Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative

Meet the Team!

Recognizing the need to address the homelessness crisis, the Journey Home Task Force (JHTF) was appointed by Kelowna City Council to lead the development of the long-term Journey Home Strategy to ensure people experiencing homelessness in Kelowna have a clear path to the support they need, when they need it. The JHTF held numerous workshops and meetings with Kelowna citizens, homelessness service users and providers. An outcome of these community-driven consultations was the need to embed research in the Journey Home Strategy implementation to explore intersecting facets of homelessness and offer evidence-based approaches to mitigate and eradicate it.
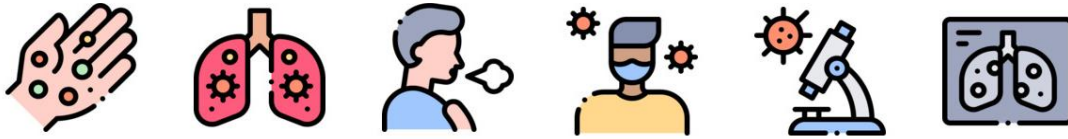
The Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative (KHRC) was established in pursuit of this goal. A team of interdisciplinary researchers with scholars and graduate students in Anthropology, Data Science, Economics, Engineering, Geography, Management & Business, Medicine, Neuroscience, Nursing, Social Work, and Sociology, along with our community partners, have come together to pursue innovations including, but not limited to, technology, organizational change amongst service providers, and the community impact of stigma.

We invite you to join us in our pursuit, review the resources, and consider participating in events, workshops, and research opportunities. If you have questions, would like to share ideas, or are interested in partnering with or joining our team, please email us at **ask.khrc@ubc.ca** – we look forwarding to connecting with you! You can also check out our recently launched **website** for more information on our work.

If you would like to continue to receive updates on our activities, research opportunities, and events, please subscribe to our mailing list!

SUBSCRIBE

COVID Sector Response

In May and June, we asked a series of service providers in the homelessness and broader support sector regarding the sector's response to COVID-19. We've produced a community summary – our report will be posted to our website at the end of our study. In the interim, we continue to accept service provider feedback on the report findings via our **anonymous survey**.

Challenges
Main areas that service providers found challenging are:
- Building and maintaining close relationships with service users
- Social distancing within existing spaces and between service users
- General safety (for all), and violence against women
- Delays in mobilizing infrastructure and technology

Successes
Participants also identified strengths and successes:
- Local support and sector collaboration
- Mobilizing housing and hotels
- Remote channels for connectivity
- Circulation of public health guidance
- Implementing hygiene centre and plexiglass

Sources of Information
Participants of this study revealed numerous sources of information and data, including BC Housing, CDC, CMHA, Health Canada, BC Ministry of Health, Work Safe BC, and news agencies such as the CBC. Most providers identified Interior Health as a primary source of information. Some did express concern with having to navigate conflicting information, and that education is powerful and available information could be streamlined into a single source with basic and clear language.

Opportunities to Scale Up
Suggested practices and infrastructure included: medication delivery systems, alcohol management program, mobile isolation trailers, increased access and supply of safe substances, tent and cart storage, providing teddy bears, information boards, and service user cellphone allocations. The focus areas for further collaboration revolved around access to food services, water and hygiene stations.

Needs for Summer / Winter
One of our main goals was to identify priorities in sustaining the response into colder months and through a potential second wave:
- Continued communication
- Mental health supports for providers
- PPE / sanitizer cost and availability
- Maintaining and increasing housing
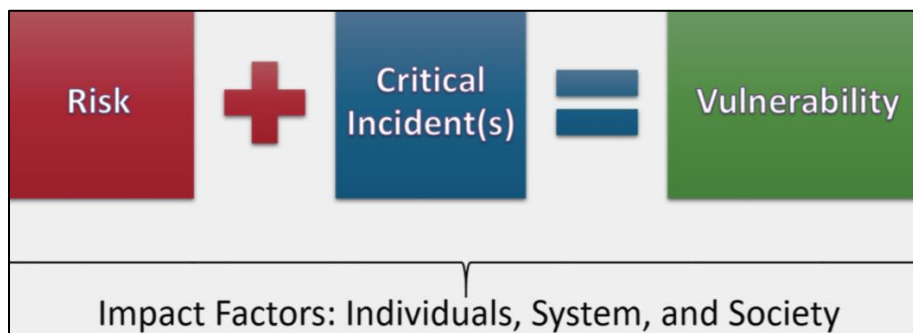- Funding for additional costs

Homelessness Vulnerabilities

In the early months of 2020, members of the Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative (KHRC) and a research sub-committee from the Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness (LECoH) held a series of focus groups in Kelowna to talk about two important questions:
1.   What events or circumstances put individuals at risk of becoming homeless?
2.   What could be done to lessen risk of homelessness?

