

Getting to The Root of Rural Housing Insecurity



County of
Grande Prairie No. 1
Alberta, Canada

COUNTY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE

MARCH 31, 2022 REPORT

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*In the spirit of reconciliation,
the County of Grande Prairie FCSS acknowledges the homeland of the many diverse
First Nations and Metis People whose ancestors have walked this land since
time immemorial.
We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Treaty 8.*

BACKGROUND

The County of Grande Prairie Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), in partnership with Centerpoint Facilitation and FCSS from the towns of Beaverlodge, Wembley and Sexsmith, initiated the *Getting to the Root of Rural Housing Insecurity* project. This project was initiated to explore the needs and gaps within these areas of persons experiencing homelessness through community consultations, surveys and interviews with individuals and community partners.

Getting to the Root of Rural Housing Insecurity was inclusive and respectful of Indigenous peoples throughout the process. A facilitator from our local Indigenous community was hired to ensure the surveys, community consultations, interviews and data compiled captured an Indigenous perspective with clarity and sensitivity. This facilitator guided and helped define our community consultation process ensuring we were honouring and including Indigenous experience, voice, and solutions.

Each Community Consultation was opened with a land acknowledgement and prayers offered by local Indigenous Elders. The Elders participated in the consultations and offered support to participants and FCSS staff. Protocols of gifting and honorariums were followed.

The *Getting to the Root of Rural Housing Insecurity* project sought the support of The Friendship Centre to better assess County of Grande Prairie residence needs in avoiding homelessness and supports that they currently utilize. The Grande Prairie Friendship Centre is an Indigenous organization that offers support to the Indigenous community of Grande Prairie and area. All supports and programming are done through an Indigenous lens and are open to everyone. Some County of Grande Prairie statistical information was collected by programs that work with housing and homelessness supports for the month of January 2022.



Activities undertaken for this project included:

- We identified and engaged an Indigenous leader and facilitator to ensure an Indigenous lens was utilized throughout the project.
- Identified partners, stakeholders, and persons with lived experience
- Conducted two community consultations at two different rural locations – one on the east side of the county and one on the west.
- Developed a survey for persons with lived experience, as well as for people supporting persons who are experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness, which was distributed in the community via social media, as well as used at the community consultation evenings or through one-on-one interviews.

- One-on-One interviews were conducted for those who are unable to or did not wish to attend a community consultation.
- Approached strategic community partners in the City of Grande Prairie who also support individuals and families from the rural communities surrounding Grande Prairie to gather pertinent statistics on rural resident engagement.

The format of the community consultations was an open space concept which allowed people to circulate to each topic and or question station. They could take as little or as much time as they like at each station and after providing their input, they were free to leave.

The five topics or stations included the following discussion questions:

1. What have you already tried in addressing housing insecurity and/or homelessness?
2. What have you learned about the things you have tried?
3. What are we pleased with about present efforts to address homelessness and housing insecurity? (eg. Services, programs, or people who helped or made a difference)
4. What are you concerned about? (needs/gaps/obstacles/roadblocks)
5. Are there partners/stakeholders that need to be at the table? (foodbanks, Alberta Supports, etc.)

When reviewing and analyzing the data within this report, keep in mind that there are limitations to the information gathered and compiled. Awareness of and invitations to community consultations, surveys and one-on-one interviews were promoted through regular media, social media, direct phone calls and conversations. However, we were not able to ensure vast engagement through the general population, therefore information compiled is based on the connections and feedback from those who chose to engage in the process.

Additionally, some participants did not answer all of the questions, or surveys were opened through the online portal, but not completed. In analyzing and presenting the data, consideration was taken to ensure the most accurate representation is presented of the collected data.

PARTICIPATING ELDERS:

Loretta Parenteau-English

Loretta is a Blackfoot Woman from the Piikani Nation in southern Alberta. Loretta has lived in the northwest region since the early 1980's. She is a Traditional Ceremonial Blackfoot Woman. Loretta is the Elder in Residence at Grande Prairie Regional College and offers guidance to the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre's Pikiskwetan mental health program and Kiwewin housing program. Loretta lives in the city of Grande Prairie and has children and grandchildren who live within the County of Grande Prairie.

Bernadette Smith

Bernadette is a Dene Woman of the Dene Thá. Bernadette is a Traditional Dene Woman and exceptional hunter and trapper. She has lived all her life in Alberta's north and currently lives within the County of Grande Prairie in the hamlet of Clairmont. Bernadette recently retired from her role within the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre however she continues to offer support and guidance to the community through educational visits to schools within Peace Wapiti School Division. Many of Bernadette's relations live within the County of Grande Prairie.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS



44

**Surveys
completed**

Two Community Consultations were held.

Beaverlodge:

12 Community Members &
10 Service Providers attended.

Clairmont:

10 Community Members &
3 Service Providers attended.

Where survey participants live:

50% in the County of Grande
Prairie*

(1 person La Glace, the remaining Clairmont)

42% in Beaverlodge

8% no response

How the 44 survey participants related to the topic of “Rural Homelessness & Housing Insecurity”.

