

**DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH ABORIGINAL  
HOMELESSNESS IN TORONTO**

**Final Report**

Jim Ward Associates  
April 8, 2008

## **Contents**

Executive Summary	3
Background	4
Research Results	5
Key Agency Personnel Interviews	5
Focus Groups with Agency Staff	10
Program/Service User Focus Groups	12
Main Points from the Consultations	17
Relevant Reports	19
Suggested Directions	25
Possible Breakdown of Expenditures	26
Appendix A - TASSA Membership	27
Appendix B - Individuals and groups consulted	28

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jim Ward Associates was retained to carry out this consultation by the Executive Directors of three TASSA (Toronto Aboriginal Social Services Association)<sup>1</sup> agencies: Anishnawbe Health Toronto, NA-ME-RES and Native Child and Family Services Toronto.

The purpose of the consultation was to develop a strategy by which the available Homeless Partnership Initiatives funding earmarked to address Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto for the year 2008 could be most effectively invested. The amount of funds available for this purpose at the time of the consultations was \$5.64 millions.

The consultation involved interviews with 17 upper management level staff personnel from TASSA member agencies; focus group discussions with 42 staff members from Anishnawbe Health Toronto and Native Child and Family Services Toronto; and focus group discussions with 53 homeless or recently homeless clients of NA-ME-RES, Native Women's Resource Centre, Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Tumivut Youth Shelter and the Native Learning Centre. In addition, several recent relevant reports were reviewed.

Those consulted were asked to identify what they felt to be the major issues currently facing homeless Aboriginal people in Toronto, how these issues can be most effectively addressed and the specific kinds of projects that would ameliorate the problem.

The overall conclusions that can be drawn from the consultation are:

- Funds should be primarily spent on capital initiatives, i.e. a mix of 80% capital to 20% non capital items.
- All projects should follow the following three criteria:
  1. they should be open to partnerships among relevant agencies.
  2. they should incorporate a strong Aboriginal cultural component.
  3. they should have a direct impact on the prevalence of Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto

Specific suggestions are made regarding the expenditure of the funds. With a breakdown of about 80% capital funding and 20% program funding. (See Table 7, p. 27)

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for membership of TASSA

## 1. BACKGROUND

The research reported here was carried out on behalf of three agencies that provide services to address the issue of Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto – Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Native Child and Family Services Toronto, and Native Men’s Residence (NA-ME-RES).

The purpose of the research was to identify the most effective ways of expending funding available to deal with Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto for the year 2008, under the federal Homeless Partnership Initiative.

In the City of Toronto’s Street Needs Assessment, conducted in April, 2006, it was estimated that there were over 5,000 homeless people in Toronto, including over 800 homeless on the street. This City of Toronto study indicated that 16% of all homeless people in Toronto were Aboriginal and 24% of those on the street were Aboriginal. Consequently, the City Council determined that 20% of the Homeless Partnership Initiative funding for Toronto would be earmarked for initiatives aimed at addressing Aboriginal homelessness. The amount of funding (20% of total HPI funding to the City of Toronto for the year 2008) is \$6.23 millions.

To date \$0.59 millions has already been earmarked for Aboriginal projects. This comprises \$523,250 to NCFST for Transitional Housing for Aboriginal Young Women and for a Mental Health Outreach Worker and \$70,000 to Miziwe Biik for a Personal Development Program. Therefore, the amount remaining is \$5.64 millions. The consultation was aimed at seeking the most effective ways for investing these funds in initiatives that will address the issue of Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto.

The approaches used in the research were as follows:

- Interviews with key personnel working in Toronto agencies either directly or indirectly working to ameliorate the problem of Aboriginal homelessness.
- Focus group discussions with clients of the foregoing types of agencies.
- Focus group discussions with front-line personnel in the foregoing types of agencies.
- A review of recent reports directly related to the subject of Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto.

## 2. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 2.1 KEY AGENCY PERSONNEL INTERVIEWS

A total of 17 key agency personnel were interviewed, this section provides a précis of their views regarding the most effective way of investing the available funds.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Major Challenges Facing Homeless Aboriginals in Toronto*

Identified challenges facing homeless Aboriginals in Toronto are listed according to frequency of identification in Table 1, below

**TABLE 1 – MAJOR CHALLENGES**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Challenge</b>
1	The challenge of meeting the basic daily needs
1	Insufficient appropriate/affordable housing, with support services
2	Low levels of education and training
4	Families existing on the edge of homelessness
5	Insufficient health care services with Aboriginal focus
6	Inappropriate location of many of the services
7	Hidden homelessness (couch surfing, etc.)
8	No Aboriginal-focused addictions treatment facility
9	No place for the elderly Aboriginals to go in the city, i.e. LTC facility
10	Arrival in Toronto without the necessary survival skills to ‘make it’

*“A central location is very important. Being located in a ‘bad’ area – like here – not a good idea. We are in an area well known for illegal activity. It’s a problem for our residents, particularly if they’ve been drug users.”*