The research team met with two separate groups of individuals: those who had experienced homelessness in the past or were at risk of being homeless, and service providers working in the homelessness sector. In total approximately 75 voices of lived experience and 50 voices of service providers contributed to this project. A unique aspect to this research was the involvement of two members of LECoH who helped with the design of the research, supporting the facilitation of the focus groups and assisting in analysis of the data. Their insight and perspective contributed immensely to the completion of this project.

Overall, discussions revolved around how risks and vulnerabilities interact to make people vulnerable to homelessness, how these occur at various stages of vulnerability, and how potential interventions likewise span various levels, from the *individual level*, to the *sector level*, to the *community level*.

The report is now available on our **website**.

An additional Report will be available describing our process in greater detail, and our intentions and lessons learned on embedding allyship within homelessness research, using the perspective of lived experience members to guide set-up, data collection, data analysis, and knowledge mobilization.

Upcoming Events

Please **subscribe** to our mailing list or check our **Events page** for updates regarding KHRC engagements.

Homelessness Vulnerabilities and Potential Mitigating Supports
Phase 3: Establishing Research Opportunities

Save the date: <mark>October 20th, 2020 (4:00 PM to 7:00 PM)</mark>

As a conclusion to our preliminary research on homelessness vulnerabilities, we will be hosting an online event with both researchers and potential sector partners to present out research findings and to collaboratively identify future research projects that are relevant and responsive to the local community needs.

A registration link will be circulated and posted in the coming weeks.

Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative: A Research Symposium
The Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative (KHRC) will be hosting a two-day Research Symposium to present ongoing projects to understand and address homelessness in Kelowna, as well as to present opportunities for partnerships moving forward!

Tentative date: **Spring 2021**

Thank You for Your Interest

If you would like to continue to receive updates on our activities, research opportunities, and events, please subscribe to our mailing list, and if you have any questions email us at **ask.khrc@ubc.ca**

SUBSCRIBE

August Reading List

[The Complexity of Work Expectations of Staff in Supported Housing](#) *(July 2020)*
"This article focuses on the work conditions of health care workers in supported housing for people with severe mental health problems. It does so by exploring the workers' experiences of their daily work situations. The article is based on data from a qualitative mental health project within a larger-sized Norwegian municipality. The findings from the study include two main themes and several subthemes that are discussed in light of institutional logic perspectives."

[Equity Concerns in the Context of Covid-19: A Focus on First Nations, Inuit, And Métis Communities in Canada](#) *(July 2020)*
"While this research brief addresses the broad inequities exacerbated by COVID-19, it focuses more specifically on their potential impact on First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and communities in Canada, recognizing that current realities are shaped by racial discrimination and the ongoing legacy of colonialism. In this sheet we explore health inequities underlying COVID-19's spread, the uneven socioeconomic burden it places on communities, and the need to adequately prepare and respond using a social justice lens."

[Recovery for All: Proposals to Strengthen the National Housing Strategy and End Homelessness](#) *(July 2020)*
"The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) Recovery for All campaign recommends an enhanced federal commitment (with timelines and targets) as a way to implement a rapid and extensive response and to end homelessness. The current pandemic adds urgency to this objective with the intent to prevent those temporarily housed during COVID-19 from being returned into an emergency shelter system that perpetuates chronic homelessness… This report details the key initiatives and strategies needed to implement that plan."

[Power and Social Control of Youth during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) *(June 2020)*
"…The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed multiple injustices and forms of oppression experienced by the most vulnerable in our country, which includes young people experiencing poverty, incarceration, foster care, homelessness, and those with marginalized identities. This article will discuss the role of power and social control in the lives of youth during the COVID-19 pandemic and present strategies leisure researchers and practitioners can adopt to overcome the loss of critical support structures and mitigate exponential effects of COVID-19 on our most vulnerable youth."