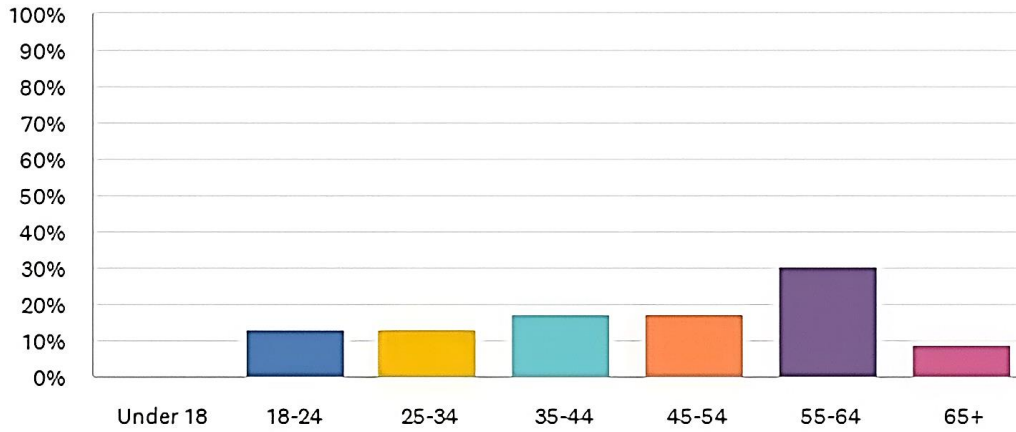
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I am living in a rural community and experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness	56.82%
I am currently living in a rural area and experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness	0.00%
I am a friend or family member of someone experiencing rural housing insecurity now or in the past	29.55%
I provide social or support services to individuals experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness	20.45%
Total Respondents: 44	

*The County of Grande Prairie includes Buffalo Lakes, Clairmont, Demmitt, Dimsdale, Elmworth, Goodfare, Halcourt, Huallen, La Glace, Lymburn, Teepee Creek, Valhalla Centre, Webster, Wedgewood, Westlake Estates, and Whispering Ridge.

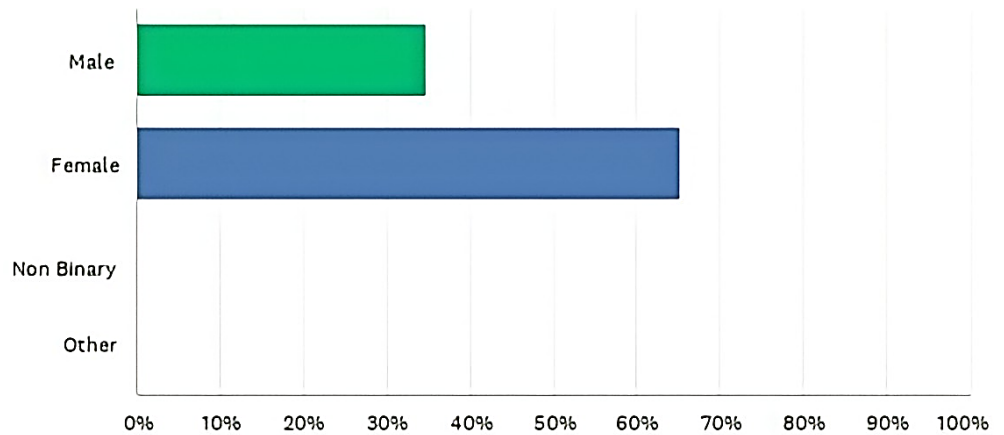
COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Demographics

Age of survey participants:



Gender of survey participants:



Family information of survey participants:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES		Average number of children in the home per family (single or two parent): 2.33 children under 18
Single	60.87%	14	
Couple	21.74%	5	
Two Parent Family	13.04%	3	
Single parent family	4.35%	1	
TOTAL		23	

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Ethnicity of survey participants:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
First Nation	21.74%	5
Metis	21.74%	5
Inuit	0.00%	0
Non Status Indigenous	8.70%	2
Caucasian	43.48%	10
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	4.35%	1
TOTAL		23

52.18% of consultation participants are of Indigenous Ancestry. This is an alarming overrepresentation of rural Indigenous people experiencing housing and homelessness concerns within the County of Grande Prairie and surrounding municipalities. Progressive and productive relationships need to be created and nurtured between the local municipalities and Indigenous leadership to ensure that Indigenous people within the area are adequately supported.

Other ethnicity reported:

- African American

None of the survey participants were:

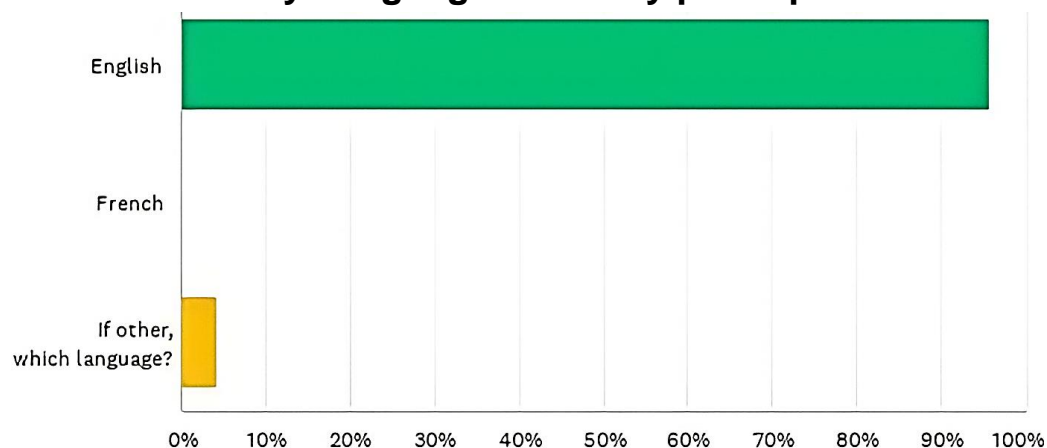
- Recent immigrants (within 3 years)
- New to province (within 3 years)
- New to area (within 3 months)

None of the survey participants had served in the Canadian Forces.

