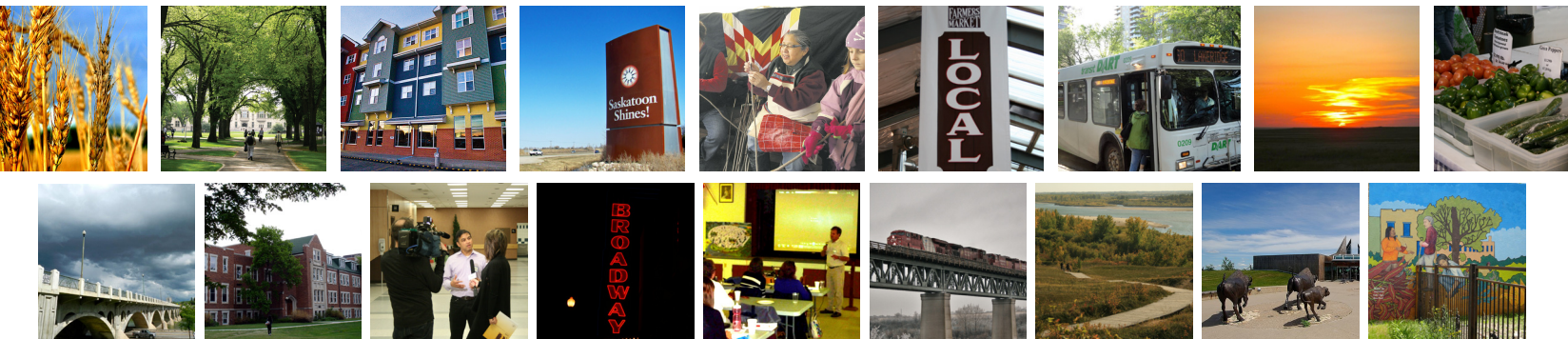# CUISR
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

YXE Connects 2015
A Research Report

Ryan Jimmy and Isobel M. Findlay

Community-University Institute for Social Research

Building healthy, sustainable communities

Since 1999, the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)—formally established as a university-wide interdisciplinary research centre in 2000—has remained true to its mission of facilitating "partnerships between the university and the larger community in order to engage in relevant social research that supports a deeper understanding of our communities and that reveals opportunities for improving our quality of life."

Strategic Research Directions

CUISR is committed to collaborative research and to accurate, objective reporting of research results in the public domain, taking into account the needs for confidentiality in gathering, disseminating, and storing information. In 2007 CUISR adopted five interdisciplinary strategies:

1. Saskatoon Community Sustainability
2. Social Economy
3. Rural-Urban Community Links
4. Building Alliances for Indigenous Women's Community Development
5. Analysis of community-university partnerships

These strategic directions extend our research organized until 2007 in three modules—quality of life indicators, community health determinants and health policy, and community economic development—the result of efforts to address health, quality of life, and poverty that led to the formation of CUISR to build capacity among researchers, CBOs, and citizenry.

CUISR research projects are funded largely by SSHRC, local CBOs, provincial associations, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Beginning in 2007, CUISR's reputation for high quality community-based participatory research (CBPR) enabled us to diversify our funding by responding to community agency requests to conduct research projects for them for a fee.

Tools and strategies

Knowledge mobilization: CUISR disseminates research through newsletters, brown bag luncheons, reports, journal articles, monographs, videos, arts-based methods, listserv, website.

Portal bringing university and community together to address social issues: CUISR facilitates partnerships with community agencies.

Public policy: CUISR supports evidence-based practice and policy at these tables: provincial Advisory Table on Individualized Funding for People with Intellectual Disabilities, Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, and Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee (RIC).

Student training: CUISR provides training and guidance to undergraduate and graduate students and encourages community agencies to provide community orientation in order to promote positive experiences with evaluators and researchers.