*“Aboriginal people who are new to the city don’t know what they’re up against here.”*

*“They may need a long-term care coordinator to get them into an end-of-life palliative care place. For example, there’s someone who has been coming here for years who is a user of drugs and alcohol, who is becoming elderly, with no place to go to his old age”*

---

<sup>2</sup> Those interviewed are listed in Appendix B

## *Addressing the Challenges*

When key agency personnel were asked how they felt the challenges could be most effectively addressed, they responded as synthesized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2 – ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Addressing the Challenges</b>
1	Educational/information preparation for a successful life in the city should be more readily available, particularly in a way that assists in establishing an Aboriginal identity
2	Provide more well-supported transitional housing, with programs
3	Create AHT satellites in several locations
4	Create easier access – with supports – to colleges and universities
5	Make rent supplements more readily available
6	Offer more life skills programs
7	Advocate for a ‘real’ housing program (as prior to 1990s)
8	Create an Aboriginal drugs/alcohol treatment centre in Toronto – provide harm reduction alternative
9	Tax relief programs for families
10	Develop funding structure providing Aboriginal autonomy

*“There should be some education about what to expect in the city before they come here- how to deal with the culture shock. If they knew services were available to them, it would be very helpful. We have clients who come in and say, ‘Oh my god, I didn’t know there was a place like this!’”*

*“Tax relief for families does a lot more to reduce poverty. Once people have a stake in a house they can raise stable families”*

*“Appropriate services to them, bridging the gap between them and the rest of society. The street problems reinforce each other – it’s a mix of structural and personal challenges.”*

*“Our approaches need to be based on cultural/traditional approaches. It’s important for a person to know themselves as Aboriginal – so you have to design approaches that take that into account.”*

### ***Is It Different Being Aboriginal and Homeless?***

In order to get a clearer sense of the likely difference in the homelessness experience for Aboriginals as compared to others, agency respondents were asked in what ways they felt this was the case. Key responses were:

- Many are younger and more naïve when they come to the city.
- They are likely to have fewer skills and resources to cope.

- They will experience considerably more discrimination and prejudice.
- The level of addictions is higher.
- Traditional cultural support is likely to be much more important to them.
- You need Aboriginal agencies for Aboriginal people. In the non-Aboriginal agencies, it's difficult, if not impossible for them to provide services that have real meaning to Aboriginals.

*“Society looks down on Native people who then may self-medicate to deal with that.”*  
*“The racist stuff – much of what you meet as a homeless Aboriginal is so much tougher than for the non-Aboriginals. There’s a lack of any positive regard by the public and the Aboriginal homeless people tend to internalize this.”*

### ***Is The Situation Getting Worse?***

The general consensus among the agency respondents re the magnitude of the problem of Aboriginal homelessness is that it is probably a growing problem. This is largely seen to be the case because, even as existing programs and services may have some limited success in getting someone “off the street”, that person’s place is soon filled by someone else joining the ranks of homeless Aboriginals, i.e. there has been no decrease in the flow from outside. This is seen to be exacerbated because there are so few supported housing initiatives catering to the homeless Aboriginal population, particularly those offered within the context of Aboriginal culture.

### ***Suggested Funding Mix***

When key agency respondents were asked what they felt the funding mix should be for the HPI funds for 2008, they responded as indicated in Table 3.

**TABLE 3 – SUGGESTED FUNDING MIX**

<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>% Capital</b>	<b>% Programs/Services</b>
5	85	15
3	50	50
2	75	25
2	90	10
1	20	80
1	100	0
1	70	30
1	66.6	33.3
1	15	85
<b>Mean =</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>31%</b>

When asked for their rationale in suggesting this mix, those that were for an even mix between capital and programs/services tended to argue for the need to provide both housing and supportive services attached to that housing. Those who argued for the bulk of the funding going into housing used the rationale that once the housing is built or acquired it is something that is there in the long term and it becomes more appropriate to make the case for funding for support staff. Finally, those who felt that expenditure on program/service initiatives was the best approach based their argument on their view that the main gaps were in the area of support services. “You can build housing, you can help people rent housing, but without the supports, you’ll find that people often can’t hang on to their housing.” In addition, a strong feeling was expressed that programming dollars should be spent in such a way that they enhance the traditional nature of all programs through, for example, hiring staff with traditional Aboriginal knowledge and skills.

And:

*“We need the supports to take care of people, programs that go out there and support them, rehab programs, TTC tokens, court support programs, advocacy, housing aftercare. There’s no point in housing without the supports. Otherwise they are being set up for failure.”*

Overall then, the majority view was that there is the need to invest the bulk of the funds in housing that can then be used to enhance the currently limited availability of housing with ongoing supports, since there is evidence that such programs have been effective in getting Aboriginal people off the streets and on to a trajectory that will lead them to lives beyond the social and economic margins of Toronto society.