Other language reported:

- Cree

Primary Language of survey participants:



COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey participants presently without a home:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	91.30%	21
Yes (for how long?)	8.70%	2
TOTAL		23

Length of time without a home:

- 10+ years
- 2 months

Survey participants housing:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I own the house I currently live in.	30.43%	7
I rent the house I currently live in	17.39%	4
I live in accommodations provided by my employer	0.00%	0
I share a house/apartment with roommates	13.04%	3
I live in a house/apartment that I share with family/dependents	30.43%	7
I live in subsidized housing	0.00%	0
There are not enough beds for everyone in my home to sleep in	4.35%	1
Other (please specify)	13.04%	3
Total Respondents: 23		

Other housing reported:

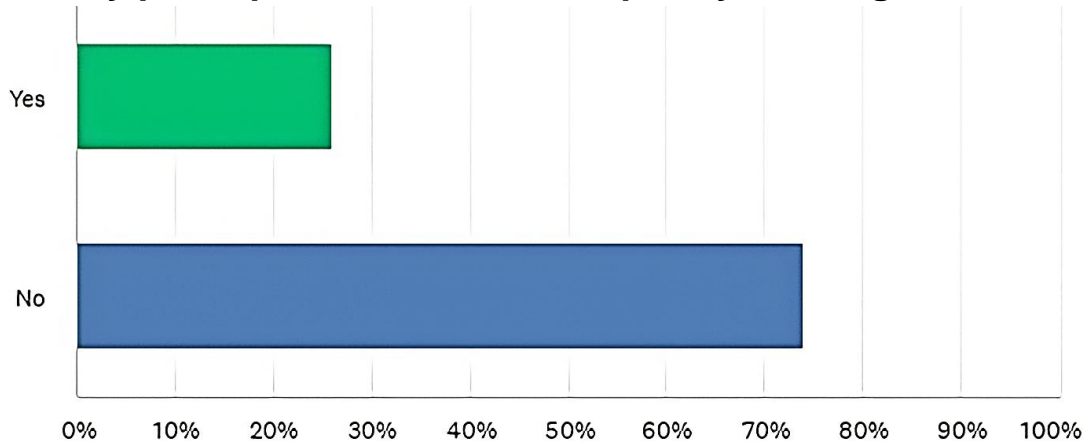
- Room & Board
- Couch surfing
- 'Own my trailer, but not my lot'

An average of
2.33
 Adults living in each household.
 (with a range of 1 - 4 adults per household)

17%
 of survey participants are
 caregivers of an adult
 living in their home

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey participants that live in temporary housing:



Temporary housing used by survey participants:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I live in supportive housing.	33.33%	2
I sleep at a friends/family because I have no other place to stay.	66.67%	4
I stay with someone I don't know because I have no other place to stay.	0.00%	0
I stay in a shelter in another community.	0.00%	0
I sleep in a makeshift shelter, vehicle, tent, shack, RV or outside.	16.67%	1
Total Respondents: 6		

LIVED EXPERIENCE STORY

Multiple family members living together ages ranging from babies to seniors. Moved to a rural community thinking accommodation would be cheaper. Bought a mobile home which needs major repair. Roof leaks, plumbing does not work properly and damage to outside deck making it unsafe.

Impacts housing as all adults living in the home have barriers to income, whether that be age, addictions, or developmental disabilities. Commented "We feel stuck here, we can't sell as too many repairs are needed and no one to help us pay for them".

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey participants moved homes an average of
1.6
 times
 in the past 5 years.
 (with a range of 0 – 8 times)

Reasons for moving in past 5 years:

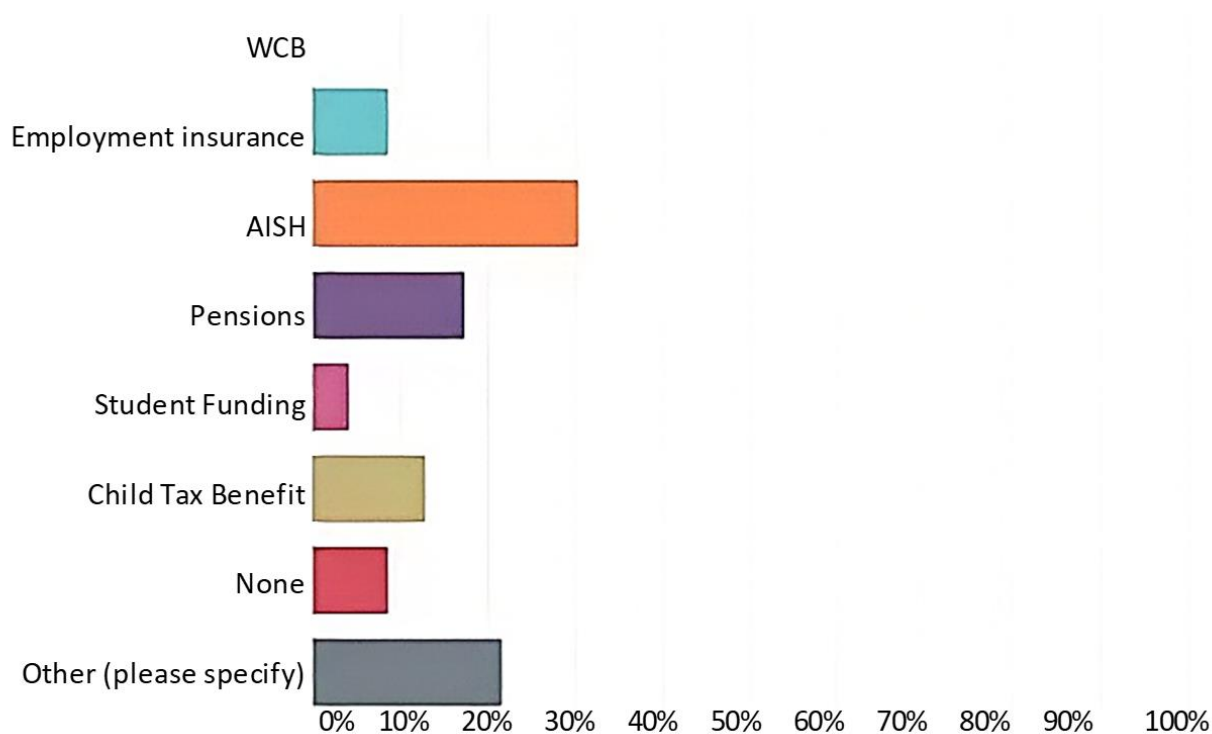
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Temporary housing	36.36%	4
Lost job	18.18%	2
Eviction due to unpaid rent	18.18%	2
Unsafe living conditions, i.e. Mold	9.09%	1
Fleeing domestic or family violence	18.18%	2
Crowded housing	9.09%	1
Other (please specify)	54.55%	6
Total Respondents: 11		