YXE CONNECTS 2015
A RESEARCH REPORT

R<small>YAN</small> J<small>IMMY AND</small> I<small>SOBEL</small> M. F<small>INDLAY</small>

S<small>ASKATOON</small>
H<small>OUSING</small>
I<small>NITIATIVES</small>
P<small>ARTNERSHIP</small>

CAB
COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD
ON SASKATOON
HOMELESSNESS

UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

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ABSTRACT

Homelessness in Canada is an increasing concern. On any given night 35, 000 Canadians are homeless; 235, 000 people in Canada can experience homelessness in a year. As a result of research and community initiatives, efforts have moved from crisis intervention to prevention, housing placement, and housing-first strategies supported by the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). Recent efforts in Saskatoon include the Journey Home Housing First at Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service; a Housing Locator at the Lighthouse, specifically working with landlords to create interest in reducing homelessness and supporting all the housing placement programs; a Rapid Re-Housing Team out of the Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre and the Friendship Inn; centralized intake for all housing placement programs out of the Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre and the Friendship Inn; The Lighthouse new housing placement case managers; and Housing First for Families at White Buffalo Youth Lodge. Another important initiative was the YXE Connects event held on May 4, 2015. Organizations such as City Centre Church, Connect Church YXE, The Lighthouse, the United Way of Saskatoon and Area, Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, Saskatoon Health Region, and Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee partnered to organize and host the city of Saskatoon's first YXE Connects. Similar Connect events have been held across the country to act as one-stop shops for vulnerable members of our community to access services in one place, on one day. The YXE Connects was held at two locations—White Buffalo Youth Lodge and City Centre Church—in the neighbourhood of Riversdale and attracted an estimated 600 attendees.

This report is based on a survey of YXE Connects participants. The study received ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan's Behavioural Ethics Board (Beh-REB) to protect the informed consent of participants, their voluntary participation, confidentiality, safety, and anonymity. The short survey was designed to be easy to read and answer and took about ten minutes to complete. A total of six volunteer researchers assisted the CUISR researcher and the principal investigator in conducting the surveys. Volunteers attended a training session prior to data collection that emphasised techniques for interviewing respondents in an ethically responsible manner. Volunteer researchers secured consent (oral, implied, or written). Participation was voluntary and no names were recorded. A total of 98 surveys were completed on May 4th, 2015, covering demographic information, people's expectations of the event, access to services, barriers to services, and what improvements could be made when planning future events.

The findings of the report are discussed in these five sections: Demographic information, Perceptions of YXE Connects, Future YXE Connects events, Service use, and Unmet services and needs. The majority of study participants (n=98) were between the ages of 26 and 49 years (58%), female (64%), and Aboriginal (61.2%). The majority (90%) of the participants called Saskatoon home, while the remaining 10% indicated other locations as home, including Biggar, Ontario, Red Pheasant Cree Nation reserve, Meadow Lake, Winnipeg, Moosomin First Nation Cree Nation reserve, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, and Yorkton. When asked how long they had resided in Saskatoon, the majority (64.3%) reported more than 5 years.

When asked what they expected to get at the event, the most common services and supports listed were housing help (32%) and health resources (32%), employment counseling (29%), food (29%), clothing (29%), skills training (23%), personal care items (23%), and ID clinic (23%), Participants also anticipated opportunities to learn and to volunteer and to get to know other people in the community. In terms of satisfaction, 68% found the event excellent, very good, or good and looked forward to future events. Participants expressed a desire to be more involved with the event and looked to organizers to include their voices when planning future events. These four themes emerged:

Structure and schedule of event
- Hand out maps, lists of the services, and schedule of events
- Maybe have the event on a weekend
- Close the block outside and have services outside as well
- Have more speakers and entertainment
- Host more than once a year

Community building
- Set aside spaces to share stories
- Recruit and involve more homeless and Aboriginal people in the planning and volunteering
- Involve more local small businesses

Advertising
- Ensure better advertising and more food
- Hand out posters on streets
- Recruit volunteers in advance

Increased services and learning opportunities
- Have a broader range of education programs
- Ensure more variety of services and employment opportunities
- Offer opportunities to learn about First Nations culture

- Involve organizations that can help us learn about family trees, ancestry, history
- Provide more clothing options and personal care items (blankets, tents, back packs)

In terms of service use in the last six months, 64% had accessed the Food Bank; 60%, health clinics; 47%, hospitals or emergency rooms; 44%, church-related services; 36%, drop-in centres; 31%, ID help; 23%, Saskatoon Housing Authority; and 22%, shelters. Other notable findings were that some barriers people faced in Saskatoon included discrimination, long wait times, difficult application processes, substandard housing, and shortages of affordable housing.