*“We need to do tangible interventions and tackle the problems that are immediate and that can be addressed – i.e. here in Toronto, and now.”*

### ***Suggested Initiatives for Expenditures***

When agency respondents were asked what they see as the most appropriate initiatives on which to expend the funding, the following suggestions were made:

- Transitional housing with the supports that are necessary to get out and stay out of homelessness.
- Services that deal directly with street homelessness
- Mental health services
- Services that provide opportunities for people to learn the traditional ceremonies
- Educational and training services
- Confidence-building programs for Aboriginal children
- Transportation to take people to traditional activities, e.g. sweats
- Aboriginal addictions programs
- Capacity building programs for Aboriginal agencies

### ***Areas of Interest for Your Agency***

When agency personnel were asked if they had specific projects on which they felt it would be appropriate to expend some of the available funding, the following projects were identified.

- Housing and support programs
- A transitional housing project for women and children with the necessary support services
- A transitional housing project for youth with a wide range of supportive services and programs, including training and education
- A supportive housing project for women
- An Aboriginal housing coordinator
- Development of literacy and life skills programs
- Housing support staff
- A two year education program that teaches the traditions

*“If the dominant culture is not making sense to you, it’s often the traditional teachings that are missing.”*

### ***Concerns re Current Services to Homeless People in Toronto***

When agency respondents were asked if they had concerns regarding the ways in which services were currently provided to homeless people in Toronto, they identified the following concerns.

- The clients of some services that are purportedly for Aboriginals are primarily non-Aboriginal
- There is too much of a short-term funding orientation, making it difficult to provide stability and to assist people in planning a better future.
- Many of the Aboriginal agencies are becoming a crutch rather than a development tool. (Such agencies need to develop their capacity to be able to provide real opportunities to homeless Aboriginals. Staff training should be a priority.)
- The funding for Aboriginal agencies should be controlled by Aboriginals.
- There is a lack of cooperation among Aboriginal agencies.
- There is still too much reliance on shelters and they don’t work. The money needs to be put into longer-term solutions. We have to move beyond crisis intervention.

## 2.2 FOCUS GROUPS WITH AGENCY STAFF

Three focus group discussions were held with Anishnawbe Health Toronto staff and with Native Child and Family Services Toronto staff. Each of these discussion groups involved fourteen (14) staff members, so that there were 42 participants in all. The questions used to structure this focus group were the same as those used for the interviews with key agency personnel, as discussed above, in Section 2.1.

### *Major Challenges Facing Homeless Aboriginals in Toronto*

When asked what they felt are the major challenges facing homeless Aboriginals in Toronto, agency staff responded as indicated in Table 4.

**TABLE 4 – MAJOR CHALLENGES – Agency Staff**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Challenge</b>
1	Poverty/unemployment
2	Lack of affordable and supportive housing
3	Discrimination
4	Low education/skills levels
5	Difficulty in accessing appropriate health care (i.e. with traditional emphasis)
6	Insufficient traditionally-based services
7	Poor life skills – e.g. how to obtain/cook nutritious food
8	Addictions/mental illness
9	Evictions
10	Lack of preparation/relevant knowledge prior to first coming to the city

### *Addressing the Challenges – Agency Staff*

And, when asked for their thoughts on how these challenges should be addressed, agency staff responded as follows:

- More transitional housing in a supportive environment – small scale, with ‘house mother/father’ figure living in. A communal place with structure/rules, with long-term stay – up to one year, with child care, counseling, opportunities re education, employment, etc. with case management services readily available off site. Holistic and culture-based.
- A Rent Bank, specifically for Aboriginals
- More Aboriginal control over the funding of these programs
- An Aboriginal Cultural Centre on its own land – possibly linked to a culturally appropriate substance abuse treatment facility and/or attached to a CHC
- A process/program that intervenes between eviction and resolution.
- Programs that facilitate access to high schools, colleges and universities
- We need a program that gets to people before they’re evicted to help them learn the necessary coping (and succeeding) skills.
- An Aboriginal worker in TCHC.

- Subsidies to landlords to encourage them to rent to Aboriginals
- Supportive services to existing housing and agencies renting (head leasing?) existing units, e.g. in the TCHC portfolio.
- City council should be more aware of Aboriginal issues – recognize our issues. We need more political autonomy.
- An Aboriginal hospital using traditional approaches.
- More Aboriginal CHCs, with the whole range of care, including elder support.
- A residence for family members of Natives in Toronto hospitals.
- A separate education system for high school kids, with traditional instructors and a high standard of education.
- Social work courses in local colleges that focus on the Aboriginal situation.
- More flexibility vis a vis status, re access
- Housing education and training in one place – e.g. Finding My Way program including housing with traditional focus and supports.
- A Native-focused community recreation cum art facility.
- AHT satellites. More Aboriginal-friendly organizations, with an Aboriginal cultural focus.
- An Aboriginal cultural centre attached to a CHC.
- A central emergency connection specifically for homeless Aboriginals (211-type)
- A health bus, specifically for the Aboriginal homeless community
- Allocation of more housing units to Aboriginals
- More Otay/Finding my way-type programs
- AHT satellites in other parts of Toronto, e.g. Scarborough and the West End.
- Better communication among the Aboriginal agencies.
- The need for more safe spaces.

