<center>

"'All We Need Is Our Land':
Exploring Southern Alberta Urban Aboriginal Homelessness."

By

Gabrielle Weasel Head
Yale D. Belanger

</center>

Introduction[i]

Aboriginal people in Canada are an inherently mobile group of individuals, which leads to improved economic and educational opportunities and also economic challenges frequently resulting in homelessness. At least those are the popular conclusions mainstream society has determined accurate, beliefs that contradict an increasingly nuanced conception of Aboriginal mobility and homelessness. Yet we are no closer to debunking what could best be described as socially embedded myths regarding the inherent perception that Aboriginal mobility is a root cause of homelessness. Yale and I had discussed these and many other concerns related to southern Alberta Aboriginal homelessness dating to my early days as an undergraduate student, and after entering graduate school. Despite this prolonged discussion generating a thesis topic was trickier than anticipated, for every discussion inevitably led back to the larger issue of Aboriginal mobility. After one particularly frustrating dialogue, after which I was ready to throw up my arms in concession, I angrily stated, "I don't know where this whole issue of mobility comes from. My people have always been mobile," after which I asked, "Why have we become so focused on the negatives?" What I was trying to convey is that mobility, from a Niitsitapi perspective, reflects a specific cultural understanding of how to interact with what is today better known as southern Alberta, a traditional homeland that snakes along the continental divide and extends south of Edmonton, Alberta, south into southern Montana and east into Saskatchewan.

In the last century the contours of Napi's Land have shifted, with the previous territorial map overlain by what we'd describe as a colonial template that has physically isolated the people who formerly utilized this once vast territory to small, landlocked islands known as the Blackfeet reservation located in Montana, and the Kainai, Piikani and Siksika First Nations located in Canada. Despite a prevalent regional understanding that this is how southern Alberta and northern Montana are now to be physically understood, Narcisse Blood for one challenges the new map's authenticity by reasserting his people's connection to what he describes as "a storied landscape, a ceremonial landscape very alive with its spirits and beings" (Savage, 2012, p. 186). What we see unfolding in southern Alberta, then, is a process that is widespread across Canada: First Nations homelands that were mapped over centuries of ecological interaction (Niitsitapi) have been displaced by a colonial map (Alberta) reflecting new land utilization schemes that was established ostensibly to reinforce newly introduced and by all means foreign understandings of land ownership and utilization.

After reflecting on these and other issues it became abundantly clear that distinctive understandings about mobility and homelessness had developed that demanded clarification prior to determining a project topic. For example while it was evident that Niitsitapi mobility within Napi's Land was needed to renew relationships and reconnect with Creation, which symbolized a healthy lifestyle, non-Aboriginal values judged mobility rather negatively, the quality of an unsettled and apparently homeless people. Yet the academic literature paradoxically suggested that Aboriginal mobility was not indicative of being homeless but rather a byproduct of seeking improved living conditions. As we continued to unpack what mobility meant it also became evident that the issue of Aboriginal homelessness had been generally ignored, which resulted in the limited availability of data needed to measure the extent of the problem (i.e., how many

Aboriginal people in Canada are homeless), or what it meant for those experiencing

homelessness. Notwithstanding the lack of data urban Aboriginal homelessness had been

confirmed by an assortment of municipal homeless censuses; and Aboriginal Affairs and

Northern Development Canada (AANDC) had verified the specter of deteriorating First Nations

housing conditions that suggested reserve homelessness was primed to become a significant

issue. It was decided that two projects were required. The first was developed to provide a

quantitative overview of Aboriginal homelessness and urban housing issues (Belanger,

Awosoga, & Weaselhead, 2013; Belanger, Weaselhead, & Awosoga, 2012b). The second project

would be a thesis project exploring what it meant to be homeless (Weasel Head, 2011). As our

families and work are situated in southern Alberta we concluded that we have an obligation to

explore issues impacting the territory's original people.

We therefore decided to explore what it means to be Niitsitapi and homeless in southern

Alberta. Acknowledging the fact that homelessness did not exist prior to colonial settlement, and

that many would argue that it could not exist due to the fact that in Creation one is never alone,

this chapter seeks to understand Blackfoot homelessness in a particular context, specifically that

of being homeless in one's homeland. This chapter unfolds as follows. First we provide a brief

overview of the close connection between land and individual and how the introduction of new

colonial ideas devalued Aboriginal regional occupation, resulting in both physical and social

marginalization. A detailed explanation of homelessness follows to aid in how we measure the

issues. Next we clarify how policy is Canada constructs Aboriginal people, thus situating

practices mainstream society considers foreign external of funding and often times policy

consideration. An overview of local urban Aboriginal homelessness is provided, which helps to

contextualize the discussion of our findings clarifying what it means to be homeless in one's own homeland.

Traditional Blackfoot Lands

The land that Lethbridge occupies was originally known as Sikokotoki, the Kainai wintering grounds, something rarely mentioned in the city's official history. Common to all cities in Canada oppositional narratives such as these operate independently of the other most often through competing occupational claims, suggesting the physical separation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Physical intersection nevertheless occurs daily between the roughly 10,000 Aboriginal and the 83,000 non-Aboriginal residents. Lost in Lethbridge's founding narrative is any discussion of pre-contact Niitsitapi perceptions of land and their role within the complex southern Alberta environment (Weasel Head, 2011). As Kainai philosopher Leroy Little Bear (1996) states, place, as an element of Creation, "is where the continuous and/or repetitive process of Creation occurs. It is on the Earth and from the Earth that cycles, phases, patterns [are] experienced." Basso's (1996, p. 7) concurs, while further elaborating that "social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities" are constructed within this place, adding "We *are* in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine."

In Niitsitapi territory the sacred knowledge is derived from *Ihtsipaitapiiyo'pa*, "the great mystery that is in everything in the universe" and is passed on to the generations through ceremonies and oral histories which inform traditional ways of knowing (Bastien, 2004, p. 77). It is important to note that identity is not entirely dependent upon individual achievement or heroic feats, but is made up of intricate associations with Creation. As Bastien (2004, p. 8) reminds us, a "need arises to affirm and, as necessary, to reconstruct an identity from the fabric that holds the

sacred ways of the ancestors." It is within this environment that over five millennia the Kainai

and Piikani organized into small bands typically no larger than 30 people (Bear Robe, 1996;

Reeves, 1988). Prior to their mid-eighteenth century acquisition of the horse, the people

traversed their territory on foot, a period of limited mobility known as the 'dog days'. The

horse's introduction was followed by the development of more efficient hunting techniques and

the expansion of Kainai and Piikani territorial claims (Bastien, 2004; Binnema, 2004; Council,

Hildebrant, Carter, & Rider, 1996; Ewers, 1955).

