, I would just say, it’s not fair that I have to struggle...” (Thulien).

For those of us who might have the privileges Ashley outlined in this response, we might forget to be gracious for the resources we enjoy on a daily basis. Ashley had the highest socioeconomic status of all the other study participants, but still expresses throughout the study her fight to survive and even feed herself. Thulien also discusses the power of a social network and how those in lower socioeconomic classes are often not closely connected with those in higher classes, which means they do not have access to help that could help them “get ahead” in society (Thulien).

In pop culture, there is often discussion of people who are *nepotism babies*. [Nepotism](#) is “the act of using your power or influence to get good jobs or unfair advantages for members of your own family.” This concept is often used when referring to children of celebrities, who then become celebrities, but this concept can be applied to many fields of study and careers. Similar ideas include building a network while receiving a degree from a 4-year institution. Although some members of higher classes might not have family members who can put their foot in the door at good jobs, having access to higher education is another luxury that is often taken for granted. This luxury is one that is not available for those living beneath the poverty line, causing a huge disparity between classes.

Youth experiencing homelessness and those who are transitioning to independent housing are prone to the inability of achieving meaningful social integration due to classism and structural determinants that work against them.

### **How Can We Help?**

We agree with Thulien that the structure of our society leads to extreme challenges for youth experiencing homelessness to progress in society as working citizens due to the structure’s oppressive nature. Some of these challenges relate to food security, physical and mental health, opportunities for stable employment, and active socialization (Thulien). We at the Canadian Courage Project believe that each of these areas can be addressed to better equip our youth. Our team hopes to both educate society on these issues to destigmatize the backgrounds of homeless youth and to educate youth on career development. Through this, our team hopes to help break the cycle of poverty that youth in our society face. Our [career workshops](#) educate youth on the UN’s sustainable development goals and open their eyes to different careers. Our goal is to inspire youth to believe their future goals are attainable, and also teach them how to reach those goals.

Please also read our other blog posts relating to these challenges our homeless youth face: [food insecurity](#), [employment opportunities](#), [lack of adequate education](#).

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

## Images

- Career workshop image

## Blurb for Mailer

Our newest blog post discusses the difficulties that youth face when trying to transition from the welfare system/supportive housing to independent living. In this post, we review a thesis written by Naomi Thulien from the University of Toronto. We discuss the power of classism and the challenges youth face when trying to break the cycle of poverty. Our team is actively working to fill the gaps of these disparities by advocating for accessible education and providing education to our youth as well. For a more in-depth view, check out our [blog page](#)!

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## **Social Determinants of Health: Finding Causes of Causes.**

Dear CCP readers,

Written by: Varleen kaur

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

*A health care system – even the best health care system in the world – will be only one of the ingredients that determine whether your life will be long or short, healthy or sick, full of fulfillment, or empty with despair.*

- *The Honourable Roy Romanow, 2004*

In this blog post, we aim to focus on the social determinants of health, the impact of non-medical factors on health. The World Health Organization ([W.H.O.](#)) offers a simple definition of health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. “Social well-being” is an important aspect of this definition that may not always occur to us in thinking about our health. If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

The most important thing you need to know about your health may not be as obvious as you think. The [World Health Organization's](#) Commission on the Social Determinants of Health has defined the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) as the non-medical factors influencing health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.

This is a detailed list of all the social determinants affecting health:

- Income and social protection
- Education
- Unemployment and job insecurity
- Working life conditions
- Food insecurity
- Housing, basic amenities and the environment
- Early childhood development
- Social inclusion and non-discrimination
- Structural conflict
- Access to affordable health services of decent quality.

However, this is not an exhaustive list. There could be more factors depending on what health means to you and where you live.

### **Why is SDOH so important in public health?**

[Research](#) has shown that SDOH could be responsible for 30-55% of health outcomes. It also shows that the [contribution of non-health sectors to population health is greater than that of the health sector](#). For instance, children born to parents who have not completed high school are more likely to live in a setting that brings health barriers, such as a lack of safety, exposed trash, and inadequate housing. Additionally, they are less likely to have access to sidewalks, playgrounds, parks, recreation facilities, or libraries.

Another example could be addressing the social needs of patients from disadvantaged economic backgrounds. This can significantly decrease hospital re-admission rates, since

possible that patients from underprivileged social backgrounds are underrepresented in care management programs. Overall this can allow hospitals to cut down on avoidable readmissions and enhance treatment for their patients.

In addition to improving overall health, addressing SDOH is crucial for lowering health disparities frequently caused by social and economic disadvantages. [Studies](#) are also showing that legislative choices in a variety of public policy areas have a significant impact on the standard of these health-shaping living environments, which will eventually impact your health. Stress has a deleterious influence on health across the lifetime, and environmental factors may have effects that span multiple generations.

### **Initiatives to address SDOH:**

The Public Health Agency of Canada established the [Canadian Council on Social Determinants of Health](#) to work with leaders from different sectors on the SDOH and improve health equity.

- *Focus on Health in Non-Health Sectors:*

For instance, access to employment, affordable, wholesome food, and health care are impacted by the accessibility and availability of public transit. In addition to supporting healthier corner stores in low-income neighbourhoods, farm-to-school initiatives, community and school gardens, and larger efforts to support the production and consumption of healthy foods, nutrition programmes, and policies can help boost health. Early childhood education for children from low-income families and communities of colour is crucial to promote health equity, closing achievement disparities, and improving the health of low-income students.

- *Working to address food security:*

One of the most important socioeconomic factors affecting health is food security. Many patient populations nationwide reside in food deserts, where it is challenging to buy food because of logistical or financial constraints. In either scenario, a lack of food is a major risk factor for chronic illness, most notably diabetes.

If you are interested in learning more about it, we also has a detailed blog on Food Security on our website; you can access it [here](#).

- *Creating affordable housing:*

The CCP has always been a big advocate for affordable housing, and we have published a couple of blog posts on the importance of affordable housing; you can check them out on our [website](#). Connecting patients with affordable housing is a critical health need; governments have several options to achieve this. Housing benefits and social housing are the most prevalent types of housing assistance for low-income households. There is a possibility that housing policies will not help everyone and, in some situations, may make housing more expensive. For example, tax relief that promotes property ownership tends to primarily benefit higher-income households. Landlords may keep a portion of public housing subsidies, which would raise overall rents in tight housing markets.

- *Transportation:*



The availability of reliable transportation networks enables individuals to securely and reliably go to regular locations like workplaces, schools, restaurants serving wholesome food and healthcare services. Issues with transportation affect people's capacity to access necessary medical care. Non-emergency medical transportation, which addresses issues like the price of transportation and vehicle accessibility, could be very helpful, specifically in smaller towns and cities where infrastructure may be less developed.

**Social Determinants are a very large topic and the meaning of SDoH varies depending on the region of interest. For example, determinants may differ in western/developed countries as compared to developing countries.**

[Studies](#) show that certain SDOH interventions like the ones mentioned can enhance health and wellbeing when used in the appropriate contexts and according to the population. Additionally, certain interventions may lower healthcare costs; nevertheless, good interventions might be cost-effective and worthwhile to implement even if they do not eventually result in large financial savings. The majority of research conducted to date has been on shorter-term outcomes, medically complicated groups, or on populations that frequently require healthcare services. Studies on community interventions have also shown long-lasting positive impacts on health. However, as we concentrate our efforts on SDOH, more research is necessary to evaluate the effects of various strategies on multiple groups. We need to strengthen the evidence base for informed decision making.

We at CCP are working to address issues which can have an impact on the health and wellbeing of youth and youth facing homelessness. Our goal is to inspire youth to believe their future goals are attainable, and also teach them how to reach those goals.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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Will insert it before the initiatives part. Explain

it.

# Educational Barriers to Upward Financial Mobility

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Today's blog post continues a review of Naomi Thulien's 2017 thesis paper on the lives of homeless youth and why youth experiencing homelessness have difficulty transitioning into independent adulthood. Our team aims to highlight Thulien's incredible research study, as it reveals many truths regarding the reality of homelessness for youth in Canada. For her thesis, "Precarious Lives: A Critical Examination of Homeless Youth Transitions to Independent Housing," Naomi Thulien conducted her own research study with nine study participants, ages 16-24, who were transitioning into independent housing. Today's post will specifically focus on **educational barriers experienced by youth facing homelessness in Canada**.

In this blog post, we focus on how education serves as a barrier to necessary financial mobility for young adults experiencing homelessness. The Canadian Courage Project seeks to instil confidence in youth to set future educational and career goals that inspire them. We understand that there are significant barriers that they might face in reaching those goals, so it is important for our team to stay educated on this topic and share this awareness with the public.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

**Barriers to Education**

When we begin to understand the educational barriers that youth facing homelessness experience, we can then understand the life cycle of poverty and homelessness. Education is a human right that should be offered free of cost to youth worldwide. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), education is meant to help [provide equal opportunities, ensure sustainable development, and raise people from poverty, but there are still 244 million children around the globe that cannot access school education due to social, economic, and cultural reasons](#). Although education is a human right that is offered at no cost from elementary school until high school, there are many barriers to a quality education and education thereafter that cause critical issues for necessary mobility and development. The [following are a few barriers](#) to a quality education that are experienced in Canada:

1. A large wealth gap between the wealthy class (owning class) and the low-income class (traditional working class). This inequality significantly impacts the quality and quantity of educational resources available in their corresponding communities.
2. Food insecurity- a lack of proper nutrition and lack of consistent meals can hinder early childhood development.
3. Academic streaming models in the Canadian public school system that separates “good” students from “bad” students.
4. Access to consistent transportation to school.
5. Housing instability.
6. Sociocultural influences.

These are just a few barriers to adequate education that youth facing homelessness encounter and are areas we further discuss in this blog post.

### **A Pivotal Time: High School Education**

In Naomi Thulien's thesis, she explains how “academic streaming” has an effect on the outcome of a high school student's post-graduate prospects. [Academic streaming](#) is defined as grouping students based on ability to either an *applied* track or an *academic* track. Historically in Ontario, students must choose which track to join during before grade 9, but [as of recently](#), has changed to grade 10. Thulien addresses the fact that students from low-income neighbourhoods are more likely to be enrolled in majority applied courses than academic courses in comparison to students from high-income neighbourhoods (Thulien). Students enrolled in applied courses are less likely to land job opportunities after high school and are prone to have significant economic barriers when pursuing post-secondary

education (Thulien). It remains clear that there is a direct correlation with one's socioeconomic status and their future outcomes over their life course. In Thulien's research cohort, only six of the nine students graduated high school. The academic vs. applied streaming issue was a barrier that they faced, but there are also many educational barriers faced by youth who have not graduated from high school.

The majority of Canadian street-involved youth (62%) have not completed high school (Thulien). Within this group, the employment rate is only 36%, which is two times lower than the employment rate of those with a diploma (79%) (Thulien). There is an upward-tick in future success and career prospects for youth who have received an education, and their financial prosperity increases with each level of education they are able to access. Education is a strong determinant of future employment and income, but remains a difficult hurdle for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **Financing Post-secondary Education**

Youth who come from low-income households are less likely to pursue post-secondary education (trade schools, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, doctoral degrees, etc) for various reasons, but the main barrier to this level of education is financial concerns. Thulien shares the personal account of several of her study participants to demonstrate the impact of post-secondary education and various economic barriers experienced by the youth. In an interview with study participants Kat and John, Thulien learns how they value the prosperity that post-secondary education brings. She explains, "John, like most of the study participants, was streamlined in the 9th grade (15 years of age) into the applied stream, in a sense of marking him as incapable of succeeding alongside his university bound (academic stream) peers" (Thulien). Kat also felt that she would not be able to enjoy life, or let alone survive life, if she did not pursue post-secondary education. Thulien also explains her frustration by the economic barriers the study participants faced when pursuing post-secondary education, including the story of Marcel, a participant pursuing training to become a chef. Marcel was 24 years old and had received a school loan from the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), but was never able to return to school because he spent six years in jail (Thulien). Marcel faced many economic barriers after he served his jail term, but maintained his interest in attending a culinary program. Thulien explains that the program required him to pay \$150.00 to hold his spot in the program with only a week's notice, but had to decide if sacrificing his monthly rent payment was worth pursuing his career goals. Fortunately, he was able to raise money to overcome this barrier,



but Marcel's story is just one of many that exemplifies the different types of economic barriers that low-income youth face.

The current system leaves various barriers for youth facing homelessness to access higher education, but economic barriers are of chief concern. We hope to provide awareness on these matters so that we can make change in our society to lead to easier access for youth to obtain quality education, a variety of career prospects, and eventually upward financial mobility to break the cycle of poverty.

## Helpful Interventions

The CCP team also wants to highlight helpful interventions to improve education access to youth facing homelessness. We believe these interventions are helpful and hopefully can inspire both educational policy and organizational programming in the community.

1. [People for Education](#) reports success in from an investigation analysing the benefit and success of combined applied and academic courses. People for Education recommended increased flexibility in educational structures and had previously recommended the Ontario school system to delay academic streaming until after grade 9 (which has recently passed). We agree with these recommendations.
2. There are various community programs that serve as interventional programming that may be beneficial to increasing student success in youth experiencing homelessness.
  - a. [Yonge Street Mission](#) is an organization that is dedicated to ending chronic poverty and provides a multitude of services for both street-involved youth and adults. This organization provides substantial educational and employment support including GED access, developing financial literacy skills, paid-job readiness programs, and innovative employment partnerships to help youth find stable employment in at least two years.
  - b. Our partner, YouthLink, offers a [Pathways to Education Program](#) for high school students in Scarborough Village that provides students with academic, social, and financial support.
3. Outside of direct programming measures to increase student success, it is clear that one's socioeconomic status can have a massive impact on their ability to obtain quality education and their ability to finance higher education that can lead to more prosperity in our society. In order to combat this, it is important that we all increase the conversation on matters relating to the generational cycle of poverty and ask our

leaders to drive change to close the wealth gap and increase resources for those from low-income backgrounds.

We at CCP are working to address issues which can have an impact on the health and wellbeing of youth and youth facing homelessness. Our goal is to inspire youth to believe their future goals are attainable, and also teach them how to reach those goals. Our team hosts career workshops to continue to inspire changemakers in their communities and we continue to advocate for equitable education across the country. If you would like to learn more about enhancing the education of youth facing homelessness, please also read our blog post about the importance of reading and literacy for youth. Click [here](#) for more!

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

### **Shop Our Charitable Clothing Line**

*100% of proceeds go towards wellness programming for youth facing homelessness and their animal companions*

**Buy Here**

### **Blurb for mailer:**

Our newest blog post discusses educational barriers youth facing homelessness experience and its effect on their future prosperity. In this post, we review a thesis written by Naomi Thulien from the University of Toronto. We discuss the way someone's socioeconomic status affects their ability to access quality education and finance higher education for better access to job opportunities. Our team is actively working to fill the gaps of these disparities by advocating for accessible education and providing education to our youth as well. For a more in-depth view, check out our [blog page](#)!

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## **The Impact of Social Determinants of Health on Individuals Facing Homelessness**

Welcome back CCP readers,

Two weeks back, we discussed Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), the types of SDOH and their role in public health. This week we are focusing on the relationship between SDOH and homelessness.

If you would like to learn more about the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

The state of homelessness is a major contributor to poor health when seen through the lens of social determinants. Simultaneously, homelessness is the outcome of a combination of unfavourable social and economic circumstances. Housing is frequently mentioned as a significant SDOH, given that poor quality or lack of housing can cause negative impacts to overall health and well-being. As with many social determinants of health, the causal paths from housing to health are intrinsically complicated. Therefore, many of these pathways are neither completely conceptualised nor empirically understood.