### ***How is it Different for Aboriginals?- Agency Staff***

When asked how they felt the experience of homelessness was different for Aboriginals compared to non-Aboriginals, AHT staff responded as follows:

- They experience being treated with a lack of respect
- The higher level of racism/discrimination that is experienced
- There are more services for the non-Aboriginals
- It's more stressful, they really have to look out for themselves
- Some of the drugs make them more aggressive
- The Culture Shock they experience when they come to the city
- The identity issue
- More police harassment
- A higher incidence of poor health

### *Suggested Funding Mix – Agency Staff*

When staff focus group participants were asked what they felt the funding mix should be for the HPI funds for 2008, they responded as indicated in Table 3.

**TABLE 5 – SUGGESTED FUNDING MIX – AHT STAFF (n=42)**

<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>% Capital</b>	<b>% Programs/Services</b>
9	90	10
18	80	20
8	75	25
6	40	60
1	25	75
<b>Mean</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>26</b>

### **2.3 PROGRAM/SERVICE USER FOCUS GROUPS**

Four focus groups have been held with program/service users. These group discussions were held at Native Women’s Resource Centre, NaMeRes, Anishnawbe Health Toronto and in the youth drop-in of Native Child and Family Services Toronto. In total these focus groups were attended by 53 people. Responses to the focus group discussions have all been synthesized into tables, indicating the most frequent responses to the particular questions.

#### *On Becoming Homeless*

The response to the question: “How did you get to be homeless?” are synthesized in Table 4, below.

**TABLE 4 – PRIMARY REASON FOR INITIALLY BECOMING HOMELESS**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Primary Reason for Becoming Homeless</b>
1	Breakdown in relationship/Family conflicts
2	Addictions
3	Lack of affordable housing
4	Discrimination
5	Loneliness
6	Released from jail without money/support
7	Violence/anger
8	Mental illness
9	Number of children
10	Arrived in Toronto with no resources

### *Perception of What It Took (or takes) To Get Out of Being Homeless*

When service/program user focus group participants were asked what it was they felt got them out of the homelessness (if in the past) or what would get them out of the situation if still homeless, the major responses were as indicated in Table 5.

**TABLE 5 – FACTOR THAT GOT ME BEYOND HOMELESSNESS**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Factor</b>
1	More accessible and affordable housing (particularly with supports)
2	More access to good jobs
3	Education/skills training
4	Having more money
5	More Native-only programs/services
6	Access to support workers
7	Money management programs
8	Better information in jails re what's available in the community
9	Stronger local Native communities
10	Better treatment by the homeless agencies

### *Programs and Services in Toronto that Have Been Most Helpful*

Related to the foregoing was the kinds of programs and services that service/program users felt had been most helpful to them in Toronto. Those listed were:

- Native Women's Resource Centre
- Miziwe Biik
- West Hill Food Bank services
- The Native Canadian Centre
- AHT
- Anduhyaun
- Aboriginal Legal Services
- Native Child and Family Services
- Council Fire
- John Howard
- Eva's Phoenix
- YWCA
- The bail program and Native courts diversion program
- NaMeRes
- Tumivut
- Anger management programs
- Drum circles
- Sessions with elders
- Traditional ceremonies
- Cultural awareness

- A.A
- 2 Spirited People
- Pedhabun Lodge (bring it back)
- Council Fire
- CUP – Crack Users’ Project – Regent Park
- CAMH treatment centre (Donwoods)

### ***Why These Programs and Services?***

When asked to elaborate why these particular programs/services were the most helpful, users focus group participants answered:

- Because they are helpful and they have a Native point of view
- They got me to listen
- Patient staff
- They brought me back to who I am, my ancestry had been taken from me.
- The temporary assistance
- No discrimination
- A good place to get a roof over my head, a place to eat, a place where there are people I can talk to.
- They helped me get myself together
- They helped raise my sense of self awareness, built up my esteem. It was nice that people believed in me.
- Because they help you with one-on-one workers. They give a shit about what is going on.
- They help with jobs, help you save money and get on to your feet
- Because I was just here from Alberta and they helped me without needing to have the Ontario Health Card

### ***What Further Programs/Services Would be Helpful?***

Additional programs and services that consulted users felt would be helpful included:

- Job training that leads to actual jobs.
- More supported educational opportunities.
- More services e.g. shelters specifically for Native people, with no discrimination.
- Support workers at shelters that help you do positive things with your life
- A safe house where you can go and deal with mental health stresses, etc. – especially for Native people (We experience discrimination even if we look white)
- More evening programs because it’s a different world out there at night. Everything is 9 to 5
- An easier way of doing Direct deposits for rent
- More communication among agencies, e.g. through posters
- Agency staff following through