As elder Joe Crowshoe has stated the peoples would cease to exist in the absence of a

connection to and renewal of the relationship with the land (Vest, 2005). Unfortunately, in a

context in which the colonial narrative has been accepted as the norm the Niitsitapi conception of

land and its relationship to Aboriginal people has become one of displacement and disconnection

(Crowson, 2011; Johnston, 1997).[ii] It unfolds as a nineteenth-century frontier of American

whiskey traders, drunken Indians, and Canadian/British heroes who defended law and order

(Dempsey, 2002). Good overcomes evil as the whiskey trade is eradicated, Indians are

sequestered on reserves, and "civilization" takes hold with the emergence of coal mining,

railways, and agriculture (Regular, 2009). Aboriginal peoples are effaced as nameless and

faceless warriors whose homelands are recast as sites of nomadic foraging and vacant lands (e.g.

Brasser, 1982). Banished to the margins by treaty, which ceded their lands to Canada, the

regional First Nations play into official and popular histories as dysfunctional and violent,

victims of the early whiskey trade only to be forgotten (Fiske, Belanger, & Gregory, 2010).

Aboriginal people consequently remain foreign visitors occupying an alien environment,

which Peters (2005) has suggested is not surprising considering the historically accepted

incongruity between Aboriginal peoples and urban life. Urban architects have exploited this

tension to discourage urban Aboriginal settlement, thereby enabling city fathers to develop

communities of like-minded individuals crafting inclusive citizenship criteria that exclude

Aboriginal input (Belanger, 2013; Stanger-Ross, 2008). Aboriginal individuals are therefore

expected to embrace what have become the accepted political models (i.e., municipal council,

provincial legislative, and federal parliamentary) and collective municipal citizenship.

Defining Homelessness

Before proceeding defining homelessness is required for this influences our measurement

format. How do we determine who precisely is homeless? Menzies (2005) suggests that current

definitions of homelessness stress the physicality of the term relative to actual shelter, and fail to

address homelessness as it affects Aboriginal people and he contributes a new definition: "the

resultant condition of individuals being displaced from critical community social structures and

lacking in stable housing" (8). The Canadian Parliamentary Research Branch (CPRB) has

tackled these vexing questions with little success and, in lieu of one specific definition, has opted

to generate three different meanings for "homeless," but all are deemed essential categories that

identify people as belonging to a certain "kind" of homeless population (Casavant, 1999). First,

there are the chronically homeless, or individuals who live on society's margins and who

frequently face problems of drug or alcohol abuse or mental illness. Second are the cyclically

homeless, or individuals who have lost their dwelling as a result of their changed situation. These

individuals intermittently utilize safe houses or soup kitchens, and regularly include women

escaping family violence, runaway youths, and persons who are unemployed or recently released

from detention centres or psychiatric institutions. The third group is made up of the temporarily

homeless, those who lack accommodations for a relatively short period, have lost their home as a

result of a disaster (e.g., fire, flood), and whose economic and personal situation has been altered

by family separation or loss of job (Casavant, 1999).

Since the CPRB presented its three groups, various agency-specific definitions reliant on

a continuum measuring degrees of homelessness have been devised and/or proposed. Hulchanski

(2000) in particular is critical of this approach for, in his opinion, it enables governments to

avoid taking action for anyone who may not be, by definition, homelessness. This, in turn, masks

the inherently political issue of homelessness as a statistical or definitional problem (O'Reilly-

Fleming, 1993). But what does it mean to be homeless? The Canadian Homelessness Research

Network (CHRN) has developed the following working classification (Gaetz, 2012):

> Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being absolutely homeless at one end, and experiencing housing exclusion (being precariously or inadequately housed) at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized here in a typology that includes:
> 1. Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
> 2. Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as Violence Against Women shelters;
> 3. Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary, and who do not have their own home or security of tenure, and finally;
> 4. Insecurely Housed, which describes people who are "at risk" of homelessness, and whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards. It should be noted that for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where people's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency.
>
> Homelessness can also be categorized by duration of homelessness that includes:
> 1. brief homelessness (less than 30 days);
> 2. short-term homelessness (less than a year); and,
> 3. chronic homelessness (more than a year), which is more entrenched and long term.
>
> Such periods of homelessness can be continuous in duration or episodic in which people rotate in and out of homelessness.

Liberal definitions of homelessness like this tend not to be the norm, as the majority of the

academic, government, front-line agency, and grey literature tends towards statistically identifying rough/street sleepers as homeless, while anecdotally alluding to other forms of homelessness (e.g., couch surfing).[iii] Consequently, the 20 percent sleeping rough are truly homeless while the remainder is classified as "hidden homeless." Such classifications hinder attempts at generating an accurate national homeless rate or at capturing the national urban Aboriginal rates of homelessness.

Urban Aboriginal Peoples: The Policy Environment

While establishing accurate urban Aboriginal homeless counts is vital for raising public awareness and for establishing the data sets of policy makers, we need to set out the historical and ideological contexts of federal Indian policies that continue to influence Aboriginal peoples new to the city and who are long-time residents. Place is a personal concept central to an individual's sense of identity. Canada's history abounds with stories of colonists moving into Indigenous territories and claiming permanent homeland status. Once permanently settled, community leaders often disregarded Aboriginal regional contributions in settlements many of which grew into modern cities (Abbott, 2008). New settler-informed norms were developed to guide the emergent political class pursuing community-building initiatives. Many leaders noted Aboriginal peoples repeatedly visiting their communities for health care and in search of economic opportunities, but rarely did they consider permitting Aboriginal participation to become an active aspect of their local development plans. In response, "municipal-colonialism" materialized in many regions across Canada, which Stanger-Ross (2008) describes as the implementation of city-planning processes purposely designed to manage Aboriginal peoples in urban settings (Belanger, 2013).

Many of the same attitudes that had previously resulted in Aboriginal peoples' physical isolation on reserves were now being employed by city fathers across Canada encouraging urban Aboriginal exclusion. Municipal-colonialism displayed many of the same attitudes that had previously resulted in Aboriginal peoples physical isolation on reserves, and were actively encouraged to prohibit urban Aboriginal permanency. Arguably, these trends continue today, which Windsor and Mcvey (2005) see as extremely problematic, since escaping damaging attitudes through either forced relocation or voluntary relocation negatively impacts interpersonal relationships, and arrests personal and collective identity development. Many urban Aboriginal people nationally have either overcome or learned to manage these disparate forces, and have established unique municipal social and cultural spaces they call home. Yet, ironically, the already difficult task of community building is aggravated by the destabilizing nature of being unwelcome in one's own lands (Abele, Falvo, & Hache, 2010; Belanger et al., 2013; Christensen, 2012; Ruttan, Laboucane-Benson, & Munro, 2008; Weasel Head, 2011).