Other responses to reason for moving:

- Rent was more than half my income.
- Eviction for too many people in the home.
- Non-renewal of lease.
- Didn't make enough money to pay all my bills and rent.
- To be closer to family.
- Retired.
- Landlord wanted home back.

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey participants current sources of income:



Other Sources of Income reported:

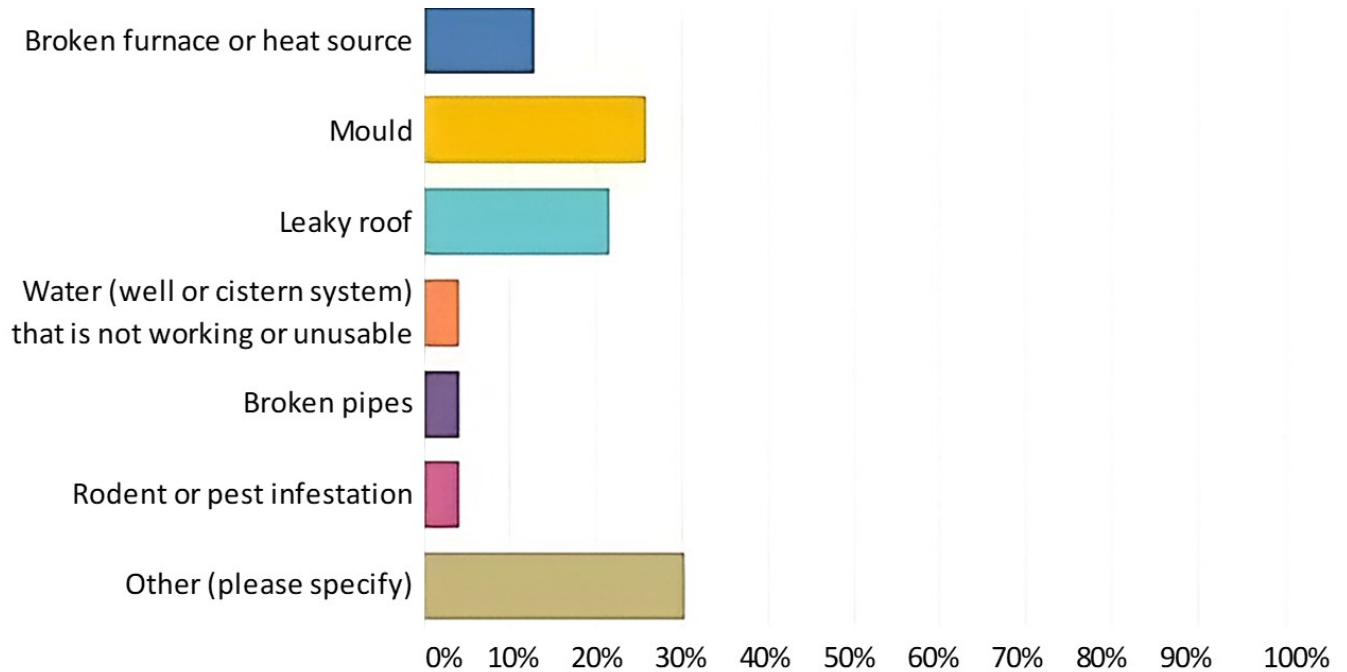
- Guaranteed Income Supplement
- Alberta Supports

Survey participants monthly expenses:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I find it difficult to pay rent/mortgage and I spend more than 1/3 of my monthly income on my housing. (For example, if your income is \$1000, \$330 is 1/3 of your income)	86.36%	19
I must choose monthly which bills or expense to pay to keep my home.	63.64%	14
Total Respondents: 22		

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey participants that live in homes that require major repairs:



Responses to “other” repairs required:

- Foundation
- Broken windows
- Kitchen floor
- House is cold in the winter
- Garage door needs fixing
- Doors and windows are drafty and cold
- Front door
- Interior
- Windows
- Electrical wiring
- Lots of water damage

COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Community services accessed by survey participants:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
FCSS	57.14%	12
Foodbank	100.00%	21
Alberta Supports	28.57%	6
Church led supports	14.29%	3
Library (access internet, warming centre)	9.52%	2
Other (please specify)	14.29%	3
Total Respondents: 21		

Other Community services accessed:

- Odyssey House
- Beaverlodge Foodbank
- AISH

Additional things survey participants wanted to share about Community Services accessed:

- ❖ *FCSS is very respectful and helpful any way they can.*
 - ❖ *Very helpful!*
- ❖ *Nothing is available in La Glace. Everything is a drive.*
- ❖ *Sometimes the foodbank can't accommodate dietary restrictions.*
 - ❖ *Appreciated!*
 - ❖ *Helpful.*
- ❖ *I live under the poverty line. I can't pay all my bills and have anxiety about my finances.*
- ❖ *There is no seniors housing where I come from in Kelly Lake. We have been fighting for 20 years for housing there.*
 - ❖ *The firehall has helped with groceries and rent at times.*
- ❖ *Family Connections and the Mennonite Church on Emerson Trail is helpful.*
- ❖ *FCSS worker helps with any paperwork, or anything that has to be emailed.*
 - ❖ *I appreciate the help.*