- More evening drop-ins for Natives
- More housing support workers and native outreach workers.
- More counseling for Native youth, especially the young men
- A drop in centre just for Native women
- Realistic life skills training – e.g. budgeting, shopping
- Learning about our Native heritage
- Letting the world out there know we are still here (i.e. the Native people)
- An *actual* Native Men’s Residence (i.e. without non-Natives) – with strong cultural relevance
- More traditional teaching
- Self-awareness raising – who I am, what I can be, increasing my self belief
- More programs with job opportunities –run by Native people
- Native-run businesses
- Better access to fitness facilities
- More clothing programs
- Have services and housing in locations that do not put me in harms way (e.g. of the weight room at John Innes – a great program but in the wrong location)
- **Avoid bad locations!**
- More employment
- Jail integration/discharge programs
- Bus tickets program
- More drop-in food/meal programs
- More child/youth abuse workers in drop ins
- Reduced discrimination against LGBTs, etc. (i.e. appreciate 2 spirits)
- Clothing programs aimed at the under 25s, i.e. with more quality and style – so help when job seeking, etc. (Gift certificates to buy outfits for job interviews)
- New shoe programs
- More multi-media art programs (graffiti, dance, DJ, etc.)
- More scholarships
- More detoxes – for Aboriginals only

### *Ways in Which the Aboriginal Experience of Homelessness is Different*

When participants in these discussion groups were asked if they felt their experience of homelessness was qualitatively different from that of homeless non-Aboriginal people 45 of the 53 (85%) said they thought it was and they went on to say it was different in the following ways:

- The general public has the perception that all Aboriginals in Toronto are homeless because they see so many out on the street.
- The experience is more multi-generational for Natives.
- Non-Natives get more help at agencies such as clothing places and food banks.
- The discrimination we all feel/racism

- We get moved on more if we are panhandling
- Discrimination from police and general public - e.g. of statement: “Put them on a bus and send them back to the reserve, where they belong”
- Stereotyping, we get labeled as “drunken Indian”
- It depends on the area you are in.
- More drinking
- Discrimination re job finding
- We have an important culture and it’s hard to stay true to our roots.
- It feeds into the stereotype of Aboriginals held by the wider society
- There are fewer facilities for Aboriginal people
- We make less when panhandling, squeegeeing, etc.

***How Should the Programs/Services Respond to these Differences?***

Users felt programs/services should respond to these differences as follows:

- More on Aboriginal experience and history should be taught in the schools.
- More traditionally-culturally-based services
- More programs like the AHT Otay program, where you don’t get the money directly
- More programs like Beatrice House (YWCA)
- We need to be taught our rights as Native people.
- Sensitivity training for the police
- Sensitivity training for health care workers
- More government dollars for Native people
- More Native counsellors

### 3. MAIN POINTS FROM THE CONSULTATIONS

Based on the foregoing results of interviews and focus group discussions with 16 key agency personnel, 28 agency staff members and 53 users of programs (i.e. 97 individuals in all), the following main points can be made.

There is widespread agreement that the main challenges currently facing homeless Aboriginals and those at risk of soon becoming homeless are:

- Lack of appropriate and affordable housing, particularly transitional housing with a high level of supports to overcome the day-to-day exigencies of life in the city
- Low levels of education and skills training
- Insufficient opportunities to become involved in tradition-based initiatives
- Those facilities that do exist are often located in areas that put people at further risk
- Widespread discrimination
- The homelessness experience is qualitatively worse for Aboriginals than for others
- Poor levels of health.

There is a particularly strong feeling among respondents that the challenges faced by Aboriginal homeless people in Toronto are greater than those for other homeless people, largely due to widespread discrimination and negative stereotyping by the general population.

The kinds of solutions to these challenges that are most frequently suggested include:

- The provision of more transitional housing programs with ongoing supports, including education for success in urban life.
- Development of programs that will more effectively prepare Aboriginals for a successful urban life.
- Development of closer partnerships between Aboriginal social/health agencies and Toronto colleges and universities to facilitate increased involvement in education/skills training programs.
- Creation of satellite community health centres in several Toronto locations.
- An emphasis on the provision of services within a traditional Aboriginal environment.

- Capacity building within organizations serving urban Aboriginals so that those organizations can increase their effectiveness in reducing the levels of Aboriginal homelessness. This may include the development of ways in which these organizations can provide supports and services more effectively outside what are considered normal urban service/program hours.
- The establishment of an exclusively Aboriginal addictions management program.
- Increased Aboriginal control over funding for Aboriginal homelessness initiatives
- Development of an awareness-raising program aimed at the citizens of Toronto generally re the importance of the Aboriginal people in Canadian history. (An Aboriginal history month? An Aboriginal City Councillor?)
- Increased advocacy for the establishment of an Aboriginal presence at political decision-making levels in Toronto, e.g. on City Council, within the City's public service.