As articulated by Wise and Phillips in their [paper](#) on narratives of healthcare and homelessness:

*“Until a health care problem becomes life-threatening, a homeless individual will likely choose shelter or food before going to the doctor. These priorities must be considered when dealing with the homeless population. What might, at first, seem like carelessness or noncompliance is, in reality, simply a struggle to survive”.*

Hospital readmissions due to the same problem could be a nightmare for individuals experiencing homelessness. To better understand it, consider this example - you went to the emergency department yesterday because of a severe stomach ache, and underwent an urgent appendectomy after being hospitalised for appendicitis. When you were ready to go home, you were given a bag of painkillers, instructions on how to keep your incision dry and clean, and a warning to stay away from vigorous activity. Simple, yes? Unfortunately, this situation is anything from straightforward for most patients facing homelessness. What could appear to be a

routine outpatient procedure could be the beginning of a protracted battle with pain management, infections, and nearly certain readmissions. Assisting patients attain stability through housing and employment, interfering in care transitions, and providing individualised primary care could be a solution to break this vicious cycle.

The situation of homelessness is a health hazard in itself and an important SDOH. Being in a state of homelessness may have worse health outcomes due to their subpar living conditions and lack of access to food. These patients also typically have few resources available to them for self-care. For example, a diabetic patient who is homeless may struggle to control their condition without access to nourishing food and a suitable location to store medication for insulin. Patients who are facing homelessness may also live in remote locations (such as densely forested areas) or be very mobile and have limited or no access to transportation. These access problems make it difficult for healthcare professionals to connect with patients facing homelessness and build the patient-provider bonds required for successful treatment.

Here are some of the problems associated with homelessness that can impact accessing healthcare when needed:

- Poor communication
- Stigma
- Social exclusion
- No transportation
- Mental Health
- Justice Involved
- Poor life skills
- Lack of life support

### ***Treatment Must Go Beyond Medical Care***

Housing and employment are two social factors that affect health and greatly impact people's lives. It is insufficient to address the medical requirements of people who are homeless or unemployed. Providers must address the issue's root by assisting patients in finding dependable housing and employment.

Steve Rolfe et al., in their [research](#) on developing an empirically-informed realist theoretical framework for housing as a social determinant of health and well-being, provided three potential causal pathways through which housing may affect health and well-being.

1- Regardless of demographic traits or background, a pleasant tenancy experience, influenced at least in part by connections with the housing provider, is substantially connected with the health and well-being of all tenants.

2- Some tenants appear to value aspects of home quality beyond the fundamentals of weatherproofing in ways that are probably impacted by past housing experiences and present expectations.

3- Although there may be significant heterogeneity among different tenant groups, neighbourhood characteristics and social support in the area may impact health and well-being.

[3](#) (Thinking to add this picture, google docs does not support the picture format, but i think it will get uploaded in wics)

These Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations' (CMOCs) developed by [Steve Rolfe et al.](#) attempt to identify how causal mechanisms may operate to generate outcomes within particular contexts. Additionally, the paradigm provides a foundation for additional studies to improve and test these causal pathways.

Description for the picture - Summary of refined CMO-Cs. Note: Dotted line indicates that this CMOC is not evidenced here, but may be applicable in other housing markets. These improved CMOCs give a more balanced view of what works, for whom, and under what conditions. They can be used in practise and serve as the basis for more realist research iterations.

By highlighting how some components of housing service might function as a public health intervention in renters' lives, this framework offers a lens through which to assess and possibly improve practice within housing organizations and housing policy.

CCP is Canada's first non-profit organization to support youth facing homelessness and their animal companions. Based in the Greater Toronto Area, we strive to promote the mental well-being and health of youth. You can support us in our various initiatives like wellness departure packages, art & mindfulness workshop, community pantries, and animal stations on our [website](#). There is also an option of a tax receipt for donations of \$25 or more.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.



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# Mental Health Promotion for the Holidays

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

As we enter the holiday season, it is important to promote mental health and well-being for all. During the holiday season, it can be a depressing time for those without strong connections to their family and for those without shelter. Here in Canada, the weather changes can also contribute to greater environmental stressors. During this time, it is important that we focus on promoting mental health for everyone, and especially those who are facing loneliness, homelessness, and/or displacement.

In this blog post, we focus on how to support others and find support to fight the holiday blues. The Canadian Courage Project seeks to educate the public on issues relating to mental health and promote the well-being and health of youth. We hope you engage in fulfilling activities to pay it forward this holiday season. If you are interested in donating to our organization, please [click here](#).

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

## The Importance of Mental Health Promotion

One of the [leading concerns](#) across the globe is the increase of mental illnesses, with depression being a leading cause of disability and suicide being the fourth leading cause of death in youths 15-29 years old. It is important to recognize mental health related issues because they affect a vast majority of the population, yet they often go overlooked due to lack of resources, under-education, and stigma. The goal of mental health promotion is to fight each of these areas to increase awareness and promote bolstering one's mental health

and well-being. [Mental health promotion can also be a powerful method for prevention, as there is a higher likelihood of increased education and interventions](#). From a community level standpoint, we believe in educating our peers on areas relating to mental health, and finding interventional methods that can help encourage a positive well-being for youth in our area. We can help improve social conditions to enhance overall good mental health in the community by vying for a healthy physical environment, a healthy social environment, and educating on developing strong coping skills.

## **How to Support Your Own Mental Health**

The holidays may not always be a joyful time for everyone, and it is important that we use this time to give ourselves better support and support others as well. The holiday season may [trigger bad memories and loss](#), and weather conditions can contribute to [seasonal affective disorder \(SAD\)](#), leading to this heightened state of depression for many. [Sixty-four percent](#) of people living with mental illness report that the holidays make their condition worse. In light of this, we want to highlight ways to support your own mental health during the holiday season.

1. Take time for yourself. Make sure you set time to rejuvenate and replenish your energy after any family/friend gatherings.
2. Learn how to set boundaries. Click [here](#) for more information on how to set boundaries and communicate them.
3. Try to go outside and enjoy the fresh air (and the sun when it's out). Nature can be so healing and grounding!
4. Try to eat nutritious meals, but don't shy away from indulging in any holiday treats!
5. Don't put pressure on yourself to buy gifts for everyone if you cannot financially do so this year. Your presence is a gift!
6. Reach out to mental health professionals if need be. Your mental health matters and there is no shame in needing help.

## **Supporting Others this Holiday Season**

The winter season brings upon lots of additional stress for our neighbours who live without shelter. The cold weather is an additional stressor that people facing homelessness living in colder cities experience. It is important that we understand the value of taking care of our individual mental health, but it is also important that we reach out to others and help those in need.

[Community-based mental health care](#) is an approach to mental health promotion that the CCP endorses. This is because we value promoting the health and well-being of the whole person. Local programs are valuable as local officials and community members have a better understanding of the specific needs of their community. To support better mental health services and care for others please read below for detailed ways to get involved in community mental health:

1. Volunteer at a food bank/food pantry and donate food to the organization as well.
2. Support better housing for the homeless population and advocate for better funding in housing services.
3. Support [agencies that provide](#) warm shelter, hot meals, and warm showers during the winter season.
4. Have open and honest conversations with people you trust. Don't be scared to ask the tough questions!
5. Spread awareness and advocate about mental health promotion to fight the stigma of mental illness and homelessness. Read more [here](#) about real life experiences regarding understanding the stigma of mental illness!

If you would like to donate to the CCP as a holiday contribution, please click [here](#). All help is appreciated!

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

**Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!**

- The CCP Team

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# Changes in Homelessness Over the Years

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Happy New Year! We hope that you are continuing to ring in 2023, and we hope that you had a great holiday season. Many of us use this time of year to reflect on the past and make resolutions for our present and future. During this season of reflection, we want to demonstrate how the state of homelessness has evolved over the years.

In this blog post, we discuss the changes in homelessness in Canada and how this will affect the future of homelessness. There are many determinants of homelessness, including one's family and social environment, housing, employment status, health status, and education, that can each evolve over time. A [2014 report](#) on the state of homelessness stated that 35,000 Canadians a year and around 5,000 Canadians a day experience homelessness. Since the 1980's, homelessness [has become a mass social problem](#) in Canada. The increase in people facing homelessness can be greatly attributed to the history of government funding for housing changes throughout the past few decades. In this blog post, we discuss the history of homelessness, housing solutions, and moving forward, what changes can be made to provide preventive solutions to homelessness.

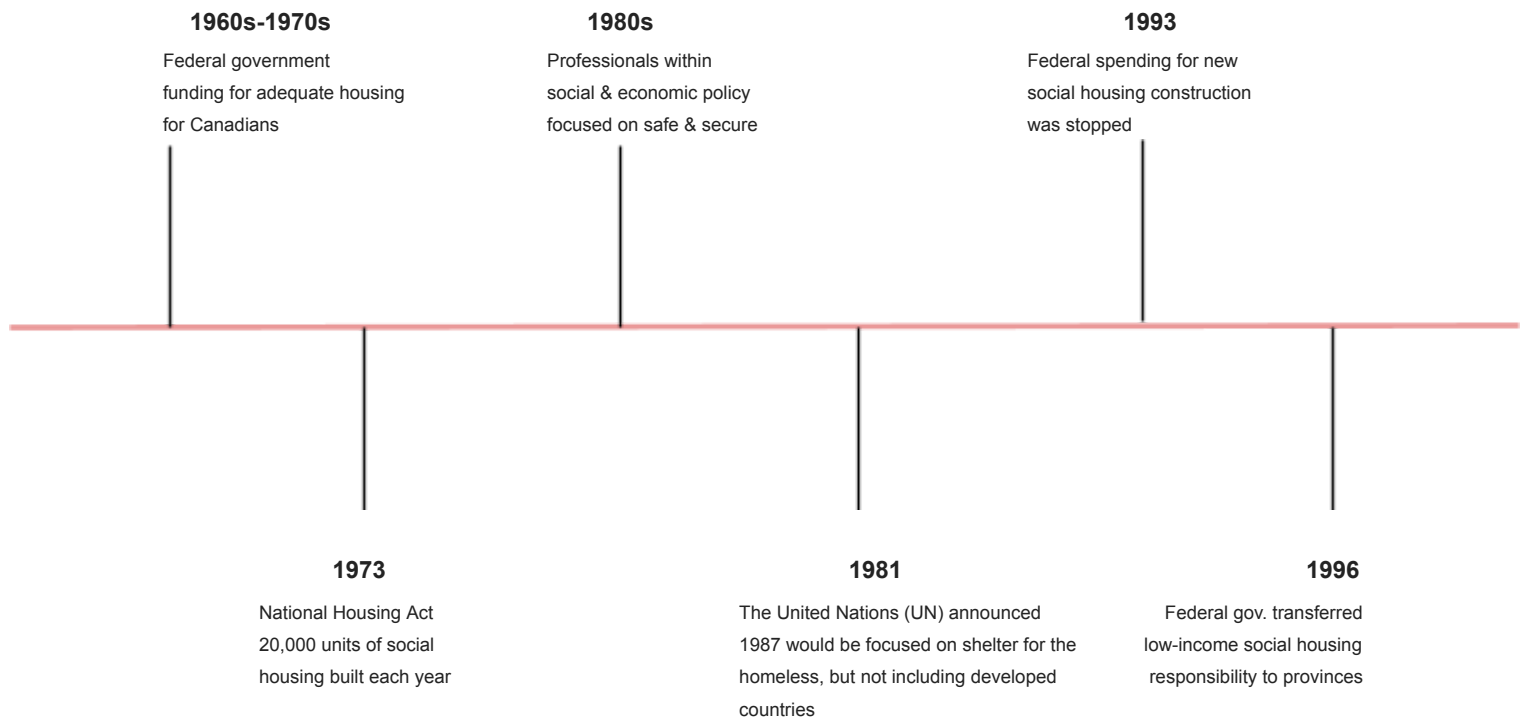
If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

## History of Homelessness in Canada

The amount of people facing homelessness in developing countries has been increasing over time. It's helpful for us to understand the timeline of these changes to better understand the 'why' behind homelessness and how we can suggest changes to policies for better



prevention against homelessness. The timeline we discuss in this blog post is derived from [The Canadian Encyclopedia](#).



\*Image created by Canadian Courage Project, but information sourced from [The Canadian Encyclopedia](#).

The timeline of changes across four decades demonstrates the impact that federal funding for housing specifically has on the state of homelessness. There was a large increase in unhoused people during the 1980s in Canada due to the progressive decrease in federal funding. Since the 1980s, the Canadian [population increased by 30%](#) and the unhoused population continues to increase as well. National spending and investments on low-income housing have [dropped by over 46% per capita](#) over this same time period. As the population grows, there is an evident decrease in social and economic policy measures to provide more security for housing for our homeless population.

The demographics of the homeless population has changed over time, which is also notable and helpful for developing preventable solutions to the current climate of homelessness. In the past, the majority of the homeless population in Canada was [older, single men, but the homeless population is now more diverse, including more women, families, and youth](#). For more demographic information please refer to the [graphic](#) below.

# HOMELESSNESS in CANADA

## BY THE NUMBERS



**35,000** CANADIANS  
ARE HOMELESS ON A GIVEN NIGHT

at least  
**235,000**  
CANADIANS EXPERIENCE  
HOMELESSNESS IN A YEAR



**27.3%**  
ARE WOMEN



**18.7%**  
ARE YOUTH

THE NUMBER OF  
OLDER ADULTS (50-64)  
AND SENIORS (65+)  
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IS GROWING



making up a combined  
**24.4%** OF SHELTER USERS



**28-34%** OF THE  
SHELTER POPULATION  
IS INDIGENOUS

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
ARE OVERREPRESENTED  
**4.3%** OF CANADIANS  
ARE INDIGENOUS



**FAMILIES**  
STAY IN SHELTERS  
**2X AS LONG**  
AS INDIVIDUALS



approximately  
**2,950** VETERANS  
EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

**2.2%** OF SHELTER POPULATION

Historically, individuals experiencing homelessness in Canada were older, single men. The homelessness crisis we see today is much more diverse. More women, families and youth are experiencing homelessness than in the past.

## WHAT DOES HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA LOOK LIKE?



There has been a steady decline in the number of Canadians using shelters in the last 10 years.

IN 2014 THERE WERE ALMOST  
**20,000 FEWER** PEOPLE USING  
EMERGENCY SHELTERS  
than in 2005



most shelter stays  
ARE BRIEF WITH YOUTH  
AND ADULTS STAYING ON  
AVERAGE 10 DAYS

BUT FOR ADULTS (50+) &  
FAMILIES, THE AVERAGE  
LENGTH OF STAY IS  
**2X AS LONG**

THE NATIONAL  
OCCUPANCY RATE

- how full shelters are -  
**INCREASED BY  
MORE THAN 10%**  
BETWEEN 2005-2014

## THE NEXT PHASE: PREVENTING & ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Today, we are facing a critical moment in our efforts to tackle modern mass homelessness in Canada. The experience of the last decade has changed the way we think about the problem and shifted our focus to solutions. A number of important shifts, described in this report, signal that we are poised for a new phase, one that may finally lead to ending homelessness. Some of these shifts include:



return to the  
NATIONAL HOUSING  
STRATEGY



BUILDING ON  
THE SUCCESS OF  
HOUSING FIRST



ADDRESSING THE  
NEEDS OF KEY  
POPULATIONS



Shift to  
SYSTEM COORDINATION  
AND REAL-TIME DATA



ACTIVE  
& ENGAGED  
GOVERNMENT

The common issue we discovered through our research is that prevention is the best measure against the issue of homelessness, which is what was working in favor of protecting homelessness from becoming the mass social problem that it became after 1980. We can learn from this mistake by encouraging further prevention of homelessness by encouraging our local government and policymakers to increase housing funding and leaning on private organizations as well.