COMMUNITY PARTNER FINDINGS

County of Grande Prairie/Rural Areas

(In the month of January 2022)

<u>Foodbanks</u>			<u>United Way Emergency Fund</u>		
<u>Location</u>	<u># Visits</u>	<u># People fed</u>	<u>Support given</u>	<u># Times</u>	<u>Funds used</u>
Clairmont	9	28	Utility Arrears		
Beaverlodge	45	98	Transportation	1	\$25
Sexsmith	14	50			
Hythe	15	25			

Odyssey House Shelter data

Odyssey House is a crisis intervention shelter for women and their children that are fleeing domestic or intimate partner violence. It provides a safe and secure space for women and their children along with professional counselling and resources. Getting to the Root of Rural Housing Insecurity worked with Odyssey House and was granted permission to utilize their stats. The statistical information was gathered from **January 1, 2021 – January 1, 2022** and is reflective of First Nations women from the two surrounding First Nations communities of Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation accessing Odyssey House.

Emergency Residential (Odyssey House) in Grande Prairie

<p>7</p> <p>individuals from the County of Grande Prairie & surrounding areas accessed the Emergency Residential Shelter.</p>	<p>1 of the seven</p> <p>individuals accessing the Emergency Residential Shelter from the County & surrounding areas identified as Indigenous.</p>
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Community Supports (Outreach) of Odyssey House

<p>25 Adults &</p> <p>26 Children</p> <p>from the County of Grande Prairie & surrounding areas accessed the Community Supports offered by Odyssey House.</p>	<p>24%</p> <p>of the adults from the County & surrounding areas accessing the Community Supports offered by Odyssey House identified as Indigenous.</p>
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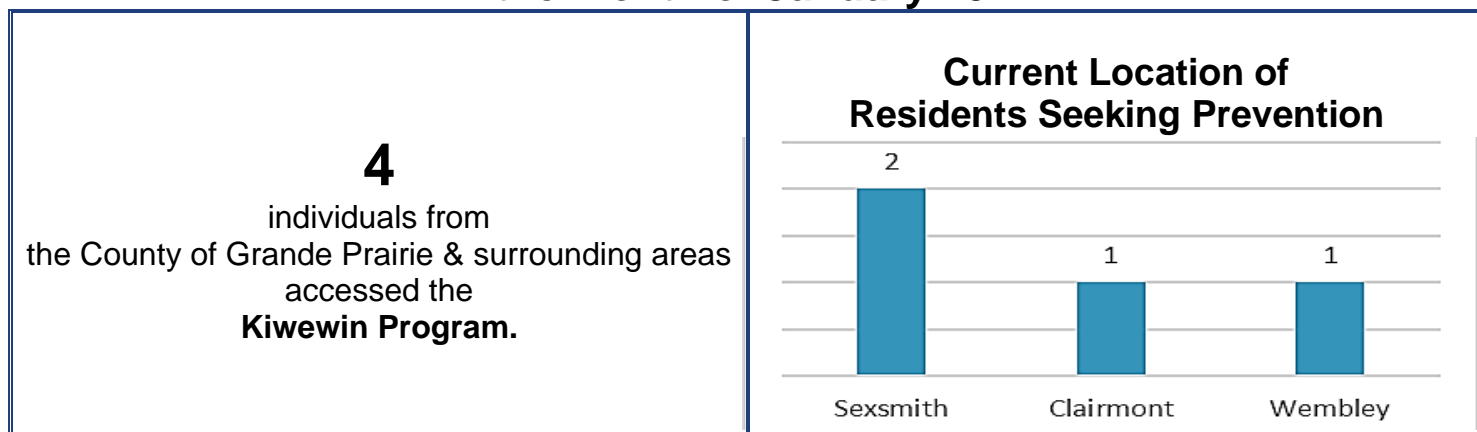
*When interpreting the data, one must be cognizant of the fact that the data is not reflective of Indigenous women as a whole but rather only First Nations women who live on the two local First Nations. The data is not reflective of First Nations women living within rural communities nor is it inclusive of Métis, Inuit, or Non-Status Indigenous women. Additionally, it is imperative to bear in mind that not all women declare their Indigeneity for an array of reasons such as fear of being traced back to their community and systemic racism.

COMMUNITY PARTNER FINDINGS

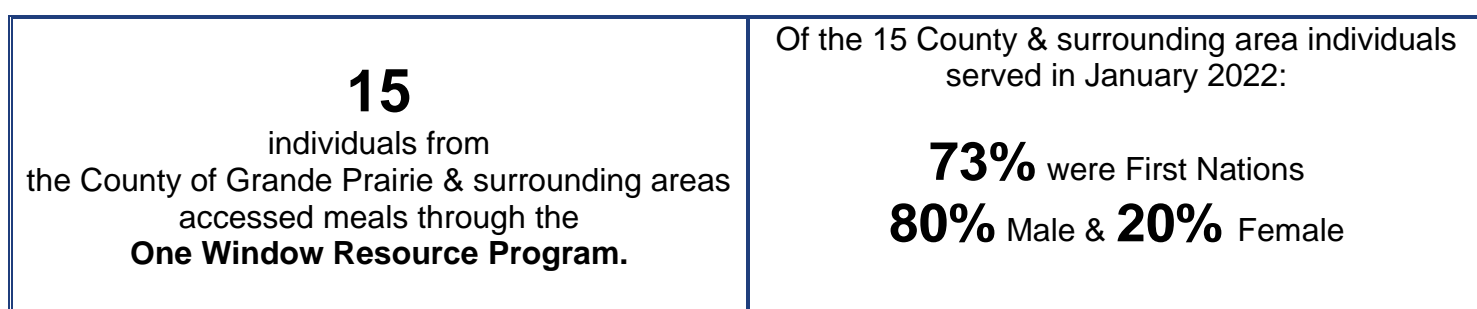
Friendship Centre Homelessness Support data

The statistical information was gathered for **the month of January 2022** and is reflective of persons from the County of Grande Prairie and surrounding areas that accessed resources and supports from the Friendship Centre programs.