The suggested mix in terms of expenditure of the available funds took into account the need both for housing and the range of support initiatives that are necessary if those who occupy such housing are to be able to maintain their housing status and to succeed in urban life. Such support initiatives were seen to include life skills training, case management and facilitating access to job skills and educational opportunities. On average, the suggested mix becomes 71% capital and 29% programs/services.

The majority of respondents stressed the importance of investing in transitional housing with a strong presence of support services, particularly since there is evidence that this appears to be the most effective approach in getting and keeping Aboriginal homeless people off the margins and into successful ways of living in the city.

#### **4. RELEVANT REPORTS**

The following reports are relevant to this research.

Anderson, Doug (2003) *Moving Towards Unity: A Community Plan for the Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy*

Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategic Interim Management Committee (2004) *All Voices Heard: Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategic Action Plan*

Obanswin-Irwin Consulting Inc. (1998) *A Planning Framework for Addressing Aboriginal Homelessness in the City of Toronto*

Funding requests, sent to Service Canada under Homeless Partnering Strategy – October, 2007 on behalf of the Toronto Aboriginal Community

City of Toronto Homeless Partnership Initiative – Community Plan 2007-2009

In this section these reports are reviewed for their relevance to the current report and for the ways in which they may influence the main findings, conclusions and recommendations. Key relevant points are listed with regard to each of the reports.

##### **4.1 Anderson, Doug (2003) *Moving Towards Unity: A Community Plan for the Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy***

The most relevant aspects of this report come in the 14 objectives listed in the Strategic Plan section of the report. These are:

- 1) To lay foundations for a long-term vision of sustainable community development, considering the next 7 generations.
- 2) To help the diverse Aboriginal community stakeholders to network and build their resources in a coordinated way, using holistic, community-wide development approaches.
- 3) To support community demonstration projects which provide solutions and models focusing on whole Aboriginal family systems as the basis for true community development.
- 4) To support Aboriginal community based models providing the basis for revised government policies and systems.
- 5) To respect, support and involve existing community agencies and services through capacity building projects accountable to the wider community.

- 6) To promote and support unity, peace and cooperation among local Aboriginal stakeholders through a common strategy based on mutual interests.
- 7) To support and contribute to a more unified presentation of holistic Aboriginal interests that considers both urban and reserve-based aboriginal communities across Canada.
- 8) To improve Aboriginal community networking and communications through a coordinated strategy.
- 9) To support the community in the recovery, application and retention of Aboriginal cultures, and foster the development of Aboriginal cultural solutions.
- 10) To identify and access significant funds and other resources from new sources to support the Toronto Aboriginal community, without threatening existing funding arrangements.
- 11) To develop a strategy supporting and building on the development and utilization of local Aboriginal community leadership.
- 12) To support the development of Aboriginal cultural models for community development which build a positive profile of Aboriginal people and provide leadership for all communities.
- 13) To cultivate increased and improved community contact and partnerships with Non-Aboriginal government and corporate leaders.
- 14) To increase client motivation and community involvement by providing a common focus that draws the community together in creative and recreational ways.

#### **4.2 Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategic Interim Management Committee (2004)** ***All Voices Heard: Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategic Action Plan***

This strategic action plan identifies priorities within what are considered to be the nine sector group areas impinging on the daily lives of Toronto's Aboriginals, i.e. (i) Arts, Culture and Media; (ii) business; (iii) youth; (iv) education; (v) employment and training; (vi) health; (vii) housing and homelessness; (viii) justice; (ix) seniors, elders and disabled. Of course as can be drawn from the foregoing consultation materials, all of these sectors – not just sector vii - have some relevance to dealing with the issue of homelessness, since homelessness is best fought through full integration of Aboriginal citizens into society and all nine sectors are germane to that effort. Thus, the listing of priorities within each of these areas has relevance to the current report. These priorities are as follows:

- **Arts, culture and media** – build a multidisciplinary arts centre
- **Business** – establish an economic development corporation
- **Youth** – develop social and recreational facilities
- **Education** – reflect Aboriginal experience in school curricula, improve access to post-secondary education
- **Employment and training** – continue support of agencies delivering employment and training services
- **Health** – addictions services and aftercare, increase training opportunities in health field, recognize/accredit traditional healers
- **Housing and Homelessness** – continue support to Aboriginal agencies delivering services to the homeless
- **Justice** – provide more alternatives to current justice system, support Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination
- **Seniors, elders and disabled** – provide a graduated nursing facility

#### 4.3 **Obanswin-Irwin Consulting Inc. (1998) *A Planning Framework for Addressing Aboriginal Homelessness in the City of Toronto***

This report was commissioned by the 1999 Toronto Mayor's Action Task force on Homelessness. Several of the conclusions in the Obanswin-Irwin report were incorporated in the final report of the Action Task Force that are relevant to this particular report. These were as follows:

- The federal government should carry responsibility for funding housing and supports to the Aboriginal homeless population in partnership with the provincial government.
- A supportive housing pilot project should be established in a suburban area of the City specifically for the Aboriginal population in Toronto. The capital costs should be covered by the federal government. Support services should be attached to appropriate Aboriginal-specific service providers. This project should establish formal linkages to the healing lodge recommended below.
- The federal government should establish an Urban Multi-Purpose Aboriginal Youth Centre in Toronto in cooperation with the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Council Fire and other Aboriginal agencies.
- An Aboriginal clinical detox centre, funded by the Ministry of Health should be established, building upon the efforts of Anishnawbe Health and Pedahbun Lodge.
- Establish a rural-based healing lodge near Toronto to provide opportunities for healing and self-development of the Aboriginal homeless population in Toronto.