## Housing Solutions

One of the biggest issues that people facing homelessness deal with is a lack of safe and secure housing. In this case, finding housing solutions is the first step in combating the increasing levels of homelessness. There are a few solutions that we discovered that our aligns with the mission of the CCP:

1. Prioritizing finding housing for youth is [key](#).
2. Major [financial investment](#) is needed to provide more low-income housing.
3. Affordable housing [tax credit](#).
4. Working hand-in-hand with community partners, such as [A Way Home](#) and [Housing First for Youth](#).

Organizations such as [A Way Home](#) and [Housing First for Youth](#) are working towards finding specific solutions for youth facing homelessness. Both of these organizations focus on prevention and partnerships that will have an impact on policy planning and implementation of social programs. In terms of financial investment, it has been recommended to increase investment to around [88 cents per week](#) (bringing this to a total of \$2.04 per Canadian) in order to provide a reasonable solution for the affordable housing crisis. These numbers are important because they demonstrate how little money it would cost in the fuller picture of providing solutions towards ending homelessness. Aside from financial investments, each of the above solutions for housing are necessary to solve the problem in the state that it is now.

## Moving Forward

Moving forward, we hope to continue raising awareness on matters relating to homelessness and working with more community partners to mobilize for good. While our organization does not specifically focus on housing, we [partner](#) with various shelters for people facing homelessness, and we are passionate towards advocating for youth. We encourage more research and programming dedicated towards finding housing and providing education to

youth facing homelessness, and we hope to continue to find methods to prevent homelessness in the future.

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# Comparative Approaches to Homelessness Around the World

Written by: Lauren Anderson

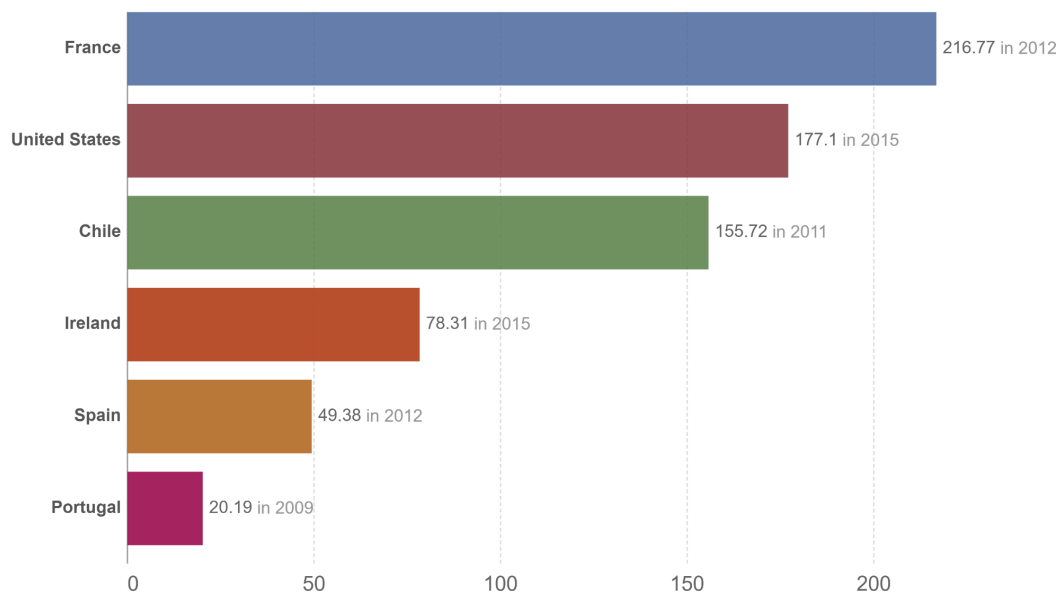
Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Today's blog post will provide a comparative analysis of the state of homelessness in different countries and how the issue of homelessness is treated around the world. Around [150 million people experience homelessness globally](#), which is around two percent of the world population. The United Nations (UN) has declared this state of homelessness as a ["serious violation of human dignity."](#)

## Homelessness rate

Estimated number of homeless individuals per 100,000 people in the total population



Source: OECD Affordable Housing Database

Note: All of the included countries employ a similar definition of homelessness.

OurWorldInData.org/homelessness • CC BY

## [Homelessness - Our World in Data](#)

Educating ourselves on different causes of homelessness and approaches to treating the complexities of homelessness, is essential as it can lead to a better understanding and unique perspective on treating the issue in our own area. We will compare an approach taken by developed countries, such as Canada, the United States, Finland, Scotland, and the United Kingdom, as well as developing countries, such as India, Kenya, and Malawi.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

## **Homelessness in Developed Countries**

The approaches to preventing and treating homelessness in developed countries are varied and unique. Some countries, like Finland, have almost eradicated chronic homelessness. It is important to note the structural and size differences of each country, but the different perspectives offer incredible insight.

### ***Canada***

On June 11, 2018, Canada announced a new national housing strategy called [“Reaching Home,” with the goal of reducing chronic homelessness by 50% within 10 years](#). This community-based program has a \$2.2 billion commitment. The Canadian government redesigned the federal housing framework with new understandings and approaches to handling the homeless crisis.

Private organizations, like [Nomadic](#), are also dedicated to providing affordable housing to the Canadian population, including indigenous affordable housing (Pauquachin First Nation Housing Project photograph below).



<https://www.nomadic.com/project-spotlights/pauquachin-first-nation-housing-indigenous-housing/>

### ***Finland***



The Finland homeless population [decreased by 50% in the past decade](#) due to a tremendous initiative called the “Housing First” policy. The [Housing First model](#) employed by the Finnish government that enforces the idea that housing is a human right and not a reward. Finnish people experiencing homelessness are given permanent independent housing in a community that has staff to help facilitate rehabilitation and integration into society again. This strategy led to increased investments in affordable housing and connecting their citizens experiencing homelessness with advisors to provide more stability for a successful transition out of homelessness.

### ***United States of America***

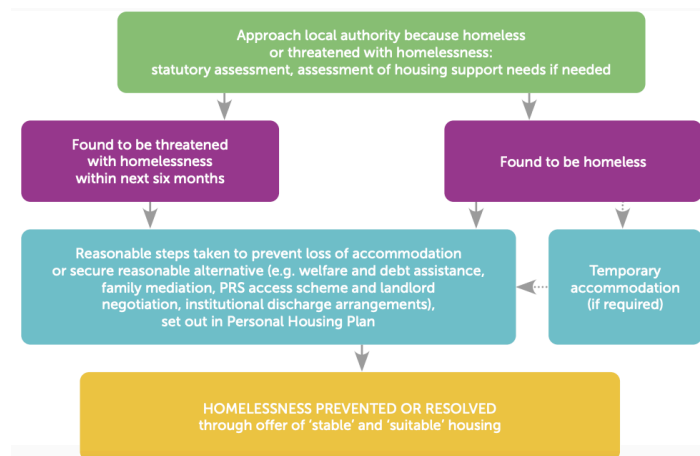
California is one of the largest states in the U.S., and it is the 6th largest economy in the world (larger than Canada). With such an economy and population, the state of homelessness in California mirrors the growth of other countries. There are around [151,000 people living without homes in the state of California](#), and around [580,000 people facing homelessness in the U.S.](#) Large cities, such as Los Angeles, have taken a unique approach to providing affordable, independent housing for their homeless community, which is around [65,000 people](#). [The Hilda L. Solis Care First Village](#) (photographed below) is an apartment complex made from shipping containers that were built in 5 months, has 232 units for living, and cost the U.S. government \$57 million to build.



[HILDA L. SOLIS CARE FIRST VILLAGE | VESTA Modular](#)

### ***Scotland***

The approach taken by Scotland is multifaceted, but the main focus is on the prevention of homelessness. Their strategy has been successfully detailed in this [report](#). Their goal has been to prevent people from losing their homes at least six months prior to the expected loss. This strategy is incredibly insightful as it focuses on the root cause of the lack of affordable housing being a chief reason for homelessness. The ideal approach is outlined in the flowchart below:



[preventing-homelessness-in-scotland.pdf \(crisis.org.uk\)](https://crisis.org.uk/preventing-homelessness-in-scotland.pdf)

Another important aspect they outlined in their report is a strong focus on children's services and efforts to help young people ages 16-24 years old. The Scotland homelessness prevention report explains how [schools and health visitors can play a vital role in assessing risk factors to support the prevention of chronic homelessness for children](#). Some of these risk factors include poverty and strained relationships in the home. The [risk factors for young people](#) were found to be adverse childhood experiences, running away from home, being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, and truancy issues within the school system. Understanding risk factors and supporting a complex approach using multiple public entities is crucial for homelessness prevention.

### ***United Kingdom***

A [small study conducted by the University of Cambridge has found great success in building modular mini-homes](#) for the homeless population. So far, they have noticed a decrease in substance abuse (due to the requirement of tenants to be sober upon entry), increased health, and an increase in a sense of well-being.

### **Similarities & Differences**

There are many similarities and differences between the strategies and approaches taken by different countries and their federal and local governments. The most obvious commonality is that the lack of affordable housing is a fundamental cause of homelessness. Unaffordable housing is one of the major reasons that people find themselves facing homelessness, and various government regulations pose barriers to certain building developments to be created. [There is also a direct correlation between someone's housing status and their health outcomes](#). As realized in the University of Cambridge study cited above, people re-discovered their sense of self and overall well-being after obtaining independent shelter for a prolonged period of time. There are so many elements to the issue of homelessness that can extend the cycle of homelessness across someone's lifetime. Providing housing is a key source to preventing this cycle from prevailing.

### **Homelessness in Developing Countries**

Based on our research, there are incredible innovative approaches to combat homelessness in developing countries, such as Kenya, India, and Malawi. Organizations in these countries have adopted building technologies, such as 3-D printed houses, to provide low-cost, efficient housing solutions for those in need.

## **India**

[Habitat for Humanity International](#) invested \$411,000 in a building project with [Tvasta](#) to build 20 million 3-D printed homes for low-income families. The goal was for this project to be completed within four years. This incredible feat has provided immediate relief to homelessness in India, with a [homeless population of 1.77 million people](#). The photograph below is an example of one of the 3-D printed homes built, demonstrating their beauty!



<https://www.futurarc.com/project/tvasta-3d-printed-housing-in-india/>

## **Kenya**

Kenya's overall population is around [53 million people](#), and [40% of Kenyans live in extreme poverty](#). Over [2 million people in Kenya experience homelessness](#), and the problem continues to worsen. A unique primary cause of homelessness in Kenya is the displacement of people due to commercial business interests and development. Nonprofit organizations and community groups are leading the fight against homelessness in Kenya, but there is a [critical need for government response and intervention](#).



Organizations such as [14trees](#) are building 3-D printed houses within 12 hours in Kenya and Malawi (photograph seen below). [These houses cost less than \\$10,000 and are environmentally friendly. Their construction reduces CO2 emissions by 70% in comparison to normal home construction.](#)



<https://www.globalconstructionreview.com/holcim-to-3d-print-52-home-complex-in-kenya/>

## **Malawi**

Malawi is another African country that is experiencing a grave situation of homelessness. There is a [severe lack of homes in Malawi and a large number of orphans and vulnerable families are in need of safe and secure housing](#). The population is around [20.79 million](#) and [50% of the population lives in poverty](#). Nonprofit organizations including [14trees](#) and [Habitat for Humanity](#) are leading large projects to build clean and stable housing for the people of Malawi.

It is clear that the overall approaches to preventing and treating homelessness are different in developed countries versus developing countries. Although private and nonprofit organizations are helping with affordable housing initiatives in developed countries, they are almost the sole providers of solutions in developing countries. There is a greater need for government intervention throughout both groups.

## **Summary**

The reality of homelessness is that it is a complex issue. It is an issue that is experienced all around the globe, and it requires a multifaceted approach. Local and national governments can learn from other governmental systems that have nearly eradicated chronic homelessness. Each city, state, region, and/or country is unique, but there are similar causes of homelessness: lack of affordable housing, health status, education barriers, government regulations, and more.

We hope that the comparative analysis we provided in this blog post was educational and inspirational to all who have joined the fight to end homelessness. The CCP team strives to

educate on matters relating to homelessness and [partner](#) with other organizations that are providing resources to youth facing homelessness.

As tax season approaches, please consider [donating](#) to our organization. For all donations over \$25, you will receive a tax receipt.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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### **Summary for Mailer**

Homelessness is an issue experienced across the globe, and it requires a multifaceted approach. In this week's blog post, we provide a comparative analysis of the state of homelessness in both developed and developing countries. Through this analysis we hope to provide educational and inspirational insight for the global fight against homelessness. The various strategies used to end chronic homelessness around the world are innovative and admirable. Local and national governments can learn from other governmental systems that have nearly eradicated chronic homelessness. Click here to read more!



# Understanding the State of Poverty:

## Poverty Awareness Month

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Welcome back to the CCP blog! As January comes to an end, we would like to dedicate this blog post to poverty awareness since January is Poverty Awareness Month. The number of people experiencing poverty around the world is high. Raising awareness about the current state of poverty is important to us as an organization dedicated to advocating on matters relating to homelessness for youth in Canada. [One in five children](#) live in extreme poverty around the globe, which is devastating, and also contributes to the increased life cycle of poverty experienced from youth to adulthood.

According to the United Nations (UN), [10% of the world's population](#) (or around 734 million people) lived on less than \$1.90/day in just 2015. For most of us, this is completely unimaginable and unfathomable. As a larger society, we have to do better to support those around us who live in these types of conditions.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

### What is the definition of poverty?

The most basic [definition](#) of poverty is, “the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions.” However, the United Nations (UN) asks that the definition be expanded, as those who experience poverty deal with much more

than lack of property or income. The [UN explains that poverty also includes](#), “manifestations of hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of decision-making.” This definition of poverty is all-encompassing of its full reality. Many of these truths listed by the UN are often forgotten, but it is important that all aspects of poverty are recognized in order to find solutions from all directions.

The Canadian Poverty Institute also offers a thorough understanding of poverty with a [three-dimensional perspective of material, social, and spiritual poverty](#).

1. Material poverty: the lack of access or skills to acquire sufficient material and financial resources to thrive
2. Social poverty: isolation; and the lack of formal/informal support necessary to be resilient in times of crisis or change
3. Spiritual poverty: people lacking meaning or purpose in their lives

The incorporation of spiritual poverty is powerful in that it reminds the public of the dehumanization that occurs for people experiencing poverty. To lack a sense of self, meaning, or purpose in life is harmful to our human experience.

## **Poverty in Canada**

Although Canada is a developed country with the [tenth highest GDP](#) (gross domestic product) in the world, there is a considerably high rate of poverty throughout the country. [Over 14% of Canadians are within a low income class, and in 2011, 1 in 7 people in Canada were living in poverty](#). The poverty rate has dropped double-fold in the past 10 years, but there is still much more that can be done to provide security for those facing homelessness and poverty in Canada.

In 2018, the Canadian government released a [strategy to reduce poverty by 50% by 2030](#). There are 12 indicated measures of poverty that they are analyzing including, food insecurity, housing needs, youth employment, education and training. Part of this strategy is aimed towards creating better outcomes for Canadians through intentional actions.