In the month of January 2022:



Kiwewin is a culturally based homelessness prevention program. The program offers clients financial and advocacy support in staying within their home and avoiding eviction. The Kiwewin program is only accessible to City of Grande Prairie residents however support to the 4 County residents was provided through referrals to their local FCSS, and counselling was offered in budgeting techniques and low-cost housing options. Demographics of these individuals is not available but the community that they reside in was recorded.



One Window Resource offers a safe and welcoming cultural space for the community's most vulnerable sector to gather in fellowship. This program offers access to the **Community Kitchen** and other Grande Prairie Friendship Centre programs as well as offers referrals to other community agencies.

In partnership with the Salvation Army, the *Community Kitchen* offers three meals per day to those in need Monday through Friday and brunch on Saturdays and Sundays.

COMMUNITY PARTNER FINDINGS

Elders Caring Shelter data

The **Elders Caring Shelter** is a Metis organization whose on-going mandate is to sustain a fully accessible shelter that meets the needs of at risk and/or homeless men and women over the age of 55.

1
individual from
the County of Grande Prairie & surrounding areas
is a resident of
Elders Caring Shelter.

Horse Lake First Nation, which borders the County of Grande Prairie, provides some housing to band members living on reserve. Metis Housing Corporation provides some subsidized housing to Metis citizens in Grande Prairie, some of which have moved in from surrounding communities. In the future, when the project partners address homelessness and housing insecurity, it would be ideal to establish a relationship with both these entities in order to best serve Indigenous residents.



LIVED EXPERIENCE STORY

Two senior ladies presently living as roommates in a rural community trying to make ends meet. One lady with complex medical needs and no access to a doctor. Comment was “there are no Doctors in this town, and we don’t drive so I just don’t go.” The other lady would like to find employment and is expected to work through AB Supports but unable as small town, no transportation and is full time caregiver to her roommate.

Impacts housing as no viable way to increase income, unable to apply for AISH as no family Doctor and unable to find employment. Presently able to pay rent but behind on all bills, use foodbank for groceries and rely on friends for emergency transportation needs.

DISCUSSION**QUESTION #1:**

What have you already tried to address housing insecurity and/or homelessness?

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID:

- Have tried to understand/learn about the needs related to housing insecurity and the needs of the community. *(2 responses stated)*
- Tried learning about resources (or lack of), educating myself by helping others navigate the systems has helped me learn what is out there. Have offered support for navigating government bureaucracy. *(4 responses stated)*
- Try to offer supports in prevention stage – food insecurity, housing insecurity, financial supports, youth mental health, seniors home support program.
- Tried having transportation from rural communities to larger urban centres.
- Support for sudden death – offer support and education.
- Supports for children in schools.
- Offering Mental Health supports.
- Accessible professionals to listen.
- Addiction supports.
- Trauma counselling.
- Community inclusion.
- Have tried to meet the needs of people that fall through the cracks.
- Have tried exploring options for rent subsidy.
- Tried living with others (friends/family) so it is more affordable, have father-in-law living with them to help financially. *(5 responses stated)*
- Try to get support from friends/community. Rural communities are closer communities and neighbours are helpful. *(2 responses stated)*
- Got resources to help with money.
- Have tried to access online resources.
- Have called contractors as presently have damages that need to be repaired – leaking roof, mold, need new windows and doors - but can't afford.
- Grief support group – short term (not enough people/interest to carry on)
- Using the Foodbank at least 1x/month and FCSS. *(5 responses stated)*
- Have also used the one in Grande Prairie to help supplement.
- Pick bottles for extra money.
- Re-use leftovers to make things last – make ends meet.
- Referrals to housing supports and other services.
- Volunteer on housing committee.
- Through employment, helped ensure safe housing.
- Have tried accessing: Emergency Fund, Alberta Supports, Local churches.
- Moved to Clairmont from Grande Prairie – fixed rent, steady agreement.

DISCUSSION**QUESTION #2:**

**What have you learned about the things
you have tried?**

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID:

- There are municipal boundary barriers (e.g., county/city) that hinder the delivery/eligibility/accessibility of services – causes divide between communities and people. (3 responses stated)
- Learned that there is limited funding support for rural residents. No rental supplements available. If there are supports, they don't cover what is needed i.e., tax arrears, or it is only one-time support. (3 responses stated)
- Limited long term funding options – short term funding.
- Limited wrap around supports.
- People from rural communities feel like they must move to the city to access support.
- People who lived in Grande Prairie couldn't afford it. (3 responses stated)
- Sometimes people mistrust government workers and programs: (6 responses stated)
- Feel like no one listens.
- Just shuffled from worker to worker.
- Information given isn't always accurate.
- Can't talk/meet with actual people – everything online. IT tech is abysmal, half the time it takes forever to load or freezes and you lose information. (2 responses stated)
- There is a lack of kindness.
- Lack of transportation to resources.
- Gas prices make it difficult to get to work.
- Sometimes people don't like being under the magnifying glass in small communities (big time!)
- Learned there is no supports for widow/widower to make ends meet.
- Have learned that once retired, pension does not cover costs.
- Mental Health and Addictions supports are not as accessible as they could be or are just missing. (2 responses stated)
- Grief supports are missing.
- Learned that people need to want to change.
- Have learned that living with a friend for both supports and financial works well (still not enough to pay all the bills).
- Learned that need to ask and look for help and to accept unexpected help – to be open to help, remember you are not a bum/burden. Having someone who knows how to access supports is helpful (not everyone has someone or knows how to ask for help). (4 responses stated)
- People get tired of sharing their story.
- Sometimes there is too much of a gap before support starts or when eligible.
- Learned that there is embarrassment in asking for help due to preconceived society views, people's independence is important to them. When they get turned down, often just give up and then are isolated, it is abusive. (4 responses stated)
- To get contractors in is very expensive and there is no financial help with it.
- Need to talk with people, not at them.
- Have learned that it is hard to make ends meet. It's tough to make the food last all month.
- Have learned that not everyone is aware of foodbanks. (2 responses stated)