As Andersen (2002, p. 20) notes, however, Aboriginal people "have created new and distinct communities while concomitantly creating new cultural norms, adapting, as we have always done, to the material circumstances around us." Yet the non-Aboriginal majority still clings to the belief that cities remain alien environments and that Aboriginal peoples are better suited to rural lifestyles. Few acknowledge that most large cities have a long history of Aboriginal urbanization and growing interaction between urban Aboriginal and municipal leaders (Belanger & Walker, 2009; Malloy, 2001; Nelles & Alcantara, 2011). Municipal and provincial politicians have capitalized on this perceived incompatibility to legislatively abandon urban Aboriginal peoples, who are obliged to forge ahead in bureaucratically, and often socially, hostile environments (Forsyth & Heine, 2008; Peters, 1996). Consequently, cities are colonial

environments that perpetuate binaries that highlight community insider/outsider and citizen/other (Furniss, 1999), where urban Aboriginal people, accordingly, become and remain permanent outsiders.

Countering this stereotype is a growing literature highlighting urban Aboriginal adaptability and the meaningfulness of urban space (Awad, 2004; Belanger, Barron, Mills, & Turnbull-McKay, 2003). Peters (2005, 393) in particular has argued that there exists within the urban Aboriginal community "a sense of belonging, active household assistance networks, and the growing presence of self-governing institutions" (see also Peters 2004). This discussion parallels a growing literature that challenges, for instance, Richards' (2001) assertions that Aboriginal peoples were apt to live in socially and economically poor neighbourhoods. Positive social reproduction is, nonetheless, dependent on more than local community support. It is reliant on equitable resource access and the ability to participate in local policy development (Belanger & Walker, 2009; Prentice, 2007; Sookraj, Hutchinson, Evans, Murphy, & Collective, 2010), something that continues to elude urban Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal Homelessness in Lethbridge

The causes and impacts of urban Aboriginal homelessness are difficult to quantify and evaluate because our understanding of these phenomena is informed by assorted anecdotal evidence consisting of front-line worker observations; and by various and methodologically disparate municipal homelessness censuses, along with the associated municipal and academic reports examining these trends (Belanger, Weaselhead, & Awosoga, 2012a). Recent research has provided an improved understanding of these trends. Take Figure 1, which is based on a review of homeless counts concluded in key urban centres nationally during the last decade and that

identifies the presence of significant Aboriginal homelessness in large Canadian cities. Please

note that an exhaustive search was conducted for online reports and other data sources.

Figure 1: Urban Aboriginal Homeless as Percentage of Overall Homeless Population, Select Canadian Cities
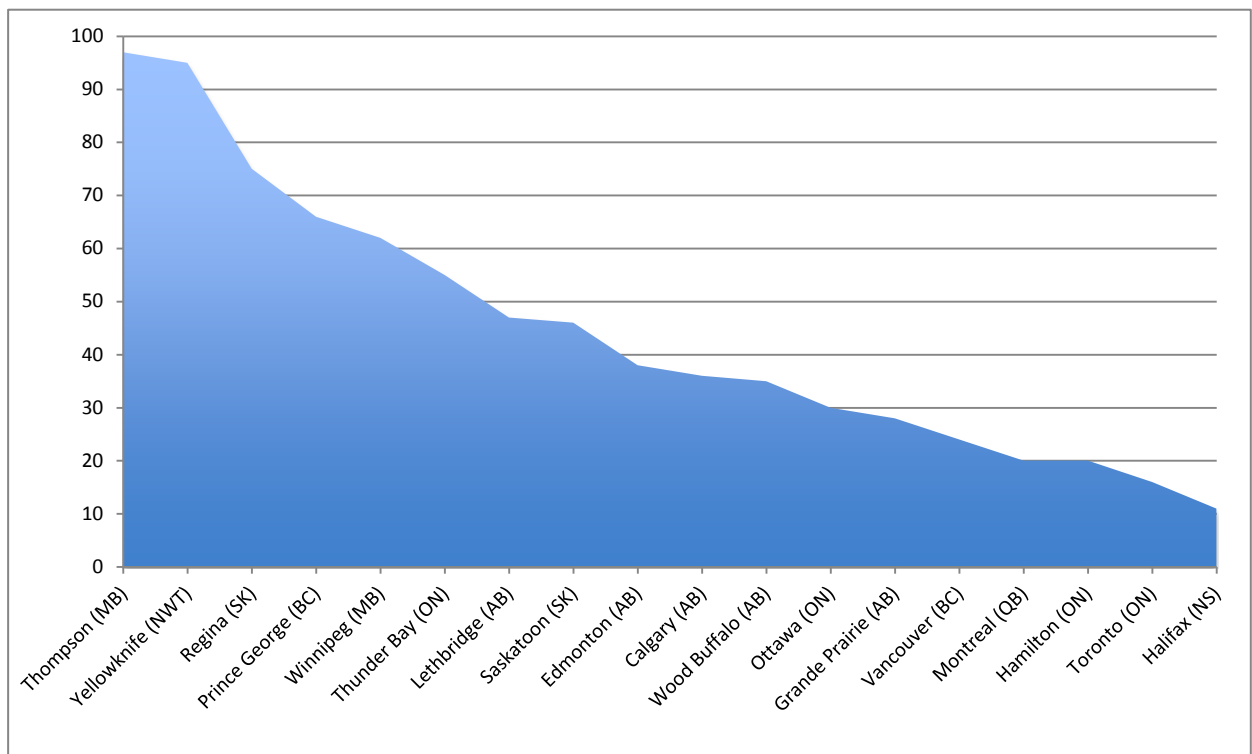
Not all large urban centres are represented, or even a modest sample of medium-sized urban

centres, and this makes generating comparative and regional research difficult. Even so, it is

apparent, according to this foundational graph, that urban Aboriginal homelessness is endemic in

Canada. Front-line workers have known this for years, but there are additional trends of note.

Starting in 2004, the City of Lethbridge has conducted an annual point-in-time census, or a PIT

count of municipal homeless persons. Each census aids municipal service providers in

determining the estimated number of people in Lethbridge who on the night of the count did not

have "a permanent residence of which they could return." City of Lethbridge officials broadly