Some of the actions already taken include, a child benefit for [low to middle income families with children, a tax credit that helps low-income workers, and Canada's national housing strategy](#). We have discussed this housing strategy in another [blog post](#) regarding the state of homelessness in Canada. The [Canada child benefit](#) is a tax-free monthly payment for families with children under the age of 18. Families receive payment based on the number of

children in the family, the age of the children, marital status of the parents, and the adjusted family net income. The tax credit for low-income workers is called the [Canada workers benefit](#) and is a refundable tax credit to help supplement earnings for workers receiving a low income. It also helps incentivize Canadians experiencing homelessness or poverty to work. It is clear that there are efforts made to alleviate the current state of poverty in Canada.

### **What can be done to alleviate the current state of poverty?**

In order to alleviate the current state of poverty, there needs to be a worldwide social and financial commitment. The UN has declared that ending poverty is one of the first Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be met before 2030. SDG 1 proclaims: [“End poverty in all its forms everywhere.”](#) Although this is a large challenge, it is possible through policy change, social awareness, education, sustainable development, social integration, and an inclusive/equitable mindset.

[World Vision Canada](#) is a Canadian organization dedicated to global relief and advocacy. They have created [eight effective solutions](#) to alleviate poverty:

1. Educate children
2. Provide clean water
3. Ensure basic health care
4. Empower a girl or woman
5. Improve child nutrition
6. Support environmental programs
7. Reach children in conflict
8. Prevent child marriage

These solutions can be effective because they each address different common causes of poverty, and it is evident that a multi-faceted approach is needed. Our organization, specifically, focuses on educating children. We believe it is important that every child has equal access to education and that education around the globe is equitable for children of all income groups.

The CCP team strives to educate on matters relating to homelessness and [partner](#) with other organizations that are providing resources to youth facing homelessness.

As tax season approaches, please consider [donating](#) to our organization and contributing to our cause. For all donations over \$25, you will receive a tax receipt.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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### **Summary for Mailer**

As Poverty Awareness Month (January) comes to an end, we dedicate this week's blog post to raising awareness on the state of poverty. In this week's post, we also provide an overview of the state of poverty specifically in Canada and various ways to alleviate the state of poverty around the globe. Click [here](#) to read more!

[Understanding the State of Poverty \(thecanadiancourageproject.org\)](http://thecanadiancourageproject.org)

# Mindfulness in Millennials

Written by: Varleen Kaur

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers

Welcome back to the CCP blog! This week we are discussing mindfulness, a prominent topic at hot startups, well-known companies, and famous wellness blogs.

If you would like to learn more about the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! We have many blogs on this, checkout our website. If you are returning for more information about the challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

In the past year, 42% of millennials have meditated [at least once](#), and the market for meditation is close to \$1 billion. What makes it so popular, then? According to the American Psychological Association [report](#), “While Millennials (ages 18 to 33) and Gen Xers (ages 34 to 47) report the highest average stress levels, Boomers (48 to 66) and Matures (67 years and older) join them in reporting levels that are higher than they consider healthy”.

## What is the mindful definition of Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s happening around us.

## How does mindfulness help?

[Mindfulness-based interventions](#) (MBIs) like mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) are beneficial in addressing a wide range of outcomes across varied demographics, according to recent analyses of well-designed, randomized controlled studies that compared mindfulness treatments to active control



conditions. These outcomes include medical and well-being outcomes like chronic pain, quality of life, psychological or emotional distress, and clinical disorders and symptoms, including anxiety, risk of relapse for depression, present depressive symptoms, and stress. MBIs have also been demonstrated to function by altering particular psychopathology-related traits, such as cognitive biases, affective dysregulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

According to a [study](#) of 68 000 registered nurses, 35% of hospital nurses showed signs of burnout. This study examined the impact of a 4-hour workshop on burnout syndrome, perceived stress, and mindfulness skills. Participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory—Human Service Survey, Perceived Stress Scale, and Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale—Revised before the start of the workshop and 1 and 6 months after the workshop. In this study, nurses reported decreases in burnout and perceived stress and increases in mindfulness after attending a 4-hour mindfulness workshop.

Also,

- Reduces your stress levels.
- Promotes healthier eating habits.
- Help achieve your goals.
- Improves your productivity.
- Make you more compassionate
- Lower your health bill.

### **Is mindfulness the same as meditation?**

When the word mindfulness comes to mind, we often relate it to meditation. The terms mindfulness and meditation might overlap and share many similarities, but they are not exactly the same.

Mindfulness is the basic act of paying attention, noticing, and being present in what you're doing. When practicing mindfulness, you pay attention to the environment and your thoughts, feelings, actions, and effects on those around you.

This [book chapter](#) by Andrew Olendzki describes meditation “The traditional sense of meditation in Western culture, before significant encounter with Asian practices, involves sustained consideration or thought upon a subject. Originating from the Indo-European root  $\sqrt{\text{med}}$ , primarily meaning “to measure,” it suggests a discourse upon a subject (as in the

title of Descartes' famous work) or calm thought upon some subject (as with structured religious prayers). As such, it is always an exercise of ordered conceptual contemplation, involving the systematic and disciplined use of language, symbol, and concept."

### **How to practice mindfulness?**

There is no one method or any rules to practice mindfulness. We all possess the innate ability to be mindful. It is available to us every moment if we take the time to recognize it. When we practise mindfulness, we are mastering the art of giving ourselves room to breathe, think, and separate from our automatic emotions. However, getting into a daily meditation routine can be a struggle. Here are a few tips to help you in your mindfulness practice:

- ***Take time to acknowledge how far you have come.***

We often forget we are living those days that we used to dream about. We are always hustling for the better version of ourselves. Pausing for a moment and reflecting on your journey can be a good way to start mindfulness.

- ***Develop a routine.***

Decide on an uninterrupted time of day that you can set aside to practice mindfulness, and keep that time in your schedule. Just like any other thing, mindfulness benefits from regular practice.

- ***Body scan meditation***

Legs extended, arms by your sides, palms up as you lay on your back. Slowly and methodically direct your attention on each area of your body in turn, from toe to head or head to toe. Recognize any feelings, ideas, or sensations connected to each region of your body.

At CCP, we organise '***Mindfulness & Art Workshop***'s for youth under the age of 25 currently residing in shelters across Ontario. Research has shown the positive impact art and specifically, painting can have on lowering ones stress. This guided art workshop starts with 10 minutes of mindfulness at the very beginning. The guided painting offers youth the opportunity to get creative and focus on mindfulness in a calming and reflective environment. All of the supplies needed are provided in care kits for the specific workshop and age range.

*"I loved the art workshop it was a very positive way to express myself through art. It was very helpful and very fun to do."* This is what one of our participant has to say.

If you want to organise a similar workshop or just wanna help us, check out our [website](#).

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## Writeup for Mailer:

Winter days can be hard for some people with shorter day light. Some people go through seasonal depression during these times. Mindfulness is a great practice to relax and not feel overwhelmed. Check out our new blog to learn more about mindfulness.

# Black History Month: February

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Welcome back to the CCP blog, and Happy Black History Month!

Although it is the last day of February, we would like to honor Black History Month and use this blog post to educate and encourage. Here at CCP, we believe it is important to recognize events important in Black history in Canada and also address how homelessness affects Black people in our country. The [2023 theme for Black History Month is, "Ours to tell,"](#) which promotes dialogue within the Black community and encouragement for others to learn more about Black history, success, sacrifices, and triumphs. We will highlight a bit from each area listed, but if you would like to read more information on how to learn more, click [here](#) for more resources.



If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

According to data from 2021, over [1.5 million Canadians reported being Black](#), accounting for 4.3 percent of Canada's total population. During February, and all throughout the year, it is important to recognize the rich culture and history of the Black community. The CCP team is committed towards anti-racist actions and promotion of all cultures and backgrounds.

## **Black History in Canada**

We would like to first educate on both Black history and the origins of Black History Month. Black history dates back to the early 1600s in Canada, when the [first person from African heritage](#), Mathieu Da Costa, arrived in Canada, in 1604, with a group of French explorers. Shortly after his arrival, in 1628, Olivier LeJeune was the [first enslaved African to live in Canada](#). It is important that we as a society recognize Black history in our country as it has been ignored over the past few centuries. It is crucial that we recognize the various contributions that Black Canadians have made to [shape Canada's heritage, culture, and identity](#) since the early 1600s.

Here are a few notable events in Black Canadian History:

1. Lieutenant Governor Simcoe encouraged the Canadian government in Upper Canada to pass the [Anti-Slavery Act](#) in 1793, to make it illegal to bring slaves to Upper Canada.
2. In 1794, [Black Loyalists petitioned](#) for an All-Black settlement in Upper Canada which was denied.
3. The [Underground Railway](#) from 1800-1865, that led to the arrival of 30,000-40,000 Black slaves who fled from the United States to go to Upper Canada.
4. In 1829, the first large Black community was the [Wilberforce settlement](#).
5. In the 1830s, [Thornton and Lucie Blackburn](#) arrived in Toronto from the U.S. The Blackburns are known for their large contributions to anti-slavery activities and

assistance to refugees in Canada. Mr. Blackburn started the first cab company in Toronto.



6. Black people were accepted as volunteers into [Canadian military services](#) for WWII in 1939.
7. [The Racial Discrimination Act of 1944](#), was signed in Toronto, Ontario.
8. In 1963, the first Black person was elected to the Canadian Parliament, Leonard Braithwaite.



## Origins of Black History Month in Canada

1978

The Ontario Black History Society was created. Dr. Daniel G. Hill and Wilson O. Brooks petitioned that the City of Toronto should make February recognized as Black History Month.

1979

Toronto issued the first proclamation in Canada to formally recognize February as Black History Month.

1988

First Black History Month celebrated in Nova Scotia. Now referred to as African Heritage Month.

1993

President of OBHS, Rosemary Sadlier, proposed recognizing February as Black History Month across all of Canada to the Honourable Jean Augustine, the first Black Canadian Woman elected to Parliament.

1995

The House of Commons recognized February as Black History Month for all of Canada, due to the initial motion from Dr. Jean Augustine.

2008

The first Black Canadian Senator, Donald Oliver, introduced the 'Motion to Recognize Contributions of Black Canadians and February as Black History Month- later approved by the Canadian Parliament. [Senator Donald Oliver stated](#), "today, racism manifests itself in the racially unequal workforce, taking the shape of unequal income, discriminatory remarks and the glass ceiling. in light of these challenges, Black History Month is essential to maintain and strengthen the Black community."

This timeline has been sourced from the Canadian government website. For more information, please click [here](#).

This timeline shows the tremendous efforts taken to recognize the month of February as Black History Month, and how long it took for the government to officially recognize Black Canadians contributions. We are grateful that these efforts are now recognized, and we are committed to continued education on the matter.

## Homelessness in the Black Community

It is important that we acknowledge the disproportionate amount of Black people represented in the homelessness population. Many people from marginalized communities are greatly affected by homelessness. This is due to many social determinants including: racial discrimination, environment, economic class, and one's environment. There are many



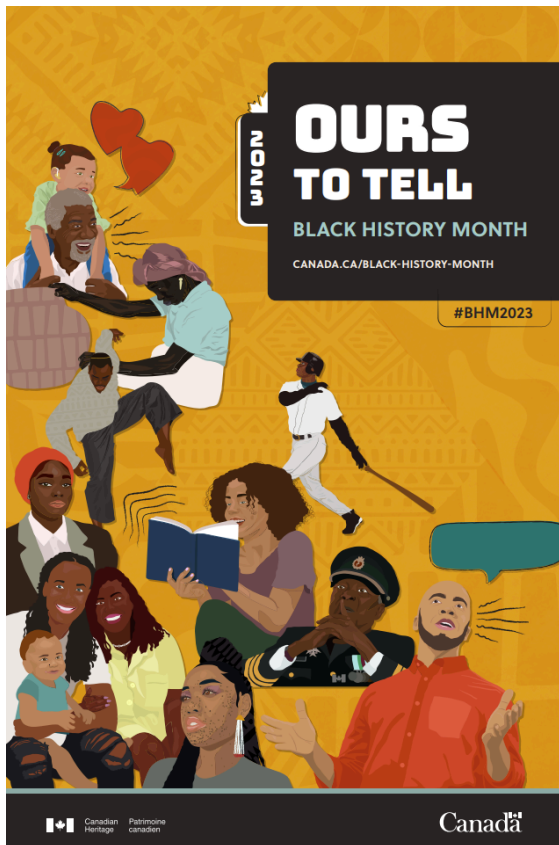
societal and systemic setbacks for Black people that should be recognized for the impact they have and the ability that these factors have to lead to a greater likelihood of homelessness for Black people.

Some of these structural difficulties are represented in different facets of society including our education system and prison system. For example, [Black youth are three times more likely](#) than their white classmates to be suspended or expelled from school. In the prison system, [11-15% of the Canadian inmate population are Black](#). These statistics represent various outcomes of the disproportionate structural barriers faced by members of the Black community in Canada, which therefore impact the likelihood of homelessness for them as well.

The inequality of our system continues to prevail, but we hope to keep conversations on this topic ongoing outside of Black History Month as well. Part of our mission at the CCP is alleviating the state of youth homelessness in Canada. To work towards this mission, it is crucial that we acknowledge the barriers that members from marginalized communities face in this country. We hope that the history we included in this blog post can educate members of our local community and that we can collectively work towards anti-racism efforts to help close the gaps in our systems here in Canada.

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team



Link: [2023Multi\\_BHM\\_Poster-20x30-4 \(canada.ca\)](https://canada.ca/black-history-month)



Link: [Thornton and Lucie Blackburn | The Canadian Encyclopedia](https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/thornton-and-lucie-blackburn)



Link: [Leonard Braithwaite | The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

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Summary for Mailer:

Happy Black History Month! Here at CCP, we believe it is important to recognize events important in Black history in Canada and also address how homelessness affects Black people in our country. The [2023 theme for Black History Month is, "Ours to tell,"](#) which promotes dialogue within the Black community and encouragement for others to learn more about Black history, success, sacrifices, and triumphs. We will highlight a bit from each area listed, and also discuss the disproportionate amount of Black Canadians experiencing homelessness. We hope that the history we included in this blog post can educate members of our local community and that we can collectively work towards anti-racism efforts to help close the gaps in our systems here in Canada.

# Technology & Mindfulness

Written by: Varleen Kaur

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers

Welcome back to the CCP blog! This week we are again discussing mindfulness, we are looking at how to be mindful when using technology. Secondly, we will be looking at how technology can support our journey in mindfulness. [Research](#) has shown, mindfulness practices such as meditation and yoga have proven beneficial in reducing stress and improving self-awareness, anxiety, and emotional and behavioural reactivity among youth experiencing homelessness.

If you would like to learn more about the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! We have many blogs on this, checkout our website. If you are returning for more information about the challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

Has FOMO made you feel anxious? Are you worried about how much time and effort you devote to your devices? According to this [scoping review](#), increased usage of technology, in the younger generation can lead to poor self-esteem and detachment (1). The amount of time and effort people put into recording, taking pictures of, and sharing their happy experiences on social media has multiplied in recent years. How frequently do you attend holiday dinners when the majority of the guests take pictures of the food? How frequently do people check their social media accounts at family get-togethers to see what others are doing? The real question here is: are we using social media mindfully?