- Sometimes the foodbank does not have enough food. *(2 responses stated)*
- Homelessness is a very complex issue and multidimensional
- It's not a single solution answer i.e., you can't just throw money or services at the issue to solve it.
- Very difficult maintaining housing and being homeless with children.
 - There is a lack of communication between schools, families and supports.
- Have learned it's important to always pay mortgage 1st /rent first and then other bills if possible.
(2 responses stated)
 - Paying all the bills is difficult.
 - High utility bills.

DISCUSSION**QUESTION #3:**

What are you pleased with about present efforts to address homelessness and housing insecurity?

(e.g., services, programs, or people who helped or made a difference)

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID:

- There is a desire from people to support solutions at every level, from housing insecurity – to homelessness.
- Public awareness is good.
- When it is realized that people (societies) care, people come together as a community. (2 responses stated)
- The agencies and organization in the rural communities are strong.
- There are some resources available.
- Multi-level government support is provided.
- That people are open to efforts and education.
- When supports are provided the personal growth of some is visible.
- Church groups working with residents, can provide some food. (3 responses stated)
- FCSS working together across the region to support individuals. (4 responses stated)
- Especially when mom passed away and the grief support group.
- The Emergency Fund.
- Social workers who advocate with support to pay power and water.
- Food Banks are very helpful. (6 responses stated)
- Beaverlodge and Hythe staff are kind.
- Can access monthly.
- The Clairmont Food Bank is very accommodating, staff are positive and nice.
- Store coupons are helpful.
- Friends, neighbours and some businesses are kind and helpful.
- Schools are willing to work with agencies.
- HHRS is doing great work in Hythe.
- Hythe community members helping each other with bills/food/support. Good connection between community.
- Stonebridge in Grande Prairie opening pleased not to have experienced or see street level homeless in rural communities.

DISCUSSION**QUESTION #4:**

**What are you concerned about?
(Needs/Gaps/Obstacles/Roadblocks)**

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID:

- The financial resources/capacity to support solutions/address the needs – no funding to rural areas or very strict guidelines. *(4 responses stated)*
- No “Housing First” in The County. *(2 responses stated)*
- Operational funding - capital funding and what do you do before attaining the funding?
- The barriers created between municipalities. FCSS City of Grande Prairie and FCSS county could work together! Homelessness does not have a boundary.
- Lack of professional and medical resources i.e., Counselling, Mental Health, Addictions and Trauma. No Doctors, no transportation so I just don’t go. *(3 responses stated)*
- Lack of supports for children: from birth to 18.
- After school care for children of working patients (needs to be affordable or free).
- Mental health in young people starting out is concerning.
- Concerned that young people have less opportunity to build positive lives for themselves and their families due to rising cost i.e., home ownership etc.
- Lack of support for people with disabilities - How the community views people with disabilities – the mentality of other people, people on the poverty line get taken advantage of! Don’t you get that!
- Bad stigma around being homeless - people don’t want to be labeled homeless or be housing insecure.
- Feeling pressure to move to GP for work, programs etc. *(3 responses stated)*
- Limited low-income housing in rural areas. *(2 responses stated)*
- Cost of repairing current housing – no funds available for this. You can live and 100% own a house, but your housing may not be safe. *(3 responses stated)*
- Lack of jobs in rural areas: Hours at work got cut – couldn’t make ends meet. No employment, not even part-time. No local training for people who want to work/take courses. *(4 responses stated)*
- Flow of information/communication between resources and communities.
- Alberta Supports and AISH hard to navigate on own.
- AISH - some costs are not covered for medical.
- Food security: Do we eat or pay bills is often a choice we must make. *(2 responses stated)*
- No transportation to/from rural to urban – too expensive and need it to have flexible times, evening/weekends. *(5 responses stated)*
- Paperwork in excess is a major deterrent to accessing supports; contributes to feelings of inadequacy and helplessness.
- No technical support – e.g., people say to apply for Telus friends and family – too confusing on computer – need support.
- No access to computers, internet etc. for job searches etc.
- Lack of financial support – can’t cover cost of bills.
- High utility costs – outrageous. *2 responses*
- Need more financial support for things other than rent
- No financial support for the grieving

- Need financial support for family members that are caregivers e.g., Grandparents raising grandkids. *(2 responses stated)*
- Lack of overall resources in the rural communities. *(2 responses stated)*
- No place for kids to go – need an Activity Centre.
- A common place where people can meet to eat, watch TV, play games etc.
- Need a bottle depot in Clairmont.
- Need a supermarket in small communities.
- Wait times for Alberta Support not working:
- They have a 2x phone call rule.
- Support for working persons who are still struggling to make ends meet. *(2 responses stated)*
- I need access to services but can't make Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pp
- Concerned that indigenous people not accessing supports and services due to historical trauma and systemic racism.