define homelessness to include people who were living on the streets, as well as those who were staying in emergency shelters or in facilities offering longer-term care and support, accordingly any individuals who did not have a permanent residence who would otherwise be living on the streets. Both the United Nations and the Canadian government define this condition as 'absolute homelessness'. Each census provides a snapshot of the number of people in Lethbridge who were likely to be absolutely homelessness on any given night (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Results of Lethbridge Homeless Census, 2004-2010
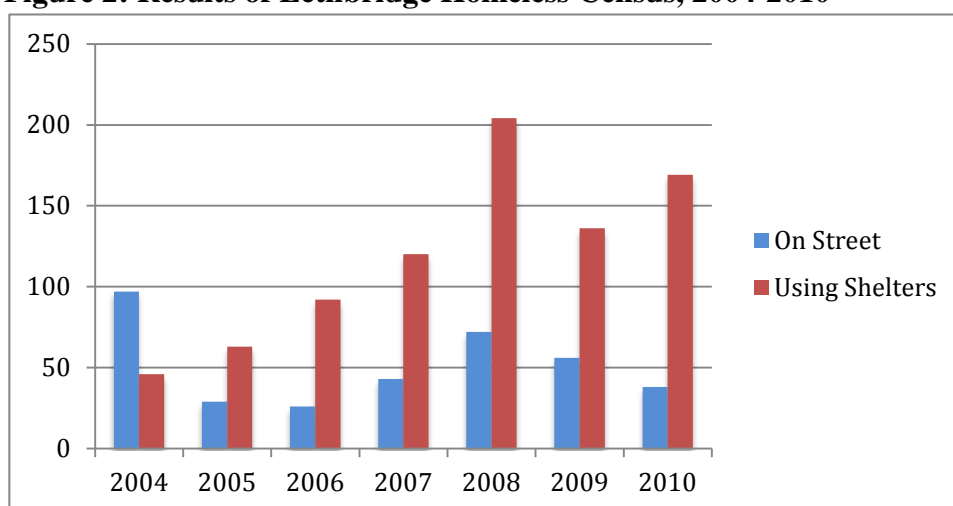
Unfortunately the census and other similar measures are imperfect gauges of local homeless trends. For example, it has been hypothesized that a full 80% of the youth homeless community remains invisible (e.g., sleeping rough, intentionally living apart from mainstream populations), trends that in all likelihood reflect non-youth homeless community patterns, meaning that a large majority of the homeless we seek to count are inaccessible to the census enumerators (Raising the Roof 2004). Using this as an informal metric, City of Lethbridge officials in the last eight years have estimated the homeless population to be as high as 485 (2004) and as low as 130 (2006). The Lethbridge homeless census shows that the number of Aboriginal homeless dropped from a high of 54% in 2006 to 38% in 2009. Yet the 2010 census shows a return to previous

trends, and that currently 55% of the homeless community is Aboriginal (City of Lethbridge 2010, p. 8). Confirming these trends, this study found 52.1% (n=61) of the sheltered population was of Aboriginal decent. In total, 43.6% (n=51) self declared as First Nations; 6% (n=7) self declared as Métis; and 2.6% (n=3) identified as Inuit.

Research conducted in 2010-2011 at the Lethbridge Shelter highlighted the homeless community's cultural heterogeneity (Table 1), which is at variance with general municipal attitudes equating homeless with being exclusively Aboriginal (Fiske et al., 2010; Kingfisher, 2007). A study of the municipal discourse surrounding the need for a homeless shelter in 2002 suggested a strong social perception that the homeless tended to be substance abusing/addicted Native men (Kingfisher, 2005). These opinions persist regardless of the fact that the Lethbridge homeless census shows that the number of Aboriginal homeless dropped from a high of 54% in 2006 to 38% in 2009 (Belanger, 2011). It is important to note that shelter PIT counts can also underestimate the number of homeless people because they do not include people sleeping on the street. In 2001 it was projected that roughly 5 per 10,000 population were sleeping in shelters of the nine largest municipalities (Hwang, 2001, p. 229). For comparative purposes, roughly 5.29 per 10,000 population were sleeping at the Lethbridge Shelter and Resource Centre during this study period.

Table 1: Sheltered Population by Self-Identified Cultural Background		
Age Group	Percentage	Number
Caucasian	52.1%	61
Aboriginal	47.9%	56
Totals	100	117

Homelessness remains a high profile issue provincially and in Lethbridge. In 2007 Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach and the Province of Alberta announced that a 10-year plan to coordinate initiatives to address provincial homelessness would be created. In addition to

establishing the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, the Province committed more than $285 million to address immediate housing pressures. The Alberta government's affordable housing strategy led to more than 11,000 units development during the subsequent five years. Locally Social Housing in Action (SHIA) was established in Lethbridge in 2000 with a mandate to minimize the impact of homelessness and prevent homelessness. Since then it has created and supported a range of projects, programs and approaches to that have resulted in the development of additional housing units and the 'right housing' options and supports.[iv]

In Lethbridge, available municipal programming to combat homelessness falls into four key categories: (1) emergency shelters (Harbour House, Emergency Youth Shelter, Lethbridge Shelter and Resource Centre); (2) supportive homes; (3) affordable permanent housing; and, (4) Housing First programs (Community Outreach, Blackfoot Family Lodge Society, Wood's Homes, Lethbridge Resource Centre, YWCA Residence, and YWCA Hestia Homes). As of April 2013 there are 104 beds available for people who are homeless at Harbour House and the Lethbridge Shelter and Resource Centre, and eight beds at the Emergency Youth Shelter. There however aren't many shelter beds or once in the system available units available specifically for urban Aboriginal homeless individuals, and the majority of beds are directed towards women and their children. The lack of a much needed men's transition home is evident, for Aboriginal males compose the highest percentage of the city's urban Aboriginal homeless. More generally, beyond one dedicated agency, and other 'first-come-first-served' services, there is a noticeable lack of Aboriginal-specific services in Lethbridge.

Methodology

The Blackfoot elder Percy Bullchild (1985, p. 2) wrote that retelling stories is a powerful and empowering act that, if properly pursued preserves "our Indian history" by fostering a form of agency that situates the stories within the larger context of Blackfoot society. Stories also "provide a window to the experiential domain" for humans "interpret experiences as well as make them understood to others through language" (Gregory, 1994, pp. 53-54). A focused ethnography method was employed to explore chronically homeless Blackfoot perceptions of and attachment to land and place. Knoblauch (2009) has indicated that focused ethnography advocates shorter, more pragmatic researcher field visits ensuring the collection of robust data sets and close analytical scrutiny. Qualitative research is deemed more subjective and allows for a wider range of meaningful data to emerge from the narratives, and is consistent with the Niitsitapi oral tradition. Preliminary fieldwork for the study began in October 2008 with our participating in the regional homeless census PIT count, after which interviews were conducted with six participants (4 male, 2 female) at the Lethbridge Homeless Shelter during a six-month period (October 2009-March 2010).

Two interview sessions were conducted at the home of a female participant who had managed to obtain housing with the assistance of shelter staff. Each of the chronically homeless participants ranged in age from their early thirties to early fifties, and had used the shelter resources for several years. Participants were recruited through the use of plain language, easily accessible and understandable posters displayed in the Shelter's high traffic areas to grow a purposeful sample; and were selected based on existing information regarding this project's research objectives. Given the time restrictions and the participants' transient nature, five narratives were completed with six participants. The data was interpreted and framed through the participants' subjective realties (Kingfisher, 2007; Letkemann, 2004; Menzies, 2007; Sider,

2005). Thematic analysis was used for the data analyses because of its emphasis on personal experiences; in this instance, how they experience and understand their homeless situation (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Each of the participants was provided with small gifts (i.e., practical clothing items, tobacco/cigarettes) as a token of our appreciation.