Our motive here is not to stop anyone using social media and technology. Social media can be an outlet for some, or a career for others. Instead, we want you to pay attention to how



you feel in relation to social media. This acknowledgement of your feelings may give you a clearer picture and help you form a healthy relationship with it.

In this era, a decent amount of our work and certain careers like social media manager, marketing manager, role of social media influencer are centred around the use of technology and being up to date with latest trends. The change in working style and work from home option due to the Covid pandemic has also increased our usage.

Here are some problems that may arise from prolonged use of technology and social media:

**1- Physical health issues** - I think we are all very familiar with posture issues that come with prolonged use of computers. For example carpal tunnel syndrome due to inappropriate posture causes the shoulders to roll forward, shortening the muscles in the neck and shoulders as well as squeezing the neck's nerves. This [epidemiological study](#) states that the issue might not be severe but it can have an impact on the wrists, fingers, hands and neck pain (2).

**2- Mental health issues** - People are less likely to engage in meaningful social relationships because they spend so much time on technology, potentially resulting in isolation. Sometimes, the internet can be a source of social comparison, feelings of exclusion, and cyberbullying, amongst other things. Checkout this [study](#) on social connectedness, mental health and screen time (3).

**3- Technology Addiction** - Addictions to technology can have a serious negative impact on a person's mental health, including anxiety, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the long run. This large scale [clinical trial](#) confirms addictive Internet use is related to ADHD-like symptoms (4).

### **How can mindfulness aid the use of social media?**

In our everyday lives, we get distracted and our thoughts can drift very easily; during a business meeting, we might daydream about a grocery list, a hypothetical quarrel with a person who had offended us before, an obnoxious song stuck in our brains, or random environmental stimuli. According to the [Udemy In Depth: 2018 Workplace Distraction Report](#), 70% workers feel distracted at work.

In between these conflicting distractions, mindfulness invites us to remain in the present, even if only for a moment. If you want to learn more about what mindfulness is, you can check our previous blog [here](#).

The use of technology mindfully operates on a similar note. The premise is that we are continually subjected to technological distractions and are enticed to use technology far more frequently than is appropriate or healthy.

[Research](#) has shown *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction* is a structured and well proven way to reduce stress, increase focus, productivity and an enhanced feeling of well being and happiness (5).

### **Principles of Mindful Technology Use:**

This section explores some useful applications of mindfulness when using a computer or any other device.

**1- Be mindful of posture:** The idea here is to be mindful of your posture. This is very important as we spend a lot of time on our computers these days. If possible you can invest in an ergonomic chair and mouse, along with a height adjusted table which allows you to move your table according to your height and if you wish to stand and work. You can even invest in a walking pad which can be kept underneath the table that can also contribute towards your daily step count.

**2- Take breaks** - This [systematic review](#) identified seven recent studies that investigated the acute effects of physical activity interruptions in healthy individuals(6). Three of the seven studies suggested that taking regular physical activity breaks from sitting offers short-term benefits for cognition in healthy adults. However, they concluded that further research is required, initial results still look promising to try. In your breaks you can go for a walk, or maybe try a home workout.

**3- Be mindful of your breathing:** Pay attention to how you are breathing. Faster and shallow breaths are a sign of stress while slower and deep breathing can be healthy. You can even try doing short guided breathing practices in between work to take a break. [Here](#) is my favourite 10 min breathing guide.

**4- Control the notifications on all your devices:** According to a research [study](#), most people get 63 notifications per day(7). That might mean you have to look at your phone 63 times a day and 63 times interrupting your work. You can try stop notifications for all the non-urgent apps. You can try using 'Do Not Disturb' mode to have maximum focus while working.

**5- Single tasking instead of multitasking** - You might not believe in this, but multitasking is actually bad for your focus. Simply put, your brain is going back and forth between two things, making it more difficult to finish both. This method of working is less effective, leads to more errors, and eventually depletes our mental energy

**6- Work in time blocks** - Set time blocks for all similar tasks in your calendar. Switching between different tasks depletes your energy and specifically when they use different parts of the brain. For example, you can do all your phone calls at the same time and then go to the next task for example writing. Going from making a single call then writing something down then again back to phone calls, can result in poor productivity.

**7- Plan your day** - Make a schedule which makes you happy and makes you look forward to the day one day before. Try sticking to your schedule, this could mean waking up and sleeping at the same time everyday.

**8- Check on yourself** - Positive feedback on social media can make us feel quite ecstatic. Receiving even one unfavourable comment, though, can be heartbreaking. Set your boundaries and consider this a part of the journey. Positive affirmations and compassionate thoughts towards yourself can keep you grounded.

#### **How to use technology to improve mindfulness:**

- **Using mindfulness apps** - There are mindfulness apps like calm, insight timer, stop breathe and think, headspace, buddhify etc, to meditate. This plum [website](#) has many resources on various apps. Instead of trying all the apps at once, try each one at a time and look for what suits you best.
- **Mindfulness enhancing games-** There are some mindfulness enhancing games too like Forest, PAUSE, Just Sleep - Meditate, Focus and Relax.
- **Using wearable technology** - Fitness trackers and smartwatches come with heart rate and breathing rate monitors. There are some other gadgets specifically made to reflect awareness and attentiveness. EEG headset by [Neurosky](#) uses

electroencephalography or EEG to establish a feedback loop that measures how relaxed we are while meditating. According to [Neurosky](#), “The Meditation Meter algorithm indicates the level of mental “calmness” or “relaxation.” The value ranges from 0 to 100, and increases when users relax the mind and decreases when they are uneasy or stressed. The Meditation Meter quantifies the ability to find an inner state of mindfulness, and can thus help users learn how to self correct and find inner balance to overcome the stresses of everyday life.”

- **Listening to sounds that promote mindfulness** - Sounds of rain, sound of waves, sounds of birds chirping could be very peaceful for the brain. You can benefit from listening to music that promotes mindfulness, such as binaural beats, chanting, or classical pieces by Mozart, Hindustani, or Chinese composers.

We examined both how we can utilise technology as a tool to increase our mindfulness and how we may develop it while using it throughout the day. I hope these tips will be helpful to you.

### **Why does Mindfulness matter to us?**

At the CCP, we organise ‘**Mindfulness & Art Workshops**’ for youth under the age of 25 currently residing in shelters across Ontario. Research has shown the positive impact art and specifically, painting can have on lowering one’s stress. This guided art workshop begins with 10 minutes of mindfulness, and the guided painting offers youth the opportunity to get creative and focus on being mindful in a calming and reflective environment. All of the supplies needed are provided in care kits for the specific workshop and age range.

*“I loved the art workshop it was a very positive way to express myself through art. It was very helpful and very fun to do.”* This is what one of our participant has to say.

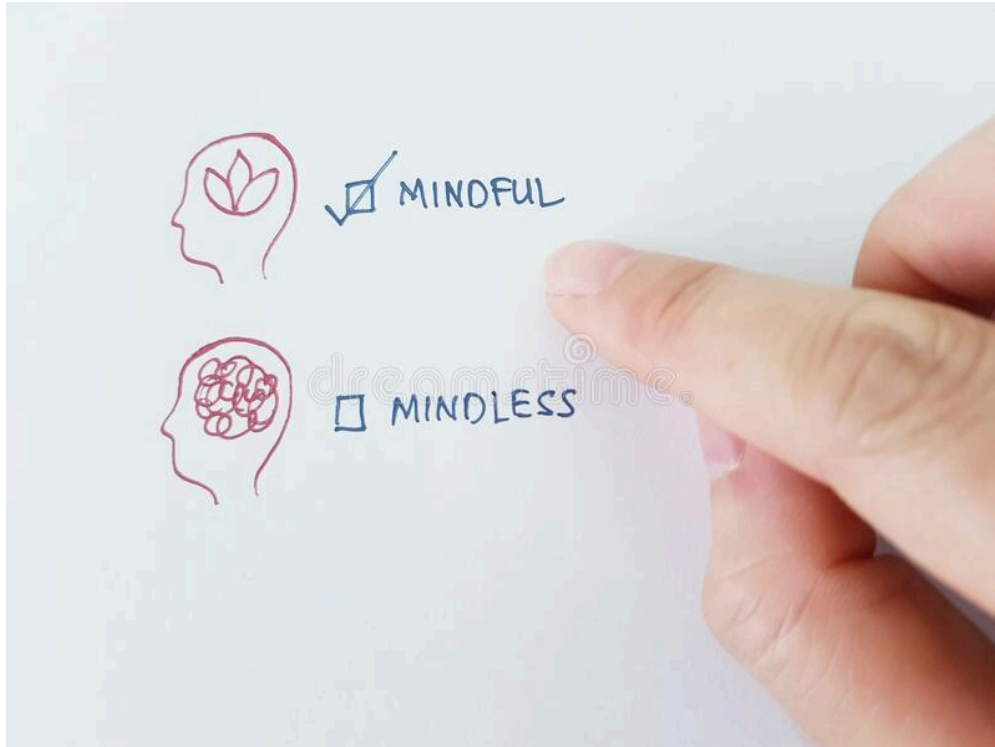
If you want to organise a similar workshop or just wanna help us, check out our [website](#).

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**MAILER** - Has FOMO made you feel anxious? Also, at the same time are you worried about how much time and effort you devote to your devices? This week we are looking at how we

can utilise technology as a tool to increase our mindfulness and how we may develop it while using it throughout the day. Checkout out the blog here. Do let us know if you have any personal tips to be more productive and mindful that you want share with us.





# Employment Opportunities for People Facing Homelessness

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

For today's blog, we hope to build upon our post from November 2022, [Employment challenges for people facing homelessness](#), discussing employment challenges for people facing homelessness. We share methods for members of the homeless community to gain employment in their area.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

In our previous post, we had shared that there are several intervention strategies that can help boost employment opportunities for people facing homelessness. These strategies include breaking down structural obstacles, such as work skills training programs, education assistance, and mental/physical health promotion. All of these interventions combat the structural inequities that lead to employment instability for people facing homelessness. It is

important that these interventions are focused on to create a more equitable workforce for those from all economic classes.

## **Homelessness ≠ Unemployed**

It is important to recognize that although a large number of people experiencing homelessness have unstable employment, homelessness does not directly equate to being unemployed. In fact, hidden homelessness and reversible homelessness in the workforce are both quite common. When most people think of homelessness, they usually imagine someone who has been homeless and has lived on the street their entire life. While this might be the case for some, living in a state of homelessness can affect many from all backgrounds.

### **What is hidden homelessness?**

[Hidden homelessness](#) is usually unreported and undocumented as most of the people experiencing hidden homelessness, do not have a home of their own, but might live with a friend or might not have immediate permanent housing available to them. These people are usually not accounted for in government statistics as homelessness resources are not usually sought after for this demographic.

### **What is reversible homelessness?**

[Reversible homelessness](#) defines a group of people experiencing homelessness who can expect to reverse this state of living within a matter of time. This demographic might be experiencing homelessness due to an external factor, which could be unemployment, but it could also be due to domestic violence, addiction, mental illness episodes, etc. To live in a state of reversible homelessness, it means that a person has the financial means to eventually return to a stable housing at some point in the future.

There is a sizable number of people experiencing homelessness in Canada who are employed and working. In fact, [there has been tremendous job growth since 2000](#), although many of the jobs occupied by members of the homeless community are low-wage jobs. As of 2013, [20% of the homeless community in Toronto were employed](#). This statistic is still too low, but [research has shown](#) that there is promise in increasing job prospects through using job training programs for people experiencing homelessness.

## **Job Training & Education for People Experiencing Homelessness**

Research has shown that collaborative teams can have a tremendous impact against the educational and work barriers faced by people experiencing homelessness. Collaboration also includes organizations that provide job training and education initiatives, employers, and employees. It is important that helping organizations and employers come from a place of compassion and understanding of [groups from all backgrounds](#) including, adults with children, veterans, senior citizens, individuals with a criminal record or a history in prison, individuals living with disabilities, individuals living with addiction, and youth in school. Each person requires a personalized approach to best understand the obstacles that have led to their state of homelessness and the job prospects available to them.

Employment training and education facilitated by professionals can be beneficial to categorize and introduce hard skills and soft skills necessary for different jobs on the market. There are some employment training programs available in the GTA:

1. [Ontario Works Training Program](#): This program prepares people for employment, self-employment, or career advancement, and it provides a monthly stipend for participants that supports any cost necessary for training programs. Training programs cover many industries from administrative and clerical to the arts.
2. Life stabilization programs are also helpful for people dealing with other external factors including food insecurity, addiction, and mental illness. For example, [Ve'ahavta](#) is an individualized program that coordinates care with a case worker to provide care for 12 weeks for 1-2 hours a week.

These programs can be helpful for those in need of coaching or a guide to help them regain employment.

## **The CCP Impact**

The CCP team is passionate about educating our youth for a prosperous and well-rounded future, which is an intervention strategy that we employ for younger members of our community. We actively engage in educational opportunities and career workshops with local schools and organizations to encourage and motivate children and teens to continue school and overcome barriers. If you would like to join our team or support us on our mission, please [contact us](#)!

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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# Affordable & Accessible Housing

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Understanding how accessible and affordable housing is an important aspect of homelessness, is key to a larger understanding of the whole picture. The Canadian Courage Project aims to build awareness on all issues relating to homelessness and educate others in our community.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

In this blog post, we will be discussing areas relating to affordable housing including, important legislation, nonprofit services, and the current housing crisis.

## **Canada's Ongoing Housing Crisis**

Housing is an incredibly important infrastructure that has an impact on the issue of homelessness. When a person living in a homeless state does not have stable housing options, it can greatly impact other facets of their life. Although they could have stable employment, it is difficult to hold a job when you have nowhere to live. A lack of housing can also impact their emotional and physical well-being. On top of that, for parents with children, a lack of housing affects the entire family unit. Housing is a human need and right.

[Dr. Yushu Zhu](#), an assistant professor of urban studies and public policy, recently explained the current state of unattainable housing in Canada. She focused on discussing how younger adults face less options for affordable housing and what is being done about the

problem. She believes that local government involvement in remedying the housing crisis and creating more affordable housing for all is vital. In the next section, we discuss several local legislations that have been enacted to solve the housing crisis in various areas of Ontario, Canada.

## **Local Legislations**

[In 2017, the federal government](#) of Canada announced a 10-year strategy to boost housing resources nationwide. As part of this decade-long plan, Ontario is specifically committed to developing an action plan every three years. Since Ontario is receiving funding from the National Housing Strategy, they must explain how the funds are being used every three years. This level of accountability is valued and will be an incentive to continue making meaningful efforts towards more housing for those in need.

Across the nation, Ontario has the largest housing need, making up [44.1%](#) of the Canadian population who are in need of stable and secure housing. [Ontario has made housing a priority](#), with an effort to build 1.5 million homes by 2031. There have been efforts made to adequately support each area of housing: rentals, social/community housing, and supportive housing. [The Ontario community housing renewal strategy](#) works in partnership with community organizations and members to sustain and repair the current housing system. [Community housing is defined as](#), “housing owned and operated by non-profit housing corporations, housing co-operatives and municipal governments or district social services administration boards.” This type of housing provides housing for people working in low-income jobs, senior citizens, those living on social assistance programs, people living with mental and/or physical disabilities, and people who have experienced homelessness. These groups of people are in high-risk groups for homelessness. It is crucial that programs like this are continuously funded and discussed at the local and federal level. There have been two new programs started in 2019-2020.

1. [The Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative](#)
  - a. Funding for service managers to replace the federal Social Housing Agreement funding that expires yearly.
  - b. Requires service managers to give priority to Indigenous community housing providers.
2. [The Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative](#)
  - a. Provides service managers flexible funding to address local priorities focused on affordable housing supply.