DISCUSSION**QUESTION #5:**

**Are there partners/stakeholders that need to be at the table?
(Foodbanks, Alberta Supports, etc.)**

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID:

- Local businesses/Corporations.
- Alberta Supports.
- Medical professionals: nurses, mental health support staff, etc.
- Schools.
- Food Banks.
- Churches.
- Pharmacies.
- Political advocacy groups and support mentors.
- Learning Centres: Making independent living skills readily available.
- Employment agencies.
- Financial Educators.
- Indigenous Service Providers: need to be a part of the conversation with their supports.
Championed by mainstream agencies. Indigenous Culture – ways of knowing and teachings need to be recognized, supported and funded.
- People with ideas different than what we have already tried e.g., tiny houses.
- Seek advice and follow best practices from other communities:
 - Calgary C-Can Project.
 - Wetaskiwin – mobile home project.
 - Calling Lake – RV's.
 - Edmonton – bought a hotel and made an affordable condo.
- Model a committee as the City of Grande Prairie has:
 - Community Advisory Board on Homelessness (CABH) Committee.
 - Have members from multi facets – business, faith, immigrant, volunteer, youth, seniors, community members.
- Government – local - Town of Clairmont and County Counsellors. Also, from Grande Prairie.
- Provincial and Federal - Local MP, MLA (someone who can do something!).

SUMMARY

The County of Grande Prairie and surrounding area continues to work to fully understand what homelessness and housing insecurity looks like in the local rural area, and how to best address the needs of individuals and families with insecure housing. The *Getting to the Root of Housing Insecurity* project assisted in obtaining a clearer understanding of the gaps, issues, experiences, and concerns so that moving forward The County of Grande Prairie can form a rural task force to create coordinated plans and strategies to address this social issue in a more comprehensive manner.

Through the *Getting to the Root of Housing Insecurity* project, we were able to get a glimpse of what homelessness and/or housing insecurity looks like within the rural communities surrounding Grande Prairie. The average person experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity is between the ages of 55 - 64 and identifies as an Indigenous female. English is their primary language. Often, they are single, they may own a home, but most likely living with multiple family members or friends in one home. They may be a caregiver to one or more of the other individuals living in the home with them. Employment and AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) are the predominant sources of income for people experiencing housing insecurity in the rural communities. Monthly rent or mortgage payments are more than a third of their income, and each month they cannot cover all their bills, but must choose which ones must be paid to maintain their housing. Adding to this dilemma, very likely the home they live in requires major repairs to the heating system, roof, foundation, windows, or it has mould issues. They have accessed the food bank and FCSS for support, and likely various other resources in the community.



Absolute homelessness did not present as a primary concern, but rather housing insecurity was the greater issue. A few of the survey participants were homeowners, however, they could not afford to maintain or repair major issues with the home. Attempts to sell their home to find more affordable housing were met with the need to complete major repairs prior, which were not affordable. Often, they had moved to the rural community for more affordable housing but discovered additional costs of living rural that they had not anticipated. At times, one family member had died, or moved away, leaving only one to shoulder all the bills and expenses on one income. Through conversations, access to transportation for medical appointments or groceries was indicated as a major barrier for most. In an attempt to offset additional costs, all survey participants had accessed foodbanks, and more than half had accessed FCSS services for assistance. Alberta Supports and church led supports were also accessed.

Through this information gathering and reporting process, strategic agencies within the City of Grande Prairie were contacted to obtain data on county residents that they provided supports to within a specific timeframe. Odyssey House provided residential emergency shelter to seven individuals from the County of Grande Prairie within the 2021 calendar year, as well as community support services to twenty-five county residents in that same period. And, in the month of January 2022, fifteen county residents accessed the Friendship Centre for meals through their One Window Resource program, and four individuals accessed the Kiwewin Program which is a homelessness prevention program.

The two community consultations were held during a time when AHS COVID restrictions were still in place. Therefore, attendance to these events may have been impacted due.

The communities within the scope of this project have a population base of 29,921. In addition, the project takes place on Treaty 8 territory and the County of Grande Prairie shares borders with Horse Lake First Nation.

Our goal for the *Getting to the Root of Housing Insecurity* project is to clearly define housing insecurity in the area, develop a task force with key players to support local solutions, identify responses and interventions and ensure we have the right partners to provide a coordinated community response. The compiled data within this report will be used to accomplish this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a Task Force
 - a. Develop Terms of Reference for the Task Force
 - b. Task Force membership should be diverse with representation from local municipalities, Indigenous communities, community, service providers and persons with lived experience.
 - c. Enhance and strengthen relationships with the Indigenous communities and organizations such as Horse Lake, Metis Local 1990, Western Cree Tribal Council, Métis Housing Corp, Grande Prairie Friendship Centre and Sturgeon Lake.
2. Identify and implement programs that provide food security. These could include community gardens, and personal gardens, urban agriculture.
3. Encourage local Governments to advocate for:
 - a. Federal Housing Dollars for Rural Communities with a focus on Housing Loss Prevention and Diversion.
 - b. Financial Support or policy change around the rising cost of utilities.
 - c. Expanding the Alberta Temporary Rent Assistance program to include all Albertans regardless of location
 - d. Additional affordable housing for rural communities.
4. Encourage local governments to establish relationships with Indigenous Leadership
5. Encourage local governments to uphold the *Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action*, with focus to municipalities i.e. #57*.
6. Build on natural supports already found within Communities.
 - a. Food Banks
 - b. Meal Delivery programs
 - c. Community gathering places
7. Secure funding for prevention and diversion programs that support the unique needs of rural communities i.e.:
 - a. Funding that supports housing repairs
8. Create Housing options for Indigenous seniors.
9. To further understand the needs of Housing Insecurity, the task force would benefit from working with local housing providers to understand the demand for affordable family and special purpose housing in rural areas.

**57. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.*