Empirical

To understand the meaning of homelessness one must first determine the pathways leading to homelessness followed by framing this experience relative to a Niitsitapi historic understanding of their traditional homeland. Ultimately the goal was to try and determine how being homeless informs this attachment to the land; and whether this connection compels individuals to remain homeless in traditional lands rather than being housed in foreign territories.

Loss of family and identity

Evident in all five narratives is a profound sense of loss related to identity and family, and all of the participants shared experiences that involved losing family members at a very young age. It appears that trauma at an early age informed each of the participants pathway to homelessness. Families were frequently separated, and as a result the participants developed an impoverished sense of what the land meant to community and individual from a Niitsitapi perspective. The participants are reminded of this daily (suggesting ongoing trauma is an issue) due to the fact that Niitsitapi protocols compel individuals to reveal family connections that shape the participants' identity. Although renewing relationships in this way is a means of reconnecting, being reminded of the historic disconnect from family is psychologically demanding. The participants are phenomenally resilient, but the ongoing trauma combined with

the impact of residential schools will eventually overcome this durability. More importantly

resilience alone cannot surmount the effects of profound loss on personal identity development

and sense of self. The personal impact is noted, but these events have also torn the very fabric of

Niitsitapi culture, as stated by one participant:

> I think it made a hole in the culture. Residential schools came along and broke up the
> family and family was a big part of the Blackfoot people. Family is the culture … we
> stick together. Putting the kids in residential schools broke up families and taking away
> language … all of this trickles down to what we see now … I don't know my culture …
> maybe a little. I don't know what my grandparents know and they don't always tell me.
> They don't talk of traditional ways; it's always about what they did in residential schools.

What was described as a trickle is more precisely a steady stream of loss that becomes evident

upon entering the homeless shelter, as one participant suggested: "I have never really wondered

what profound loneliness looks like or what constant longing feels like until I entered these

walls. Depression and loss permeates the air. I wish I didn't have to come back tomorrow."

It is important to note that the death of family members usually occurred unnaturally:

accidents, addiction, or suicide. The ubiquitous nature of these events suggests to participants

that they and their families live an inherently dysfunctional lifestyle, and this can trigger

depression and lead to substance abuse as coping mechanisms. Not unsurprisingly participants

also felt abandoned by their families, or at the very least that they were turned away, which led to

needed family resources and supports being stripped away. Interestingly even though the

participants sought out familial intimacy they simultaneously expressed feelings of shame and

guilt for past actions that act as barriers to achieving the desired contact. The centrality of family

to Niitsitapi identity means that any and all loss has tremendous personal impacts as does

dishonouring family member by failing to seek out treatment for addictions. The participants'

narratives revealed that family support was virtually non-existent in their lives, which led them to form bonds with others living on the street to fill this void.

Loss of community

In addition to losing contact with family members the participants also felt disconnected from what they would describe as traditional community. This included members of the regional First Nations and the local urban Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. The participants noted in both instances that they did not feel like they were contributing members to either of these communities, which resulted in personal dislocation from both the reserves and the city. The reserves in particular offered them little in terms of opportunity or supports, and being unable to remain on the reserve forced many to relocate to the city. As one participant indicated, "it's the transition of coming into town and not knowing what to expect … how to support your family. Finding it hard and tough, you end up drinking because you don't know how to cope." Another added, "When you move to the city, an urban environment, there's certain things you have to comply with that you don't on the reserve." The participants stated that they know many individuals who although hesitant to leave the reserve left anyways due to feelings of being disconnected from the traditional community. These feelings of disconnection mature for folks moving into the city without contacts, which in turn impedes successful urban transition. Here the disconnection from the traditional reserve community is simply replaced by moving away from a recognizable landscape and into a largely unrecognizable urban centre where the feelings of disconnection are often amplified.

When asked to explain in greater detail what traditional community meant, many of the participants suggested that 'traditional Niitsitapi community' no longer existed. Perhaps more

disturbingly it was suggested that that modern Canadian society was now directing Niitsitapi individuals to abandon their traditional values of group support and reciprocity in order to become economically and socially successful. In this context, the value of reciprocity (sharing) has the potential to compromise the social stability of those who managed to secure rental housing, as an example. In particular, members of their street/shelter family stated that those that they sought out to help replace lost family connections would invariably show up at the new home or apartment, which then directly placed the renter at risk. It is an equally difficult social situation for the renters, most of whom had a history of short-term rentals before quickly returning to the street. However, to alienate street family members could lead to stress-filled relationships upon returning to the street.

The centre of this relational network is the local homeless shelter, which is located roughly one kilometer from the city core. The mainstream non-homeless population knows its location and its role in mitigating homelessness and aiding those who are the hardest to house. Yet the shelter is unmistakably separated from local mainstream society: located literally on the wrong side of the railway tracks that act as the city's north/south divide, which also reminds all of historic cultural and economic divisions, it is housed at a site that is virtually imperceptible to the traffic using a nearby key transportation artery. Its location demands that shelter users travel from the city's core and along the heavily traveled street where they are effectively put on display for motorists heading home for the night. The next day a reverse pilgrimage is played out in front of morning commuters. Hearing cat calls and trying to avoid looks of disdain several times daily led all the participants to feel like they were outsiders in a city located in their traditional homeland. Low self-esteem resulted that was exacerbated by the fact that outside of the homeless shelter virtually no urban organizations offer vital supports considered appropriate

for the Niitsitapi homeless community. In all the participants endured being on public display daily before non-Aboriginal citizens who were at best puzzled and at worst openly contemptible. The lack of specific, culturally appropriate programming available to the Aboriginal homeless population is compounded by the public's unwillingness and/or inability to re-conceptualize Aboriginal people through a lens of inclusion. The reliance on tried and true narratives stressing settler heroism for taming a wild frontier to the disregard of pre-contact social and economic complexity and it becomes clear why the participants we spoke with feel like strangers in their homeland.

Loss of trust

In an environment characterized by a lack of strong family ties and public scorn, and having endured substantial trauma and suffering, the participants found it difficult to trust— anyone. Homelessness remained an issue for those who had become wary of organizations that were unable to help participants obtain the assistance needed to combat their addictions and improve their general living situation. For most of the participants, during their formative years abuse, neglect and the absence of meaningful contact occurred resulting in a loss of trust that has and for some would never be recovered. One participant spoke about his profound mistrust of the general non-Aboriginal population while another believed that the researchers interviewing him were intent on assisting a social organization acquire control over his finances. Indeed, all participants were not initially willing to be a part of the research until they were thoroughly convinced of our purpose and goals.