- b. Affordable housing supply includes: new affordable rental construction, community housing repair, rental assistance, tenant support, and affordable home ownership.

[In Hamilton](#), the local politicians learned that a commitment of a \$40 million investment, and \$30 million each year thereafter, to lead the path towards ending homelessness. A large aspect of this budget would include secure housing to provide a stable transition after surviving homelessness. The issue is that this is a large financial investment, but the issue of homelessness continues to rise. An early investment might prevent a larger one in the future.

The more people that are able to live safely and securely, there is an increase in employment, well-being, and it's stimulating for the economy.

### **Non-profit Services**

One interesting take in the discussion of the housing crisis is focusing on the human need for housing rather than placing profits as a chief priority. Housing has become expensive and unattainable in many cities worldwide, but it is important that we focus on human dignity and prioritize the safety of members in our community.

The non-profit sector has been dedicated to alleviating factors affecting the state of homelessness, including housing advocacy. Some [local organizations](#) include:

1. [Hands Up Canada- based in Toronto](#)
2. [The Salvation Army- Toronto](#)
3. [Eva's- based in Toronto](#)

These are just a few organizations in the charity/non-profit sector that are dedicated to making noble progress for the state of housing in Canada. The Canadian Courage project is [partnered with several organizations](#) that provide shelter or housing services to people experiencing homelessness. One of these organizations is Eva's (listed above)! Aside from our partnerships, the CCP is dedicated to educating community members on the various factors that contribute to homelessness. We believe by increasing education and contributing to homeless resources, we are able to make an impact. Our goal is to better the well-being of people facing homelessness. If you would like to join our team or support us on our mission, please [contact us](#)!

Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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evas

## [Home - Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth \(evas.ca\)](http://evas.ca)

### **Summary:**

Affordable and accessible housing is an important factor relating to the issue of homelessness. In this blog post, we will be discussing areas relating to this topic including, important legislation, nonprofit services, and the current housing crisis. The Canadian Courage project is [partnered with several organizations](#) that provide shelter or housing services to people experiencing homelessness. The more people that are able to live safely and securely, there is an increase in employment, well-being, and it's stimulating for the economy. Read more here: [Affordable & Accessible Housing \(thecanadiancourageproject.org\)](http://thecanadiancourageproject.org)



# Public Health & Homelessness

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Homelessness is a public health issue. Ending homelessness is a goal of local, federal, and global agencies. People experiencing homelessness experience mental, physical, and environmental health issues which all intersect in the field of public health. In this blog post, we define public health, discuss the importance of homelessness prevention, and how we as a society can advance health equity.

The Canadian Courage Project (CCP) strives to create meaningful change to better the mental and physical health of youth facing homelessness. Our mission is to continue caring for and educating our community.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

## What is Public Health?

Public health is a term that is heard by many, but now always fully understood. When the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, we all became more aware of what public health was and what our local public health departments do to protect us. For a better understanding of how homelessness is a public health issue, we would like to provide a clear definition to build upon. Public health is defined as ["the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities."](#) We believe that as a society, we should be committed to making sure our neighbors are taken care of equally. Equitable health care and prevention of issues, such as homelessness, are crucial for a prosperous and healthy future for our

society as a whole. Public health is important because it is [focused on promoting health care equity, quality, and accessibility](#).

Homelessness is a public health issue that highlights various health disparities present in the community.

**What is a health disparity?** [Health disparities are](#)  
*[“differences in access to or availability of facilities or services”](#)*  
[due to socioeconomic differences within the population](#). Health disparities are preventable.

Secure housing is a human right, and [housing instability harms the physical health of humans due to lack of necessary resources. It causes levels of stress that directly affect one's health](#). Community members, nonprofit organizations, and public health professionals are all dedicated to alleviating the issue of homelessness.

There are many critical health outcomes of homelessness, including the fact that people experiencing homelessness are [three to four times more likely to die prematurely](#). It is essential that we collectively work towards accessible and equitable care for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. The first step in addressing these issues is to first find stable, safe, and secure housing for those in need. The stress of being unhoused on top of not having the time to properly take care of one's health greatly affects their health outcomes. In the next section of this post, we will discuss the importance of preventing homelessness for a stronger future for the next generations. It is a public health goal to end homelessness, but it is also important that we call attention to ***interventions that will prevent this issue***.

## **Preventing Homelessness**

In our [last blog post](#), we discussed affordable and accessible housing and the efforts the Canadian government has made to end homelessness with the *Housing First* campaign. We believe that finding housing solutions is the first step necessary to end and prevent homelessness. Aside from housing, there are other areas that have an impact on one's future outcomes, including, education, the foster care system, access to healthcare systems, and more. Each of these structural areas of society lead to the future outcomes of all youth, yet there are many disparities due to varying socioeconomic factors.

In order to adequately prevent homelessness, there must be interventions created on a systemic level. Without this high level of intervention, meaningful change is not possible. We aim to educate our community on these issues so you can continue the conversation and serve as advocates to your local government for continuous change.

There is an existing public health framework designed to model how prevention should work, created by [Leavell and Clark in the 1940s](#). They focused on the idea of primary prevention which led to expanded theories on higher levels of prevention. One of the newer levels of prevention is called, [“quaternary prevention,” proposed by Jamouille and Roland in the late 1980s](#). Quaternary prevention is meant to identify patient risk factors for appropriate medical treatment. This strategy is important as it incorporates a medical and sociological approach to understanding health behaviours of different groups within the community therefore it is critical in understanding, preventing, and ending homelessness.

Prevention strategies are incorporated by many community partners, including our organization. Preventing such large issues like homelessness require a multi-faceted approach. We at the CCP are focused on educating youth, promoting mental health initiatives , and partner with local shelters to help assist adolescents and young adults transition during a critical time in their lives. If you would like to learn more about our work, click [here](#).

## **Advancing Health Equity**

One of the main goals of the field of public health is to eliminate health disparities to advance and achieve health equity. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health equity as something that is achievable when [“everyone can attain their full potential for health and well-being.”](#) Health equity is achievable when structural change is made and efforts are created to allocate equal resources to all socioeconomic groups within the community.

How can this be done?

Here are the [numerous ways](#) Canada’s Public Health Office is making an effort to advance health equity:

1. **Action on Factors Influencing Health:** these factors include: income, education, social environment, physical environment, social support networks, sex and gender, health child development, and culture.

2. **Generating evidence-based decisions:** Dr. Tam's office creates an annual report using scientific, translational evidence to provide accurate data leading to decision-making.
3. **Working in Partnership:** Dr. Tam's office acknowledges that health promotion requires a diverse group of people from all agencies and organizations for diverse solutions. These partners include: Canadians with lived experiences, international partners, academia, legislators, local and federal governments, non-profit and private sectors, primary health care partners, and indigenous partners.

[Dr. Theresa Tam](#) is Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, and she introduced [six focus areas](#) to increase health promotion and prevention. These focus areas include:

1. Drugs and alcohol,
2. Eliminating tuberculosis,
3. Healthy children and youth,
4. Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections,
5. Antimicrobial resistance, and
6. Healthy built environments.

Some of these areas are more specific, but it is clear that our public health practitioners are focused on advancing health equity using a diversified strategy. If you would like to read more about public health goals on a global scale, [read here](#) to learn more about the United Nations' sustainable development goals.

Our goal at the CCP is to better the well-being of people facing homelessness. If you would like to join our team or support us on our mission, please [contact us](#)! Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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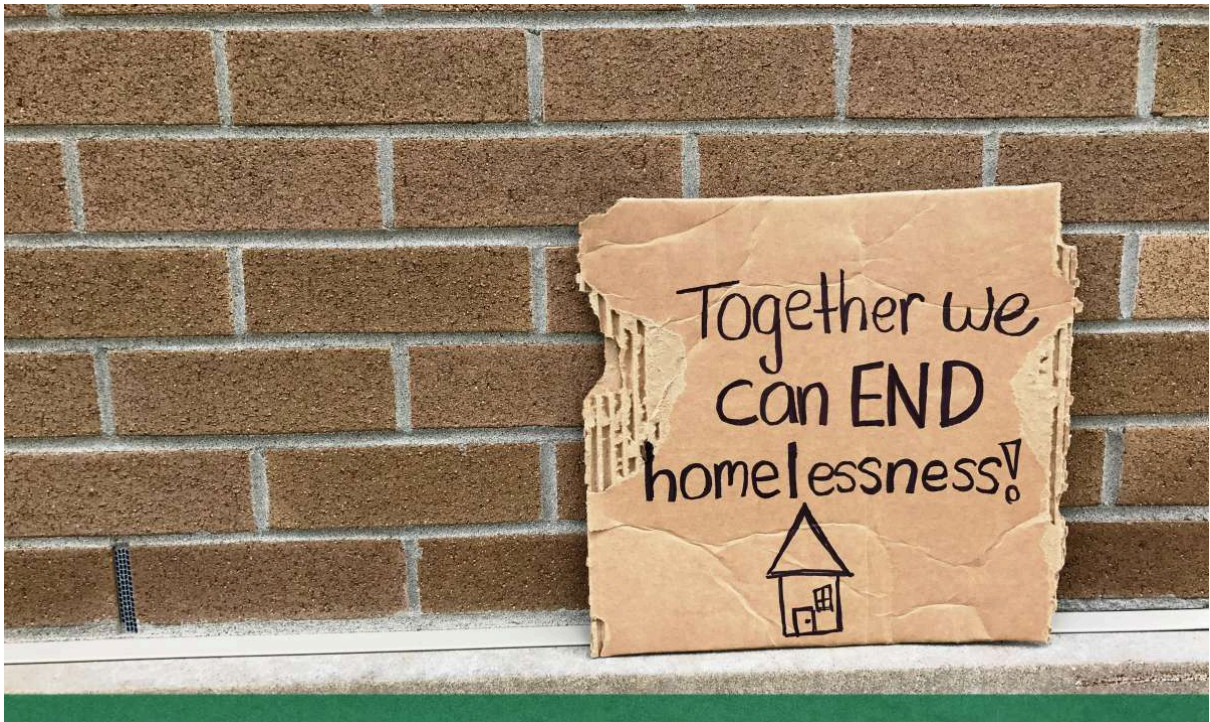
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Summary:

This week's blog post discusses homelessness as a public health issue. In this post, we define public health, discuss the importance of homelessness prevention, and how we as a society can advance health equity. We believe that as a society, we should be committed to making sure our neighbors are taken care of equally. Equitable health care and prevention of issues, such as homelessness, are crucial for a prosperous and healthy future for our society as a whole. If you are interested in learning more, read more here!



# Supporting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in the LGBTQ2S+ Community

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP readers,

Welcome back to the CCP blog! For today's blog post, we will be sharing ways to support youth experiencing homelessness in the LGBTQ2S+ community. As a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness on matters relating to homelessness and providing support to youth, we believe it is important to highlight the unique struggles that youth in the LGBTQ2S+ community face and how our societal structure creates barriers for certain populations.

Let's begin with [defining LGBTQ2S+](#). In Canada, we use the acronym LGBTQ2S+ to refer to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, two-spirit, and other sexual and gender minority identities. For more helpful information, and a full glossary of terms used within the community, click [here](#).

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

**Unique causes for homelessness**

Youth who identify as LGBTQ2S+ [are at higher risk of experiencing homelessness](#) to begin with, but they can also experience disproportionate challenges while unhoused that may not be experienced by their peers. Homelessness can disproportionately affect members of the LGBTQ2S+ community due to various reasons. Some [reasons](#) include:

1. Discrimination

Youth in the LGBTQ2S+ may face discrimination and prejudice in various housing offering options. Many [shelters are not designed to safely support queer and trans youth](#)- leading to further housing instability and a lack of understanding within the community. There is still a large amount of discrimination against the LGBTQ2S+ community and the outcomes of this outright discrimination are dangerous and unfortunately prescribe treatment of individuals in some environments.

2. Family rejection

[Family rejection is one of the chief causes](#) for LGBTQ2S+ youth facing homelessness. This is especially seen in people from historically marginalised ethnic groups, which is an intersectional challenge. Unfortunately, many teens and young adults are kicked out of their family homes after coming out. This lack of acceptance creates an emotional/mental toll of youth as well.

3. Mental health

As aforementioned, youth in the LGBTQ2S+ community are at risk of mental health issues due to both discrimination issues and the stress and trauma of homelessness. This elevated risk for mental health issues is overall caused by the social determinants of health. If you would like to learn more about the social determinants of health, read [here](#).

4. Increased risk of violence

Members of the LGBTQ2S+ experience discrimination and injustice that lead to them becoming at risk of increased violence and/or hate crimes. LGBTQ2S+ individuals are [4x more likely to experience violence](#) in their lives in comparison to their straight peers. They also [experience a higher rate of police brutality](#). Inclusive programs and shelters are crucial for providing safe and secure housing for youth

in-need. It is also important that we continue allyship with members of the LGBTQ2S+ community and educate others about the unique challenges they face to boost awareness of these issues. Violence and hate crimes should not be as socially acceptable as they are becoming. We must protect each other within our community.

## **Statistics**

It is important that we provide statistics that reflect the dire need for education, change, and support for youth in the LGBTQ2S+ facing homelessness. [25 to 45 percent of homelessness youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ2S+](#), which is a majority of the population of youth experiencing homelessness. Youth identifying as LGBTQ2S+ are underrepresented in the general population, although they are [overrepresented within the homeless population](#). [21 percent of youth in Toronto shelters identify as LGBTQ2S+](#), signifying the necessity of understanding the unique challenges experienced by this community.

## **How to support LGBTQ2S+ youth facing or experiencing homelessness**

There are many ways to show up and demonstrate support for youth facing homelessness in the LGBTQ2S+ community. This includes:

- Providing resources and/or shelter for those in-need.
- Being an ally and creating a safe and welcoming environment.
- Educating and advocating on matters relating to homelessness experienced in the LGBTQ2S+ community.
- Donating to local LGBTQ2S+ shelters and/or organizations.
- Having meaningful conversations with your friends and families (especially parents with kids) on supporting friends and family who identify as LGBTQ2S+.

These are some actionable items that can demonstrate allyship with members of the LGBTQ2S+ community and hopefully help create forward-focused progress on the state of homelessness as well.

## **Finding support as a youth identifying as LGBTQ2S+**

If you are a youth who identify as LGBTQ2S+, we have also included a list of local programs that provide support and resources for those facing homelessness, discrimination, or mental health issues.