If people had challenging experiences, many also shared positive, community building experiences, including those at YXE Connects. Being able to take part in YXE Connects was perceived as a great way to volunteer and get to know the community. Some organizations and agencies—such as the Food Bank, The Lighthouse, Westside community clinic SWITCH, Avenue Community Centre (now OUT Saskatoon), Friendship Inn, detox supports, Open Door Society, and St. Mary's Church—were also reported as places building positive relationships. Services that would improve people's lives included housing (72%), education and training (53%), employment (49%), transportation (49%), help finding jobs (45%), food security (38%), and health resources (38%).

These four themes emerged when participants identified what was both important and likely to make their own or other people's lives better:

Services and needs
- Address barriers between haves and have-nots.
- Offer greater variety of counselling services.
- Ensure more homes for people with disabilities.
- Increase support to help mothers get their kids back.
- Offer more services dealing with the effects of residential schools.
- Provide more supports for people living with HIV.
- Improve transportation.
- Provide more accessible streets and sidewalks for people with disabilities.
- Invest in more mental health services.

Planning of the event
- Plan to have more children's activities.
- Plan food. Food was a great idea but they ran out; should have talked to Friendship inn to get an idea of how much food to plan for.
- Provide a place next year where people who are homeless can share their stories. Like this talking with you felt really good, like a weight was lifted off my shoulders.

Housing and shelters
- Need support to become part of the community and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- Need safer locations for shelters, and better places to live.
- Need better housing supports for youth and single people who face or are experiencing homelessness.
- Open services and shelters after hours when you're dealing with the homeless. Build around their hours, and should have books or resources to look for services.
- Need more affordable housing. A major thing is stability.

Opportunities to contribute
- I appreciate the event and the opportunity to talk about poverty. I appreciate all the hard work that went into it.
- Would like to be part of the task force that addresses housing problems and offer mental help supports to others.

In conclusion, the level of satisfaction with the YXE Connects was high with 65% finding the event excellent, very good, or good. The first annual YXE Connects event was successful at reaching out to those most vulnerable to homelessness in Saskatoon. Some promising features that have been linked to YXE Connects success are its involvement of community resources, services, agencies, and volunteers. Future planning of events should continue to look at increasing the range of services, educational opportunities, and enhance involvement from those who experience homelessness or housing insecurity.

A recurrent theme in these and other responses was the desire to be heard and respected, to be included and welcomed and to end the cycles of discrimination and abuse. Several participants reported volunteering at the event and others expressed a desire to be included in future event planning and implementation. In fact, volunteering emerged as an important means for people to feel included and valued in the community.

Housing and shelter supports were key to addressing issues of isolation and loneliness and to building a safe, inclusive community where those most vulnerable (including youth, single people, the homeless) could access safe, affordable, and better housing—and find opportunities to contribute, to address poverty, housing, and mental health concerns.

INTRODUCTION

The annual cost of homelessness to the Canadian economy is $7.05 billion. . . . The point is that homelessness is a problem or a crisis that we created. And if we created it, we can end it.
(Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 8, 15)

Homelessness in Canada is an increasing concern; on any given night 35, 000 Canadians are homeless and 235, 000 people in Canada can experience homelessness in a year. While Canada's population has increased by 30% over the last 25 years, national investments in housing have decreased by 46% from $115 to $60 per capita (Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter, 2014). As a result of research evidence of the changing landscape and community experience and commitments, efforts have moved from crisis intervention to prevention, housing placement, and housing-first strategies supported by the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) with considerable success in provinces from New Brunswick and Quebec to Alberta and British Columbia. In Saskatoon, for example, recent efforts to address homelessness include the Journey Home Housing First at Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service; a Housing Locator at the Lighthouse, specifically working with landlords to create interest in reducing homelessness and supporting all the housing placement programs; a Rapid Re-Housing Team out of the Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre and the Friendship Inn; centralized intake for all housing placement programs out of the Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre and the Friendship Inn; The Lighthouse new housing placement case managers; Housing First for Families at White Buffalo Youth Lodge. In a related initiative, City Centre Church, Connect Church YXE, The Lighthouse, the United Way of Saskatoon and Area, Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, Saskatoon Health Region, and Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee hosted Saskatoon's first annual YXE Connects event, on May 4, 2015, bringing together community agencies, companies, and service providers to deliver housing supports, health care, and services to those who may be facing housing instability, homelessness, or who may be at risk of homelessness. Like other Connect events across the country, it was a one-stop shop for vulnerable members of our community to access services in one place, on one day.