Addictions

Each participant was engaged in a desperate and what appeared to be a losing battle with alcohol addiction. Alcohol is readily available at numerous bars and lounges, and those living in the city core are never more than a 10-minute walk from a liquor store. Unlike living on the reserve, where not owning a vehicle can frustrate individuals from obtaining alcohol at a neighboring community, the same advantage is not available in the city. The above-mentioned street family can be an aggravating element in that the majority also present similar substance abuse issues, leading to the evolution of a community of enablers. The participants appeared to use alcohol to help numb psychic and emotional pain resulting from past/present trauma, and they were aware that their addictions exacerbated an already dire situation. Further, many were in a self-admitted downward spiral yet they still chose to participate and encouraged others to pursue harmful activities. One participant blamed alcoholism for his homelessness, admitting that he was helpless to control it. Others suggested that similar addictions acted as barriers to obtaining adequate shelter. One participant in particular stated that most of his friends had good intentions and wanted to get off the street, "but when the time comes to pay damage deposit, addictions get in the way and they've lost out." The Aboriginal homeless population is seen by mainstream society to be a group of endemic substance abusers, and the participants admitted that this was an accurate assessment. That being said, it is important to understand that trauma and profound loss combined anchors these addictions. It was however common when visiting the shelter to observe Aboriginal guests under the influence. Alcohol was by far the most commonly abused substance, but we also witnessed prescription medication usage.

Racism and discrimination

Substance use and abuse was also symptomatic of the racism and discrimination each of

the participants identified as a normative aspect of city life, which led everyone in one way or another to express resentment about dominant society. As highlighted above it is not uncommon for people to insult individuals leaving and returning to the shelter. The participants felt it was easier to manage public ridicule that to face the subtle, personalized racism linked with trying to secure rental accommodations. Each participant concluded that attempting to rent in the city is to court degradation by potential landlords who will rent to Aboriginal peoples only as a last resort. Landlords are wary of Aboriginal tenants based in part on past experiences and in part on a fear of the unknown grounded by false stereotypes. To be sure, many landlords perceive renting to Aboriginal to be a "bad investment": it is anticipated that they will damage property; attract squatting family members; or be unable to maintain their rent (Belanger, 2007). All Aboriginal renters have thus been stigmatized as potential risks when in reality, renting to any tenants pose similar risks. Addiction issues compel individuals to spend beyond their meager means thereby compromising their ability to regularly pay their rent. Each of the participants acknowledged this trend, and several stated that they must first address their substance abuse issues prior to being able to rent a house or apartment. There was simultaneously pressure being experienced to conform to the non-Aboriginal social standards and a need to reconnect with Niitsitapi culture.

What we found was that a sense of pride in Aboriginal culture tempered by mainstream expectations about how to best integrate. Interestingly these norms emphasizing social, political and economic individuality conflicted with Niitsitapi values stressing reciprocity and collective community development. The implicit question being posed was what type of Aboriginal person do you want to become? Do you want to remain homeless albeit guided by cultural norms that undermine individual efforts to leave homelessness? Or do you embrace traditional albeit from mainstream perspectives alternative norms that may mitigate homelessness in the short term but

that may produce impenetrable barriers distancing you from your identity, family, and history?

Estrangement from the reserve

The research's most revealing facet was the participants' profound sense of alienation from their home reserve communities. Most had lived in the city for years if not most of their adult lives, and they felt that their home communities set in the heart of the Niitsitapi homeland were inhospitable. It had less to do with the breakdown of personal relationships but rather has to do with band council decisions directing available resources to local citizens and not citizens who chose to live an urban lifestyle. First Nations are admittedly in a difficult position for annual budgets are derived from per capita allocations, which means that the bulk of revenue is intended for reserve populations, and those living off reserve (even band members who are still First Nations citizens) find themselves shut out from local resources. Despite individual desires to remain on reserve many individuals find that the lack of jobs and poor housing conditions force naive individuals into racist and discriminatory urban environments. Compounding feelings of alienation are the band councils' unwillingness to incorporate urban Aboriginal citizens into the political decision-making process, which in turn has resulted in a great deal of resentment being directed at the reserve politicians.

The participants indicated that an invisible border was evident between the reserves and city space that influenced their understanding of the other (urban vs. reserve Aboriginal). The resulting fragmentation of Niitsitapi territory into pockets of social inclusion and exclusion was disturbing. So too were the individual feelings of disconnection from the lands the participants and their ancestors never physically abandoned but have been made to feel unwelcome within. Steady movement between the reserve and city occurs as people try to reconnect with family and

elders and in search of education and employment opportunities (Belanger & Weasel Head under review). Where the city represents employment and education the reserve symbolizes home and is a place that buttresses First Nation identity. This separation between communities is a very real barrier to feeling welcomed in an urban environment that also occupies traditional Niitsitapi territory. Hence feelings of alienation also occur living in the city meaning that individuals who cannot return to the reserve begin to feel trapped in their own homelands. This has been portrayed as spiritual homelessness by Memmott, Birdsall-Jones and Greenop (2012, p. 25), who further explain that it is "a crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused, or known but unable to be fulfilled." The participants want to be valued as citizens, and have their identity as Aboriginal people and their Niitsitapi history acknowledged as both significant and meaningful. They do not want to be seen as a relic or consequence of a colonial past.

Conceptualizing Blackfoot Territory and Homelessness

Despite all of the issues confronting the participants each indicated that they would not willingly leave larger Niitsitapi territory. All but one was raised in southern Alberta territory, and those remain connected to their home reserves. However, we would conclude that home is now variegated and no longer grounded in traditional territory *per se* but rather in pockets of land that are: (1) considered less resistant to the participants' presence; and, (2) offering the needed resources enabling individuals to both socially and economically flourish. The idea of a traditional homeland that contains the stories, history, and identity remains as does the sense that one can temporarily be away from one's residential home community but still be in Niitsitapi territory. There is however a tension associated with what home means that is exacerbated by

physical and emotional displacement. For example, the participants expressed a tremendous sense of pride in their traditional homeland that surrounded and encompassed the city. Historically the traditional homeland was considered to contain all of creation (i.e., sites of power, the two- and four-leggeds, points of historical significance). Now home is now seen as a site within the homeland where one resides which, when we factor in the inclusive nature of the reserve in relation to the city, leads to deep and simultaneous resentments rooted in dire economic and social circumstances. Economically depressed reserves are sadly seen to be abandoning individuals who would likely be facing similar circumstances by remaining. Here the reserve is considered the remaining symbol of a traditional albeit uninhabitable homeland that often forces its citizens into a racist and discriminatory environment. The fact of the matter is the city is in many ways an uninhabitable site located within the traditional homeland that is largely occupied by a settler population whose policies forced economic hardships on the reserves the participants were forced to flee.