## **Toronto Programs for Youth**

### **General Services**

1. [Central Toronto Youth Services](#)
2. [YMCA of Greater Toronto](#)

### **Help with Transitions**

3. [Supporting our Youth](#)
4. [The 519](#)

### **Meals**

5. [Supporting our Youth](#)
6. [LOFT Kitchen at CONC](#)

### **Mental and Physical Health**

7. [Rainbow Services at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)
8. [East Metro Youth Services](#)

### **Educational Programs**

9. [The Triangle Program](#)
10. [The 519](#)

### **Employment Programs**

11. [LOFT Kitchen at CONC](#)
12. [St. Stephen's Community House](#)

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- The CCP Team

**Sources:**

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[LGBTQ2S+ — Toronto Pflag](#)

[LGBTQ+ Youth & Gay Homeless Shelter | Covenant House](#)

[Infographic: Homeless LGBTQ Youth | The Homeless Hub](#)

[Understanding LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada - News & Updates | Start Me Up](#)

[Niagara | Housing & Employment Services in St. Catharines](#)

[Fact Sheet on Injustice in the LGBTQ community | National Sexual Violence Resource Center \(NSVRC\)](#)

[Programs for Youth — Toronto Pflag](#)

[Resources - Central Toronto Youth Services \(ctys.org\)](#)

[Rainbow Services \(LGBTQ\) | CAMH](#)

[About - \(soytoronto.com\)](#)

[Loft Kitchen Social Enterprise - Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre \(conccommunity.org\)](#)

<https://soytoronto.com/about/>

[Home - The 519](#)

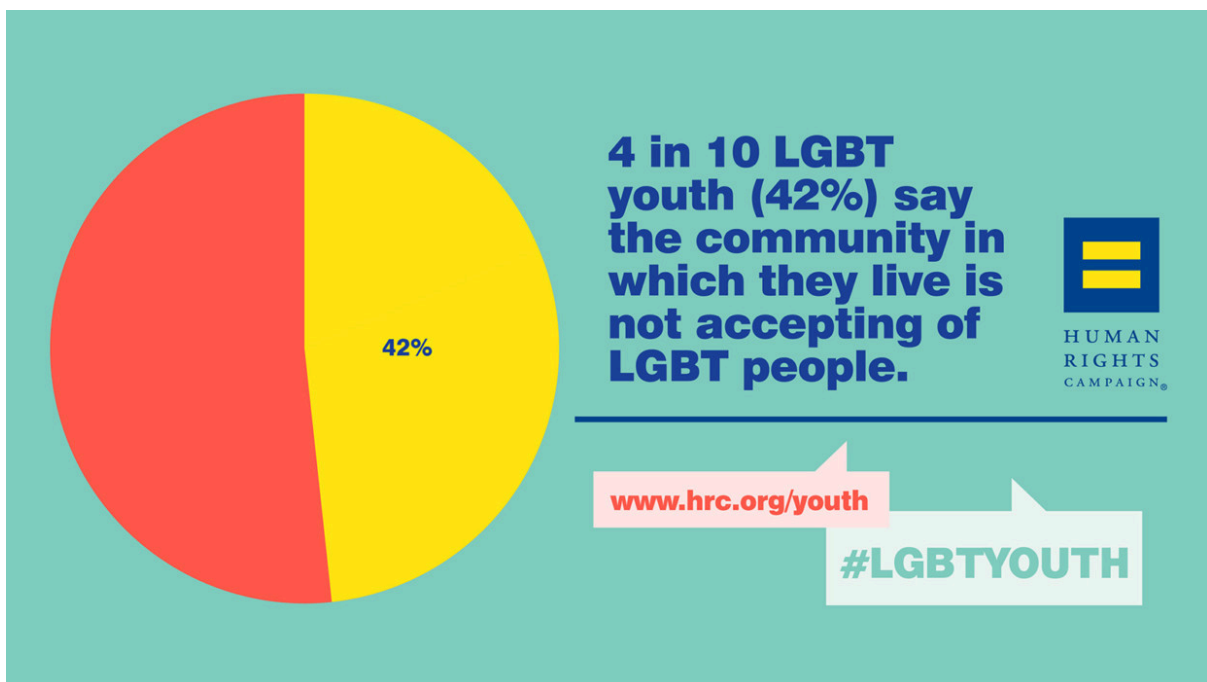
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**Images:**



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### **Summary:**

This week's blog post discusses ways to support youth in the LGBTQ2S+ community who are experiencing homelessness. Our post defines LGBTQ2S+ and highlights unique challenges that youth in this community face, especially while experiencing homelessness. In this post, we also identify discrimination, family rejection, mental health issues, and other reasons why LGBTQ2S+ youth are at a higher risk of homelessness. We provide statistics that reflect the dire need for education, change, and support for LGBTQ2S+ youth experiencing homelessness. The blog post also includes supportive programs for youth who identify as LGBTQ2S+ and other methods to provide support for members in the community.

# Highlighting Canada's New Leaf Project

Sent 4/2/23 to foundations for social change

Hello! I am a blog writer for the Canadian Courage Project, a local non-profit organization dedicated to supporting youth facing homelessness and their pets. On our blog, we highlight areas of advocacy and education relating to homelessness in Canada. I would love to write about the New Leaf Project and was wondering if I could have your permission to feature Foundations for Social Change in our next blog post. Thank you!

Our website: <https://www.thecanadiancourageproject.org/>

Lauren

Other organizations to contact:

1. The 519- Building Power: Youth Advocacy Project
2. Supporting our Youth
3. Covenant House Toronto
4. Period Purse
5. Helping Homeless Pets
6. The Triangle Program

# Understanding Access to Healthcare

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP Readers,

Welcome back to the CCP blog. We hope our blog posts continue to educate our community and beyond on areas relating to homelessness, mental health, youth education, and how non-profit organizations can provide support to each of these areas. Today's blog post will provide an overview of access to healthcare in Canada.

Access to healthcare is an important topic relating to homelessness for many reasons. People experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of physical and mental health conditions. Homelessness is often associated with a large range of conditions, including infectious diseases, substance abuse issues, and chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. In light of this, it is crucial that people experiencing homelessness have equal, accessible access to healthcare. Without continuous medical care, chronic conditions can be exacerbated and therefore, medical necessity is increased. Access to equitable healthcare is a critical issue as it should be a right for every human and it can also play an important role in supporting the transition from homelessness.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the current state of homelessness in Canada and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), welcome! If you are returning for more information about the particular challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness and those with animal companions, welcome back! If you are new to our blog, welcome to the community and thank you for your interest in learning more about issues regarding the homelessness crisis in Canada and beyond - you are one step closer to becoming a changemaker in your community, and you are in great company.

## Overview of the Canada Health Act

Here in Canada, we have a [publicly funded healthcare system understood as Medicare](#). We do not have a federal healthcare plan, but rather administered at the provincial/territorial level. The federal government administers this program called the [Canada Health Act](#). The

Canada Health Act requires the provinces/territories to meet certain criteria to receive funding. [These criteria include:](#)

1. Public administration
2. Comprehensiveness
3. Universality
4. Portability
5. Accessibility

Each of these standards are in place to make sure that citizens in each province/territory are afforded equal healthcare services. All Canadians are granted free services that are deemed medically necessary and essential healthcare services under the Canada Health Act. These services include primary care services, [but not prescription drugs, dental care, vision care, mental health services and other “non-essential” services](#). For this care, Canadians must purchase private insurance or pay out-of-pocket. This healthcare system has its pros and cons, that we will further explain in this blog post.

### **Social Inequities of the Healthcare System**

Although the Canadian healthcare system allows Canadians from all class backgrounds equal access to essential primary care services, there are still challenges faced by many. Aside from long wait times for procedures, surgeries, and specialists, there are also specific challenges faced by different groups. For example, [mental illnesses are experienced in 1 in 5 Canadians](#), yet it is difficult for citizens to receive proper mental health care within this system.

Also, income and socio-economic status still largely affect access to equitable healthcare. For those with low incomes, it may be difficult to purchase prescription medications that are not covered by the Canada Health Act. For those who are unemployed or experiencing homelessness and have concurrent chronic health conditions, this makes it difficult to properly take care of oneself. Preventative care is also a luxury for those who can afford private insurance for this type of care. Preventative healthcare promotes population health and well-being, but some services under this type of care might not be covered under the publicly funded system.

Another inequity faced by Canadians within this system is based on geographical location. Since the healthcare system is broken down by provinces, healthcare services provided vary based on the area. [Those who live in rural areas of the country have limited resources](#)

[including physical resources](#), but also a lack of doctors and other healthcare providers. We will build upon this in the next section.

## **Rural Healthcare**

A large portion of our country is remote/rural, so the topic of rural healthcare is critical. As of 2021, [18% of Canada's population is rural](#). Only [9.3% of Canadian physicians](#) practice in remote/rural areas, leaving a large discrepancy in accessible care. Aside from the shortage of primary care services, Canadians who live in rural Canada often need to travel long distances to receive specialized care, which is usually necessary as people age or if they have chronic conditions. Overall, there is an incredible need for increased funding and resources in these areas.

## **Intersectionality**

Indigenous peoples in Canada experience unique challenges relating to access to equitable healthcare. Most Indigenous communities are located in isolated areas making it very difficult to access healthcare services, [but there is also a history of discrimination faced by Indigenous peoples within the healthcare system](#). There are cultural barriers that are left to be recognized. [The government of Canada has introduced specialized legislation and funding](#) to assist in closing the gaps of unequal services for Indigenous communities, but there is a lot more work to do. There are significant health disparities experienced by Indigenous people in Canada in comparison to non-Indigenous Canadians due to systemic factors often leaving these groups to lead their own healthcare.

## **Comparison to Neighboring Country- USA**

So far, we have addressed many of the challenges to accessing healthcare in Canada, but we want to end on a positive note of recognizing the benefits of a publicly funded healthcare system as well. Although there are significant gaps in our system, we are lucky to be afforded with baseline primary care services and essential healthcare with no cost. Healthcare is a fundamental human right, and our universal healthcare system provides coverage to all residents regardless of their employment status or living situation. In comparison, our neighbouring country, the U.S., does not provide universal healthcare to all of its citizens. Their healthcare services are based on a [person's ability to pay for private](#)

[insurance or pay cash prices for healthcare services](#). The cost of healthcare in the U.S. is far more expensive.

On the other hand, access to healthcare in the U.S., for those who can afford private insurance, it is readily available. There may be shorter wait times in the U.S. for specialized healthcare, procedures, and surgeries, in comparison to Canada, however, this is only a luxury afforded to insured people.

Overall, universal coverage provided in Canada is cheaper and more accessible in comparison to our neighbouring country. There are challenges in both countries, but the Canadian healthcare system provides universal coverage, lower healthcare costs and prescription costs, and better access to care for everyone from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Our CCP team hopes that you found this blog post both informational and resourceful. We hope to continue this important conversation and we hope that you do too! Our goal at the CCP is to better the well-being of people facing homelessness. If you would like to join our team or support us on our mission, please [contact us](#)! Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

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[When will Canadians benefit from the promised mental health transfer? \(irpp.org\)](#)

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[US vs Canadian Healthcare: What Are the Differences? | AIMS Education](#)



# How to Start a Non-profit Organization

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

[The Canadian Courage Project](#) was founded by two sisters in 2020, and it is the first non-profit organization to support youth facing homelessness and offer services for their animal companions. [Shania and Anya Bhopa](#) started the CCP with the goal of empowering young people to strive for social impact, push boundaries in the workplace, support youth facing homelessness, and offer services for one's animal companions. The CCP has exponentially grown over the past three years and we want to share some tips with you about how to start your own non-profit organization for a mission you care about!

We found that starting a non-profit organization has been such a fulfilling and impactful way to address a cause that we're passionate about. So, whether you want to make a difference in your community or address a large issue, the process of starting a non-profit requires intentional planning and organization. In this blog post, we'll walk you through the essential steps to help you start your own nonprofit organization.

## Step 1: Follow your dreams and build your mission

Once you have clearly described your goals, it is important to build your organization's mission. Every non-profit begins with a clear and compelling mission that encompasses both your personal values and the values you want to display within your community. It is important to define the purpose of your organization, the specific issue you want to address, and your target audience/community. Research existing organizations in the same space to ensure your cause is unique or offers a fresh perspective. Crafting a well-defined mission statement will guide your organization's activities and attract supporters who resonate with your cause.

## Next Steps

What's next after outlining the mission and goals of your organization? Conducting research on the groundwork is necessary to build your organization in your local area. Every government/municipality has different guidelines on how to legally start your organization. In Canada, a non-profit organization is usually described as a charitable organization. Follow

[these guidelines](#) to understand the legal framework outlined in Canada. You must [incorporate](#) your organization once you have created a [business plan](#). After incorporation, it is important to gather the directors of your board and create your organization's by-laws, which will become the governing laws of your organization. It is essential that you become familiar with your government's process to incorporate as a non-profit organization before you get started. Once you have established the legality of your org, it's time to get started by fundraising and networking! We have found collaboration with local partners incredibly fruitful for the success of the Canadian Courage Project.

### **Collaboration fosters innovation!**

Connecting with local partners has been an important ingredient to our success. These partnerships are filled with mutual support, resources, and shared expertise. By teaming up with local businesses, large corporations and other non-profits, you can gain access to a network of shared audiences, funding, and valuable learning. Teaming up with like-minded organizations has provided us with a world of knowledge on how to approach our goals from innovative approaches. For example, our upcoming fundraising event, '[BFFs & Barkuterie](#),' is a collaborative event with [Ontario Doggos](#) and 100% of the proceeds will go towards building animal wellness booths at Toronto youth shelters. The Doggos team creates dog-friendly events in Toronto and is a perfect partner for this fundraiser. The event will be a charcuterie board master class that will be both fun and educational! Get your tickets [here](#) to join us!

Fundraising and events are integral parts of maintaining funds and awareness for your organization, in addition to securing grants from corporations. We have been blessed to partner with so many local organizations to share our initiatives and we believe it's one of the best forms of marketing as well! If you are interested in partnering with CCP, click [here](#)!

### **Shania & Anya's Top 3 Tips for Starting A Non-Profit**

1. Advice for young founders: No matter your age, gender, or life experiences, you are fully capable of pursuing your passions! As long as you put your mind to it and do the work, you can accomplish your goals. There is no pressure to compare yourself to others!
2. Budget & Fundraising: Make sure to budget for all aspects of the organization both quarterly and annually. This could include team lunches, gas money, etc. Every detail counts! Setting a budget helps you maintain a clear outlook for the present and

future. It also better informs your annual fundraising goals. For fundraising, we have found it helpful to consider all methods of fundraising at every level. This also includes applying for grants at the community, corporate, and government levels. Get creative and research all your options!

3. Remember your passion and your why for starting your organization, and then have fun with your peers while fulfilling your 'why!'

Throughout this post, we outlined steps involved in starting a nonprofit organization and some advice from our founders! From defining your mission and conducting thorough research to choosing a legal structure, obtaining necessary licenses, and networking and fundraising as each step plays a vital role in laying a solid foundation for your organization.

By developing a compelling fundraising strategy, establishing budgets, and building a team of passionate individuals, you can set your nonprofit up for long-term success. Embrace both partnerships and community engagement to expand your reach and maximize your impact. Also, remember to have fun!

Our CCP team hopes that you found this blog post both informational and resourceful. We hope to continue this important conversation and we hope that you do too! Our goal at the CCP is to better the well-being of people facing homelessness. If you would like to join our team or support us on our mission, please [contact us](#)! Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

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Pictures:

[How to Start a Nonprofit Organization in California? - CA SOS Expedited Filing Service \(916\) 238-6077](#)



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# How to Start a Non-profit Organization

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Edited by: Jacqueline Cheung

Dear CCP Readers,

Welcome back to the CCP blog. We hope our blog posts continue to educate our community and beyond on areas relating to homelessness, mental health, youth education, and how non-profit organizations can provide support to each of these areas. Today's blog post will provide an overview of how to start a non-profit.

[The Canadian Courage Project](#) was founded by two sisters in 2020, and it is the first non-profit organization to support youth facing homelessness and offer services for their animal companions. [Shania and Anya Bhopa](#) started the CCP with the goal of empowering young people to strive for social impact, push boundaries in the workplace, support youth facing homelessness, and offer services for one's animal companions. The CCP has exponentially grown over the past three years and we want to share some tips with you about how to start your own non-profit organization for a mission you care about!