Held in two locations in the neighbourhood of Riversdale, White Buffalo Youth Lodge and City Centre Church, YXE Connects offered free services that ranged from a clothing depot, ID clinic, haircuts, chiropractic treatment, diabetes and breast cancer programming, immunization and HIV and Hepatitis C testing, advice on personal finances and income tax, mental health supports, legal support, housing help, employment and job search supports, refugee and immigrant supports, and a free BBQ for all those who attended. According to DeeAnn Mercier of the Lighthouse, the hope was that "people can build relationships and get to know what supports and services are out there for them" (cited in Warren, 2015). Overall, YXE Connects attracted around 600 people who were pleased with the event: "It's really informative for the community. They should have more of this type of thing

for the community. It's really friendly," (cited in Adam, 2015). Echoing the voices of those who attended YXE Connects, this report explores the perceptions of those who attended the event and agreed to share their experiences of housing and homelessness, access to services, and the YXE Connects event itself. The objectives of the research study include:

- To gather data on those attending YXE Connects, including demographic information and needs relating to housing (including absolute homeless, sheltered homeless, hidden homeless, and at-risk homeless).
- To complete a needs assessment examining service use patterns and needs.
- To identify needs that may currently be unmet or under-serviced.
- To gather data to help plan future annual YXE Connects events.

The report includes a brief literature review, a review of research methods, and a discussion of findings about people's reasons for attending the event, their experience of it and how it might be improved, what services they currently use, and what would make their lives better.

Literature Review

Efforts to address homelessness have improved in Canada with a growth of relevant research on the issue documenting who are impacted and how and developing benchmarks to assess progress (Abramovich, 2012; Gaetz, et al., 2013; Patrick, 2014) revealing how diverse the experiences of homelessness are. For example Gaetz & et al, (2013) in the first such extensive report card on Canadian homelessness suggest that there is a range of housing and shelter circumstances that include:

1. UNSHELTERED - living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation
2. EMERGENCY SHELTERED - staying in overnight emergency shelters designed for people who are homeless
3. PROVISIONALLY ACCOMMODATED - people who are homeless whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, including interim (or transitional) housing, people living temporarily with others (couch surfing), or living in institutional contexts (hospital, prison) without permanent housing arrangements
4. AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS - people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

The federal government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (and its Housing First approach) has a particular interest in developing an understanding of and housing the chronically homeless, "often with disabling conditions... who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year" and the episodically homeless "who are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year" (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014)

Within this range of experiences around homelessness it is important to be aware that there is no single pathway into homelessness or one way out of it (Patrick, 2014). Recent literature indicates there is a spectrum of factors that shape why some people are more at risk than others (Abramovich, 2012; Patrick, 2014). Gaetz et al. (2013) identify "an intricate interplay between structural factors (poverty, lack of affordable housing), systems failures (people being discharged from mental health facilities, corrections or child protection services into homelessness) and individual circumstances (family conflict and violence, mental health and addictions)" (p. 4). According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH; formerly the Canadian Homelessness Research Network) (2012), homelessness is not an individual crisis but "the failure of society to ensure that adequate systems, funding and support are in place so that all people, even in crisis situations, have access to housing" (p. 1). The following groups have been cited as the most at risk of homelessness: Aboriginal people, youth, including LGBT, those from different ethno-cultural backgrounds, families, newcomers to Canada, people impacted by family violence, the elderly, Two-spirit people, and women (Abramovich, 2012; COH, 2012; Gaetz et al, 2013; Patrick, 2014). In Saskatoon single parents, working families, people of Aboriginal descent, and single people have been identified as being in greatest need of housing (Chopin & Wormith, 2008).