In the wake of such pressures none of the participants considered leaving Niitsitapi territory to seek work in the provincial northern oil fields; or in the forestry industry straddling the nearby Alberta/B.C. border. Yes the sense of pride in remaining on traditional territory was tempered by the experiences of racism and sadness of what was occurring on the reserves. The idea of remaining the traditional homeland was nevertheless rejuvenating, and it led this small homeless community to try and replicate cultural norms stressing the centrality of family and collective relationships in order to recreate a sense of community. All of the participants' past traumatic experiences and ongoing trauma meant that the new community norms developing at the centrally located homeless shelter are grounded by an impoverished sense of what constitutes an affirmative relationship. Alcohol and other substances fuel this new community located in the

heart of Niitsitapi territory that is unwelcomed and in most respects considered to be a blight living in a community that has boasted of its history of bringing life to an otherwise lifeless wasteland. Attempts were made to offset these impacts. For instance, the homeless shelter offers services that include cultural programming incorporating traditional practices such as smudging and sweat lodges, programming the participants believed reinforced the traditional community. The shelter has come to represent "home" insofar as it has been the place where new family bonds are formed and meaningful existence is re-discovered within its walls.

Conclusion

The causes of Blackfoot homelessness are complex and multi-layered, and we must begin to address these issues causes from an approach that focuses on rebuilding community connections, creating relationships and acknowledging cultural histories. The participants' narratives indicate that a new definition of homelessness has emerged. That is, to be homeless is to subsist absent family or community support networks. Being homeless does not necessarily mean having a roof over one's head or having a home in the physical sense. Common and generally accepted societal definitions of the term "homelessness" do not reflect the participants' conceptualizations. Not having shelter is indeed problematic, but the participants felt absolutely homeless after being abandoned by their family and the traditional Blackfoot community. The phenomenon of homelessness is a fluid condition in the sense that it changes and takes on new meanings for those who experience it. Focus group participants reiterated this fact in that some shelter guests obtained housing but return to the shelter because they felt so isolated from community. Essentially, regardless of the fact that they are housed they were still homeless because family and peer group support systems were not evident in their lives. We should begin

to understand that Blackfoot homelessness involves much more than lack of housing, and is substantially influenced by a lack of family and community. Perhaps more importantly we must begin to formally acknowledge how this knowledge can be used to determine best practices in improving the situation for southern Alberta's Aboriginal homeless community.

References

Abbott, C. (2008). *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Abele, F., Falvo, N., & Hache, A. (2010). Homeless in the Homeland: A Growing Problem for Indigenous People in Canada's North. *Parity, 23*(9), 21-24.

Alberani, V., Pietrangeli, P. D. C., & Mazza, A. M. R. (1990). The Use of Grey Literature in Health Sciences: A Preliminary Survey. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association, 78*(4), 358-363.

Andersen, C. (2002). *Courting Colonialism: Contemporary Métis Communities and the Canadian Judicial Imagination*. Paper presented at the Reconfiguring Aboriginal-State Relations, Queen's University.

Awad, M. (2004). Aboriginal Affairs. *Canadian Architect, May*, 54-54.

Basso, K. (1996). *Widsom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Bastien, B. (2004). *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Bear Robe, A. (1996). The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance, Including Its Future Possibilities Within Canada *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [CD-ROM]*. Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Belanger, Y. D. (2007). Assessing Urban Aboriginal Housing Needs in Southern Alberta. *Saskatchewan Institute on Public Policy, Public Policy Paper #51*.

Belanger, Y. D. (2011). Lethbridge Sheltered Populations: An Overview of Current Trends, 2010-2011 (pp. 54). Lethbridge: Social Housing in Action Society.

Belanger, Y. D. (2013). Breaching Reserve Boundaries: Canada v. Misquadis and the Legal Evolution of the Urban Aboriginal Community. In E. J. Peters & C. Anderson (Eds.), *Indigenizing Modernity: Indigenous Identities and Urbanization in International Perspective* (pp. 68-89). Vancouver: UBC Press.

Belanger, Y. D., Awosoga, O., & Weaselhead, G. (2013). Homelessness, Urban Aboriginal People, and the Need for a National Enumeration. *Aboriginal Policy Studies, 2*(2), 4-33.

Belanger, Y. D., Barron, L., Mills, M., & Turnbull-McKay, C. (2003). Urban Aboriginal Youth in Winnipeg: Culture and Identity Formation in Cities (pp. 50). Winnipeg: Department of Culture and Heritage Canada.

Belanger, Y. D., & Walker, R. (2009). Interest Convergence & Co-production of Plans: An Examination of Winnipeg's 'Aboriginal Pathways'. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research, 18*(1), 118-139.

Belanger, Y. D., Weaselhead, G., & Awosoga, O. (2012a). Housing and Homelessness of Urban Aboriginal People in Urban Centres (pp. 42). Ottawa: National Association of Friendship Centres/Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians.

Belanger, Y. D., Weaselhead, G., & Awosoga, O. (2012b). Housing of Urban Aboriginal People in Urban Centres: A Quantitative Perspective. *Aboriginal Policy Studies, 2*(1), 4-25.

Binnema, T. (2004). *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Brasser, T. J. (1982). The Tipi as an Element of Historic Plains Indian Nomadism. *Plains Anthropologist, 27*(98), 309-321.

Bryman, A., & Teevan, J. J. (2005). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bullchild, P. (1985). *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Casavant, L. (1999). *Definitions of Homelessness*. Ottawa: Retrieved from http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/modules/prb99–1-homelessness/definition-e.htm#DEFINITIONtxt.

Christensen, J. (2012). 'They want a different life': Rural Northern Settlement Dynamics and Pathways to Homelessness in Yellowknife and Inuvik, Northwest Territories. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien, 56*(4), 419-438. doi: 10.1111/j.1541–0064.2012.00439.x.

Council, T. E. a. T., Hildebrant, W., Carter, S., & Rider, D. F. (1996). *The True Spirit and Intent of Treaty 7*. Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Crowson, B. (2011). *So! You Think You Know Lethbridge? Lethbridge History for Kids*. Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society.

Dempsey, H. (2002). *Firewater: The Impact of the Whiskey Trade on the Blackfoot Nation*. Calgary: Fifth Books.

Ewers, J. (1955). *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press.

Fiske, J.-A., Belanger, Y. D., & Gregory, D. S. (2010). Outsiders in Their Homeland: Discursive Construction of Aboriginal Women and Citizenship. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 34*(3), 71-92.

Forsyth, J., & Heine, M. (2008). Sites of Meaning, Meaningful Sites? Sport and Recreation for Aboriginal Youth in Inner City Winnipeg, Manitoba. *Native Studies Review, 17*(2), 99-113.

Furniss, E. (1999). *The Burden of History: Colonialism and Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Gaetz, S. (2012). Housing: Housing First. from http://www.homelesshub.ca/Topics/View.aspx?id=209&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

Gregory, D. S. (1994). *Narratives of Suffering in the Cancer Experience.* (Ph.D.), University of Arizona, ARIZONA.

Hwang, S. (2001). Homelessness and Health. *Canadian Medical Association Journal, 164*(2), 229-233.