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- The CCP Team

## **Join us for upcoming events!**

Pride Booth Toronto

JUNE 24 & 25 | SOCIAL | TORONTO

[BFFs & Barkuterie](#)

JUNE 27 | FUNDRAISER | TORONTO

\*insert banner photo\*

[Strawberry Festival](#)

JULY 1 | SOCIAL | STOUFFVILLE

\*insert photo from last year\*

Pictures:

[How to Start a Nonprofit Organization in California? - CA SOS Expedited Filing Service \(916\) 238-6077](#)



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## **TWEETS**

# Essential Non-Profit Teams

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Dear CCP Readers,

Welcome back to the CCP blog! We hope our blog posts continue to educate our community and beyond on areas relating to homelessness, mental health, youth education, and how non-profit organizations can provide support to each of these areas. Today's blog post will discuss the different teams that make up our organization.

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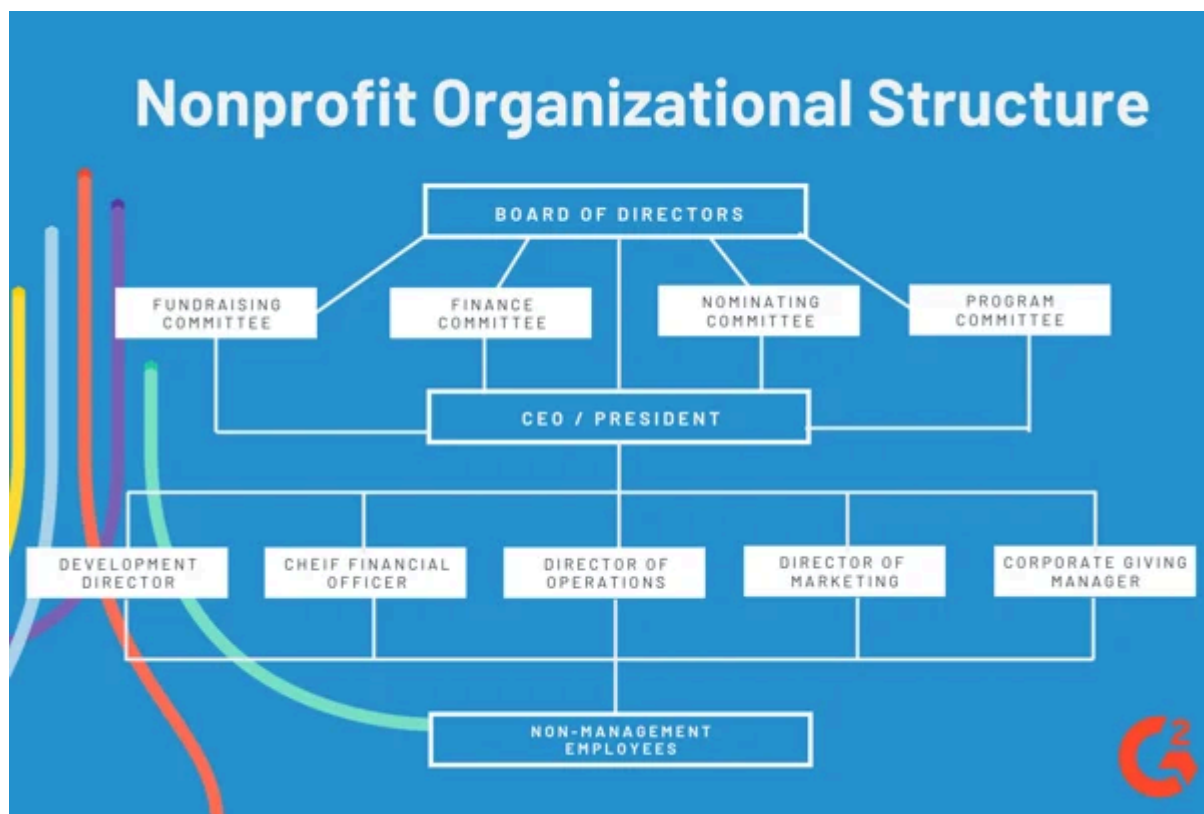
## Overview

When starting your organization, it is important to think about your organizational structure. Defining the various teams you want is important because it delegates essential work tasks across multiple departments. As you start your company or organization, it is important that you remember that you can't do everything yourself! Hiring candidates with opposite strengths as your own is helpful for the organization as a whole.

In this blog post, we share what teams we have in our organization and why, and we also share what some of our staff like about working for our organization. [Insert more](#)

## Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of your organization can be described in your business plan, but can adapt as your organization changes over time. Your organization's structure should reflect the specific needs and goals of your organization. It creates a framework defining roles, responsibilities, and objectives. Before you create the structure of your organization, it is important that you define the goals and strategy behind your organization's mission statement. You must understand this clearly before getting into the specifics. If you need inspiration on where to start, refer to the structure image below. Some commonly essential teams can include, finance, human resources, operations, and communications.



<https://learn.g2.com/how-to-start-a-nonprofit>

The Canadian Courage Project has six teams with 3 organizational roles. Our teams include: Education (Edu I and Edu II: Mental Health), Shelter Relations, Fundraising, Research, Strategic Communications, and Events. Our mission is to empower young people to strive for social impact, push boundaries in the workplace, support youth facing homelessness, and offer services for one's animal companions. Our teams reflect general needs of an organization, yet also are personalized to meet our mission statement. As a non-profit

organization geared towards educating youth and also supporting youth experiencing homelessness, Education and Shelter Relations are the two main streams of our organization.

Our organization has a 60+ member staff and is led by our two founders and directors of each team. The directors lead teams of coordinators and specialists specific tot he needs of each team. In the next few sections, we outline each of our team's objectives and how they fit our mission.

## **1. Education**

Our Education Team is dedicated towards promoting change in the community through the use of education sharing, understanding, action, and wellness. We also created this team with the intention of committing towards diverse and equitable education. Our two educational sectors address two different objectives. Edu I is dedicated towards our community commitment and Edu II is dedicated specifically for creating conversations on the importance of mental health.

### **a. Edu I**

The Edu I Team was created to present youth workshops to schools. This workshop is called *How to Make Change in Your Own Community*. The CCP has incorporated the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) for these workshops. Our goal for this team is to inspire passion within youth to use their power to enact change in their community. We address the the problems in their community and prompt them with questions that guide towards creating meaningful change to promote the betterment of their community with their own goals. This team works closely with local school boards to deliver in class workshops.

### **b. Edu II: Mental Health**

The Edu II Team was created to present a workshop in partnership with [jack.org](http://jack.org), one of our partners, to youth living in shelters focused on mental health. This workshop is called *Be There*. The goals of the workshop are centered around wellness and to support youth facing homelessness. This workshop provides youth with tangible ways to support people in your life who are experiencing struggles with their mental health. It also includes an overview of mental health resources. The workshop uses group activities to

promote connectedness and learning from real-life situations in an effort to be present and *be there*. The Edu II Team supports the mission of CCP as an integral piece of education on mental health for our target community of youth going through difficult transitions in life. We believe education on mental health and wellness provides an essential multi-faceted approach to better understanding homelessness.

### **Education Team Spotlight:**

**Shelby** works in mental health research and joined CCP as a coordinator in the education sector, and she is now a Director in the Education Sector. Shelby states that when she saw the potential impact the mental health workshops could have in the community, she knew she was exactly where she needed to be!

## **2. Shelter Relations**

Our Shelter Relations Team works by reaching out to local shelters for collaboration and partnership. We have partnered with several shelters to distribute donation materials and organization donation drop-off events. This team promotes the mission of CCP by providing direct action to those in-need in our greater community. This team is specific to the needs and goals of our organization, but you can create teams that make sense for the specific goals of your own organization!

### **Shelter Relations Spotlight**

**Megan** joined CCP and the Shelter Relations Team to be able to collaborate with an organization that prioritizes mental health and providing resources to those in need.

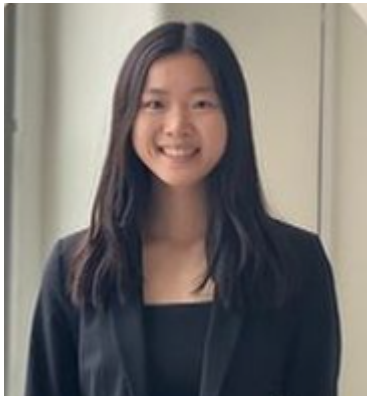


### **3. Fundraising/Operations**

The Fundraising and Operational Team is dedicated towards working with our partners and stakeholders to plan strategic initiatives. This team is highly collaborative with both our internal teams and external partners and donors. A fundraising and operational team is fundamental for all organizations, especially non-profits.

#### **Operations Spotlight**

**Jacqueline** is our Director of Strategic Development and works with each of our teams to make sure Operations run smoothly and in line with our organizational goals. She loves developing our programing and fell in love with the mission of CCP!



### **4. Research**

The Research Team focuses on doing thorough research on the specific needs of our target population in our greater community and applies to grants that can support these needs. This team is necessary for the success of our organization and the stability of our financing aside from donations we receive.

#### **Research Spotlight**



**Katie** has worked in the field of research for years, but joined the CCP to apply the skills she learned to an organization where she knew she could make a difference. Katie loves working with CCP volunteers on grant writing to help support the CCP team support youth experiencing structural vulnerabilities in the community.



## **5. Strategic Communications**

The Strategic Communications Team is a fundamental team for any organization. Communications and/or marketing teams help convey the goals and mission of your organization to your audience and help gain a following of like-minded individuals. This team helps us find our voice as an organization and creates our branding. A strategic communications team is important for making the organizational vision come to life and how to communicate that with the masses.

### **Strategic Communications Spotlight**

**Tvisha** is the Director of Communications and has been with CCP since its beginning. She enjoys working with a team that shares the common goal of raising awareness and empowering young changemakers.



## **6. Events**

The Events Team is integral to the structure of our organization. Our organization hosts events weekly between workshops, fundraisers, donation drop-offs, and community engagement events. The Events Team corporates collaboration from all teams within CCP. The CCP looks to host events that are educational or are meant to engage the community.

\*insert picture from recent event\*

## **Summary**

We hope that this blog post provided an example of how we structured our non-profit organization to be specifically designed for the needs of our organization. We hope that you found this blog post both informational and resourceful. We hope to continue this important conversation and we hope that you do too! Our goal at the CCP is to better the well-being of people facing homelessness. If you would like to join our team or support us on our mission, please [contact us](#)! Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

## **Sources**

Below are the APA format citations for the provided sources:

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# Empowering & Elevating: Building a Better World with Corporate Social Responsibility

Written by: Lauren Anderson

Welcome back to the CCP blog! If you are new here, thanks for joining us and feel free to learn more about the Canadian Courage Project [here](#)! We share blog posts on a monthly basis every 2nd Tuesday of the month, so join our [mailing list](#) for alerts.

This month we are highlighting the important of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and why organizations should employ CSR in their business practices and how it is mutually beneficial for corporations and the globe.

## What is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is [defined](#) as a business approach used to help organizations seek ways to create social and environmental change for society while also increasing revenue and maximizing value for the organization. This is usually a business model recommended to for-profit organizations, but it is a good reminder for non-profit organizations as well. Non-profits usually have social change and community-forward thinking embedded in their mission and goals, but the principles of CSR are great for everyone!

CSR has evolved over time, starting more as a concept about philanthropy, and now it encompasses societal expectations and even global challenges. Employing CSR in your organization's everyday practice is essential for the promotion of a sustainable and equitable future for future generations. A [general quote](#) that encompasses this type of business practice is, "Do *well* by doing *good*." The idea is that you can still grow your company and increase financial margins while empowering and elevating society at the same time.

### **3 Ways to Practice CSR**

There are [various ways](#) organizations can practice CSR, but in this blog post we highlight three that we find all-encompassing and very important!

#### **1. Sustainable and Environmentally-Friendly Practices**

Implementing eco-friendly practices and initiatives that contribute to conserving the environment and sustainability is a large aspect of CSR. There are several different ways sustainability practices can be promoted:

- Reducing your organizations' carbon footprint.
- Reducing waste and recycling products used for operations.
- Investing in renewable energy sources for brick and mortar businesses.
- For businesses selling products, source goods from sustainable, ethical manufacturers. This includes sourcing goods from warehouses with fair labor practices.

#### **2. Community Engagement and Social Initiatives**

Community engagement is a practice often employed by organizations that have a mission centered around their local community, but this practice is important for all! Engaging with your local community can be mutually beneficial: gaining trust of your consumers and contributing positively to the well-being of community members. Organizations can do this by creating social initiatives. Some examples are:

- Volunteer programs in partnership with local charities or schools
- Training workshops to strengthen skills of the community workforce and can possibly encourage community members to apply to a job at your organization.
- Partnering with local officials or nonprofits on community projects
- Donating to local groups in need

#### **3. Ethical Business Practices**

Ethical business practices are included in a CSR approach, but they are something that is hopefully being exercised by all organizations already! To have ethical business practices means that your organization has integrity, fair labor practices, transparency between leaders and employees, diverse and inclusive recruiting, and marketing that is respectful and honest.

### **How We Practice CSR as a Non-Profit**

#### **1. Empowering Youth in the Community through Education**

We host three different workshops for youth, and this programming is meant to inspire and promote their well-being altogether. Here are [various workshops](#):

- Mental Health Workshop in Partnership with jack.org
- Mindfulness & Art Workshop
- In-Class Workshop

#### **2. Providing Holistic Support for Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

Our mission at the Canadian Courage Project is to support youth facing homelessness, and we strive to promote the mental well-being and health of youth. We do this by using a multi-faceted approach. This approach includes: educational/career workshops for youth, mindfulness workshops for youth, community engagement, and partnering with local shelters to provide resources for youth experiencing homelessness.

#### **3. Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our Business Practices**

The CCP is committed to building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace for our employees and volunteers. As part of onboarding, we also have a DEI training for all staff members to continue education on the matter. DEI education is important to us as we believe it is essential to actively mitigate biases, foster innovation, and hopefully reducing discrimination that can happen in the workplace.

#### **4. Highlighting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN**

Our in-class educational workshops utilize a research-based youth-to-youth approach and resources on the [17 UN SDGs](#). During this workshop, students participate in a research-based quiz that pairs their personalized group of sustainable development goals with associated careers. The goal of this workshop is to empower young students to envision themselves in a career and also educate them on how they can support their community in every line of work.

### **Advice on Incorporating CSR in your Business Model**

We hope we can inspire you to begin or continue to incorporate CSR in your business practices. CSR requires a thoughtful and strategic approach that will lead to meaningful business practices. As you begin to implement CSR, here are a couple reminders:

1. [Consult](#) with other organizations or experts on CSR as you get started.
2. Understand your company's mission and goals first before diving deeper into a CSR approach. If you want to learn more, read our [blog post](#) on starting a non-profit!
3. Align with your core values and the values of your surrounding community.
4. [Collaborate](#) at all levels of your organization from the executives to the interns and volunteers.
5. Focus on innovation! Speak to community members, stakeholders, and customers and see how your organization can grow in creative ways that are beneficial to all.

We hope that you found this blog post helpful, and you consider implementing CSR in your business model. Continued education on bettering the well-being of society is a core aspect of our mission. Our goal at the CCP is to better the well-being of people facing homelessness. If you would like to join our team or support us on our mission, please [contact us](#)! Thank you for reading our blog! Feel free to leave a comment with your feedback and/or insights to help us enrich the quality of future posts and cater to the interests of our community of changemakers.

- The CCP Team

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