According to Gaetz et al. (2013), homelessness is not solely the consequence of bad personal choices; rather the context within which some at-risk groups make these choices needs to be considered. Gatez et al, (2013) indicate the following factors generate pathways into homelessness for some people:

- Structural factors: Are economic and societal issues that affect opportunities and social environments for individuals . . . lack of adequate income, access to affordable housing and health supports, and/or the experience of discrimination.
- Systems failure: Occur when other systems of care and support fail [those who are most vulnerable:] transitions from child welfare, inadequate discharge planning for people leaving hospitals, corrections, and mental health and addictions facilities and a lack of support for immigrants and refugees.
- Individual and relational factors: These include the personal experiences that have caused trauma or a personal crisis and include (family break ups, domestic violence, family abuse, and mental health problems). (p. 13)

In addition to growing household inequality, budget cuts, reduced investments in housing, and reduced benefits for low-income Canadians (Gaetz et al., 2013), in Saskatoon, some factors that have contributed to the state of homelessness include the alarming spike in rental costs with the average rent nearly doubling between 2003 and

2013 (CMHC, 2012) and housing prices tripled between 2005 and 2015 (CMHC, 2014). In addition, 25.9% in Saskatoon Health Region spend 30% or more of their income on shelter (Neudorf, 2014) with 20% of Saskatoon households making $5,000-$30,000 (Dyck, 2015), all of which factors influence the approaches to homelessness.

Current efforts to understand the homeless situation in Saskatoon have included three point in time counts conducted by the Community–University Institute for Social Science Research (CUISR) in 2008, 2012, and the latest completed this year. The findings from these counts allow stakeholders to get a snapshot of the service use patterns, barriers, and demographics, and identify promising strategies that can improve polices around housing initiatives to address homelessness (Findlay, Holden, & Patrick, 2013).

Another strategy that can help stakeholders learn more about the needs of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness are events such as YXE Connects, creating a bridge between those vulnerable individuals and service organizations. The one-stop shop of services helps get the word out about what services are available while drawing from community efforts and resources. For example, Homeless Connect Edmonton describes its mission in this way:

> The mission of Homeless Connect Edmonton is to provide services that will create paths out of homelessness, build lasting partnerships, raise public awareness of homelessness in the community and provide a vehicle for community involvement in addressing the issues of homelessness (Homeless Connect Edmonton, 2015).

In Edmonton the Connect events held twice a year in the spring and fall are led by the Homeward Trust in collaboration with Edmonton Economic Development, Shaw Conference Centre, sector organizations and agencies. One of the largest events of its kind in Canada, with over 1000 guests accessing 100 services, with the support of more than 300 volunteers, the Edmonton event can accommodate at least 1300 because of its partnership with the Shaw Centre offering snacks and drinks to clients (Smith, 2015). It is aligned with the city of Edmonton's 10-year plan to end homelessness. Overall, the Connect events have impacted the communities in which they have been held. The Saskatoon YXE Connect hopes to build on its first event and to continue offering services within a "one-stop" approach.

METHODS

This study engaging YXE Connects participants received ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan's Behavioural Ethics Board (Beh-REB) on April 24 ensuring that the study protects the informed consent of participants, their voluntary participation, confidentiality, safety, and anonymity.

Volunteers

Volunteer surveyors were recruited via email through CUISR's and the University of Saskatchewan's networks, social and local media to develop a skilled and committed volunteer base. Proper and comprehensive volunteer training, as well as a certificate of completion of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE), was a condition of ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Board. A total of six volunteers were recruited and assisted the CUISR researcher and the principal investigator in conducting the surveys. All volunteers were asked to attend a training session prior to the commencement of the data collection that highlighted acceptable techniques for approaching and interviewing respondents in a manner that did not expose either the interviewer or respondent to undue risk. Maintaining this requirement ensures that all parties were acting in an ethically responsible manner.