Johnston, A. (1997). *Lethbridge: From Coal Town to Commercial Centre: A Business History*. Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society.

Kingfisher, C. (2005). How the Housed View the Homelessness: A Study of the 2002 Controversy in Lethbridge. Lethbridge.

Kingfisher, C. (2007). Discursive Constructions of Homelessness in a Small City in the Canadian Prairies: Notes on Destructuration, Individualization, and the Production of (raced and gendered) Unmarked Categories. *American Ethnologist, 34*(1), 91-107.

Knoblauch, H. (2009). Focused Ethnography. *Focum: Qualitative Social Research, 6*(3).

Letkemann, P. G. (2004). First Nations Urban Migration and the Importance of "Urban Nomads" in Canadian Plains Cities: A Perspective From the Streets. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research, 13*(2), 241-256.

Little Bear, L. (1996). Relationship of Aboriginal People to the Land and the Aboriginal Perspective on Aboriginal Title *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Malloy, J. (2001). Double Identities: Aboriginal Policy Agendas in Ontario and British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Political Science, 34*(1), 131-156.

Memmott, P., Birdsall-Jones, C., & Greenop, K. (2012). Why are Special Services Needed to Address Indigenous Homelessness? The University of Queensland: Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland.

Menzies, P. (2005). *Orphans within Our Family: Intergenerational Trauma and Homeless Aboriginal Men*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Menzies, P. (2007). Understanding Aboriginal Intergenerational Irauma from a Social Work Perspective. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 27*(2), 367392.

Nelles, J., & Alcantara, C. (2011). Strengthening the Ties that bind? An Analysis Of Aboriginal-Municipal Inter-Governmental Agreements in British Columbia. *Canadian Public Administration, 54*(3), 315-334.

O'Reilly-Fleming, T. (1993). *Down and Out in Canada: Homeless Canadians*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, Inc.

Peters, E. J. (1996). 'Urban' and 'Aboriginal': An Impossible Contradiction? In J. Caulfield & L. Peake (Eds.), *City Lives and City Forms: Critical Research and Canadian Urbanism* (pp. 47-62). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Peters, E. J. (2005). Indigeneity and Marginalisation: Planning for and with Urban Aboriginal Communities in Canada. *Progress in Planning, 63*, 327-404.

Prentice, S. (2007). Childcare, Justice and the City: A Case Study of Planning Failure in Winnipeg. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research, 16*(1), 92-108.

Reeves, B. (1988). The Oldman River Dam and Alberta's Heritage: Conservation or Desecration? In S. B. Rood & F. J. Jankunis (Eds.), *Economic, Environmental, and Social Aspects of the Oldman River Dam Project*. Lethbridge: Departments of Biological Sciences & Geography.

Regular, K. (2009). *Neighbours and Networks: The Blood Tribe and the Southern Alberta Economy*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Richards, J. (2001). Neighbours Matter: Poor Neighbourhoods and Urban Aboriginal Policy (Vol. 156). Ottawa: C.D. Howe Institute.

Ruttan, L., Laboucane-Benson, P., & Munro, B. (2008). 'A story I never heard before': Aboriginal Young Women, Homelessness and Restorying Connections. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 6*(3), 31-54.

Savage, C. (2012). *A Geography of Blood: Unearthing Memory from a Prairie Landscape*. Vancouver: Greystone Books.

Sider, D. (2005). A Sociological Analysis of Root Causes of Aboriginal Homelessness in Sioux Lookout, Ontario: The Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

Sookraj, D., Hutchinson, P., Evans, M., Murphy, M. A., & Collective, T. O. U. A. H. R. (2010). Aboriginal Organizational Response to the Need for Culturally Appropriate Services in Three Small Canadian Cities. *Journal of Social Work*, 1-22. doi: 10.1177/1468017310381366

Stanger-Ross, J. (2008). Municipal colonialism in Vancouver: City planning and the conflict over Indian reserves, 1928-1950s. *Canadian Historical Review, 89*(4), 541-580.

Vest, J. H. (2005). The Oldman River and the Sacred: The Meditation Upon Aputosi Pii'kani Tradition and Environmental Ethics. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 25*(2).

Weasel Head, G. (2011). *'All We Need is Our Land': An Exploration of Urban Aboriginal Homelessness.* (M.A.), University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Windsor, J. E., & Mcvey, J. A. (2005). Annihilation of Both Place and Sense of Place: The Experience of the Cheslatta T'En Canadian First Nation within the Context of Large-Scale Environmental Projects. *The Geographical Journal, 171*(2), 146-165.

Notes

[i] The term "Aboriginal peoples" indicates any one of the three legally defined culture groups that form what are known as Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Métis, Inuit, and Indian) and who self-identify as such. The term First Nation is used here to denote a reserve community, or band. The term Indian, as used in legislation or policy, will also appear in discussions concerning such legislation or policy. The term Indigenous, as used here, does not represent a legal category. Rather, it is used to describe the descendants of groups in a territory at the time when other groups of different cultures or ethnic origin arrived there, groups that have almost preserved intact the customs and traditions of their ancestors similar to those characterized as Indigenous, and those that have been placed under a state structure which incorporates national, social, and cultural characteristics distinct from their own.

[ii] To date no book length manuscript has been produced exploring Lethbridge's historical evolution, and the two titles are among the best well known local histories. In particular Crowson's (2011) work is unique in that it is aimed at a youth audience. Pages 7-9 offer brief biographical snippets about the prairie region, Red Crow, Joe Healy, Jim Shot Both Sides and Canada's First Aboriginal Senator Jim Gladstone. This is followed by the introduction of explorers and the gradual dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from the land in the name of community building. In total Aboriginal content amounts to roughly 4 pages out of 92 total.

[iii] As quoted in Alberani, Pietrangeli and Mazza (1990, p. 358), "Grey Literature (GL) covers a wide spectrum of nonconventional documents. The following are some major GL categories as grouped [for this study]:

- reports-including preprints; preliminary progress and advanced reports; institutional, internal, technical, and statistical reports; research memoranda; state-of-the-art reports; market research reports; reports of commissions and study groups; etc.;
- theses;
- conference proceedings;
- technical specifications and standards;
- translations (not distributed commercially);
- bibliographies;
- technical and commercial documentation;
- official documents (issued in limited numbers)

It is often difficult to define the distinction between official publications and GL; among other definitions (e.g., ephemeral, invisible, informal, underground, etc.), GL has been recently defined as semi-published. According to the most widespread and generally recognized definition, GL is all that nonconventional material which is 'not available through the conventional, commercial distribution channels.' Yet, it must be remembered that in some countries (e.g., the United States and the United Kingdom), there are long-established distribution agencies that make it possible to obtain GL on request and for payment. In other countries, where there is no centralized agency for the distribution of GL, it is not as easy to obtain and to retrieve the same material."

[iv] Comprehensive, municipal and provincial planning approaches such as these are not widespread across Canada.