This model should be similar to the existing healing lodges in Ontario but with a focus on the homeless population.

- A focused strategy should be established for increasing training and job opportunities for Aboriginal youth based on a transitional housing model in which residents work to upgrade their skills and prepare for independent living. It should be led by Native Child and Family Services in collaboration with Nishnawbe Homes and the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and other youth service providers.

#### **4.4 Funding requests, sent to Service Canada under Homeless Partnering Strategy – October, 2007 on behalf of the Toronto Aboriginal Community**

The key relevant aspects of this funding request are the 10 listed Community Plan Priorities. They are:

- 1) Lack of affordable housing –transitional supportive and permanent – affects the overall Aboriginal population, including the homeless and those at-risk and prevents/prohibits their full integration into society.
- 2) Lack of appropriately funded Aboriginal-operated emergency shelters with counseling services as a first step to getting Aboriginal people off the streets.
- 3) Lack of education and training and employment opportunities prevents people from achieving economic self-sufficiency.
- 4) Lack of life skills, e.g. financial management, interpersonal skills, how to deal with justice-related issues, anger management, dealing with grief, developing healthy and positive support network, etc. – to enable people to get off/stay off the streets and make the transition into decent housing and permanent employment.
- 5) Capacity-building and training required for Aboriginal service providers and front line workers who are working with the homeless to better understand homelessness (root causes, dynamics, etc. and to acquire needed skills.
- 6) Financial assistance required to ensure people stay off the streets.
- 7) Substance abuse issues and lack of culturally-based, Aboriginal-operated detox and residential treatment centre.
- 8) Insufficient long-term care facilities and services for elders.
- 9) Lack of after-care services to assist individuals with mental health challenges, youth released from care of CAS and individuals released from correctional facilities. Lack of services to assist them in re-integration into the community and get them off the street.

10) Coordination of Aboriginal services to homeless required in order to ensure continuum of services to the homeless and at-risk population will better address homelessness in efforts to eradicate it, to enhance awareness of the severity of the problem and generate solutions in the community and to avoid duplication of services.

**4.5 City of Toronto Homeless Partnership Initiative – Community Plan 2007-2009**

The priorities of the City’s 2007-2009 Community Plan and the proposed proportion of budget allocation are as indicated below in Table 6.

**TABLE 6 – CITY’S COMMUNITY PLAN PRIORITIES**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>% Budget Allocation</b>
1. Create new housing opportunities with supports	35%
2. Target capital investments in community and city facilities and shelters	20%
3. Help people access permanent housing and leave shelters behind	19%
4. Help keep people housed who are at risk of homelessness	12%
5. Create skills and training employment opportunities	12%
6. Monitor and measure results of homelessness investments	2%

## **5. A SYNTHESIS OF CONSULTATION RESULTS AND RELEVANT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS/STRATEGIES**

This section attempts to seek out relationships between the consultation findings and the recommendations and strategies of the reviewed reports, particularly in terms of how these assist in identifying the types of initiatives that have the greatest likelihood of success in targeting the available funds to ameliorate Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto.

All initiatives should take a holistic Aboriginal approach that addresses the issues of homelessness in a culturally appropriate manner and that builds on long-term, sustainable solutions. Initiatives to be funded should see all Aboriginals as being part of a family and a wider kin group and provide services/programs accordingly. They should also recognize the importance of forming and maintaining productive linkages with the wider, non-Aboriginal community.

Specific initiatives could include:

- 1) The creation of more transitional housing opportunities, where both safe and secure housing and support services that increase the probabilities of independent success in the city are provided. These services would include the teaching of life skills, making connections to educational and work opportunities and providing the support that increases the likelihood of such opportunities being successful.
- 2) Provision of a space/facility/setting in a natural space (here in the City) where traditional activities can be observed, e.g. sweat lodges, healing lodges, pow-wows in conjunction with non-traditional recreational activities – i.e. an Aboriginal community/recreation/arts/spiritual centre. To also include, if possible, a program dealing with addictions-related issues.
- 3) A CED initiative working closely with businesses to develop work and business experience that can tie traditional modes of production and of doing business with those of modern urban Canada. In association with this would be skills training opportunities.
- 4) A rent bank initiative aimed at assisting Aboriginal renters in keeping their homes.
- 5) Enhancement of programs that work to provide appropriate discharge plans for Aboriginals on leaving correctional facilities.
- 6) A capacity-building initiative tailored to meet the professional development and organizational needs of Toronto agencies working with homeless Aboriginals and those at risk of becoming homeless.

## 6. SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS

Based on the foregoing consultations and overview of recent relevant reports, the following three suggested directions for providing initiatives that will most effectively address Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto are most apparent:

- 1) They should be open to partnerships among relevant agencies.
- 2) They should have a strong Aboriginal cultural component.
- 3) They should have a *direct* impact on the prevalence of Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto

(During the consultations strong views were expressed against the provision of more emergency shelter space. The belief being that such initiatives actually *increase* the likelihood of becoming and remaining homeless.)

Following on the three foregoing suggestions and the proposed mix of expenditures provided through the consultation, a possible breakdown of programs and expenditures is provided in Table 7, below.

**TABLE 7 – POSSIBLE BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURES**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Possible agency(s) to sponsor projects, i.e. those with relevant mandate and interest</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL</b>
Transitional Housing for Young Women and Children - including lots of supports, life skills, education and job connections, etc.	NCFST and Native Women’s Resource Centre	1,650,000	29%
Transitional Housing for Young Men - Lots of supports, life skills, education and job connections, etc.	- NaMeRes, NCFST & AHT (FMW)	1,650,000	29%
Programming/support related to the two above programs		200,000	3.5%
A multi-purpose Aboriginal facility, including health care, addictions services, traditional teaching programs, a location for ceremonies (if possible, located in a ‘sylvan setting’ within the City of Toronto)	Native Canadian Centre Council Fire AHT	1,200,000	21%
Programming/support related to the above program		200,000	3.5%
An Aboriginal CED project feasibility study and pilot program, working closely with local business organizations and George Brown College	- Mizewi Biik - St. Christopher House	150,000	2.7%
An Aboriginal Rent Bank initiative, particularly aimed at families	- Miziwi Biik - Neighbourhood Information Post	400,000	7%
Enhancement of prison-discharge programs	- Spirit of the People	100,000	1.8%
Capacity Building for agency staff and for boards of directors - Available to all Aboriginal agency staff – through Hostels Training Centre		90,000	1.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$5,640,000</b>	

**APPENDIX A**  
**MEMBERSHIP OF TASSA**  
**(Toronto Aboriginal Social Services Association)**

Aboriginal Legal Services  
Anduhyaun (Native Women's Shelter)  
Council Fire Native Cultural Centre Inc.  
First Nations House  
Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Housing Corp  
Miziwe Biik  
Native Child and Family Services of Toronto  
Native Canadian Centre of Toronto  
Native Men's Residence  
Native Women's Resource Centre  
Nishnawbe Homes  
Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres  
Spirit of the People  
2 Spirited People of the First Nation  
Wigwamen Incorporated

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Individuals and Groups Consulted**

#### **1. Key Agency Personnel - Interviews**

Sylvia Braithwaite, Supervisors, Anduhyaun (Native Women's Shelter)  
Dorothy Cook, Executive Director, Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Housing Corp.  
Andrea Chrisjohn, Board Member and past Executive Director, Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre  
Larry Frost, Executive Director, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto  
Joe Hester, Executive Director, Anishnawbe Health Toronto  
Anna Hudson, Housing Coordinator, Native Women's Resource Centre  
Walter Lindstone, Unit Manager, Babishkhan Program of Anishnawbe Health Toronto  
Blanche Meawassige, CEO, Anduhyaun (Native Women's Shelter) and Nekenan Second Stage Housing  
Roger Obonsawin, National Association of Friendship Centres  
Harvey Manning, Executive Director, Native Men's Residence  
Nancy Martin, Executive Director, Miziwe Biik  
Angus Palmer, Executive Director, Wigwamen Incorporated  
Kenn Richard, Executive Director, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto  
Frances Sanderson, Nishnawbe Homes  
Charlene St. Germaine, Executive Director, Spirit of the People  
June Taylor, Executive Director, Native Women's Resource Centre  
Art Zoccole, Executive Director, 2 Spirited People of the First Nation

#### **2. Focus Group Discussions**

##### **2.1 With Agency Staff**

Two focus group discussions were held with agency staff at Anishnawbe Health Toronto (one with the health services program staff and one with the Babishkhan program staff. There were 14 participants in each of these two groups. In addition a group of 14 staff were involved in a focus group discussion at Native Child Family Services of Toronto. Names of participants in these discussion groups were not recorded. However, every effort was made to recruit from across the staff spectrum in all cases.

##### **2.2 With Program Users**

Focus group discussions were held with program users at Native Women's Resource Centre, Native Men's Residence, Anishnawbe Health Toronto and in the youth drop in at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. Again, names of participants were not recorded. And, again, every effort was made to recruit participants from across the spectrum. A total of 53 program users were involved in these four focus group discussions.