Data Collection

In the interests of the respectful, ethical treatment of research participants in two busy locations, data collection included in-person surveys with a random sample of participants. An interview script was created with a set of questions that was not overly onerous for participants (in time and other terms).

A total of 98 interviews were completed at both locations and interviews lasted about ten minutes each. Before interviews began, volunteers obtained consent: oral, implied, or written (Appendix A). Participation was voluntary and no names were recorded, although the public location of the interviews meant that participation was not entirely anonymous (no personal information was collected and no links could be made between responses and individuals). After collecting demographic information, the focus of the conversation with participants was on big picture questions such as these: Why were they there? How did they hear about the event? What did they hope to learn, gain, achieve at the event? What did they think of the event? What services are they currently accessing? What do they need but do not currently access? What would make their lives better (housing, employment, education, food security, transportation, etc)? And did they want to add anything that we had not talked about and that could make a difference in their own or other people's lives? A number of open-ended questions gave participants opportunity to give full and meaningful answers (see Appendix B for survey questionnaire).

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred in-house and was completed by the CUISR researcher with the guidance and supervision of the Principal Investigator; the results were prepared according to the objectives and the research themes set out in the survey instrument through consultation with the organizing group. SPSS software was used for input, organizing, and analysis of the data. Participants' voices have also been woven into the discussion as a way to supplement and enrich the findings.

Findings and Discussion

A total of 98 surveys were completed at both sites during YXE Connects from 9am to 4pm on May 4th, 2015 with the target groups of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The survey results are discussed in these five (5) sections:

1. Demographic information
2. Perceptions of YXE Connects
3. Future YXE Connects events
4. Service use
5. Unmet services and needs

Demographic Information

Overall, the majority of those who took the time to share their stories with us were over 25 with 58% of the participants between the age of 26 to 49 years, 32% 50 years or older, while the remainder were 25 years or younger (9%). The majority (64%) of the participants were female, 32% were male, and 4% self-identified as other (gay, two-spirit, two-spirit female). The majority (n=60 or 61.2%) were Aboriginal and 17 or 17.3 % Canadian (Table 1). The remainder (n=16 or 16.3%) of the participants self-identified with an ethnic background not North American. Three participants did not respond and two identified as other but did not specify.

Table 1.

The survey also asked participants to indicate where home was for them, and how long they had been in Saskatoon. The majority (90%) of the participants called Saskatoon home, while the remaining 10% indicated other locations as home, including Biggar, Ontario, Red Pheasant Cree Nation reserve, Meadow Lake, Winnipeg, Moosomin First Nation Cree Nation reserve, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, and Yorkton. When asked how long they had resided in Saskatoon, the majority (64.3%) reported more than 5 years, 12.2% have been in Saskatoon between 1-5years, while 9.3% have been in Saskatoon for 6 months, 2% between 3-6 months, and the remaining (12.2%) for fewer than 3 months (Table 2).

Table 2.

Length of time in Saskatoon	Percent
Fewer than 3 months	12%
3-6 months	2%
6 months	9%
1-5 years	12%
More than 5 years	64%
Total	**100%**

Perceptions of YXE Connects

When asked to indicate how they heard about YXE Connects, 17 % of participants reported posters, 20% by word of mouth, 3% through the Lighthouse, and another 3% via the Saskatoon Health Region. The majority (57%) of the participants said they heard of the event through other sources. Here are some of those responses:

- Facebook
- Church
- Friendship Inn
- Passing by
- Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan (MACSI Centre)
- Newspaper
- Open Door Society
- Radio

In response to a question asking participants to check all of a list of services that they expected to get at the event, the most common services and supports were housing help (32%) and health resources (32%). Participants

also expected to receive help with employment counseling (29%), food (29%), clothing (29%), skills training (23%), personal care items (23%), ID clinic (23%), legal support 19%), eye and dental care (16%), mental health supports (17%), and cultural supports (18%). The remaining services for refugee supports (7%) and childcare (12%) were least expected (Table 3).

Table 3.

Participants also specified under other expectations of YXE Connects not only other services sought but also opportunities to both volunteer and get to know other people in the community:

- Gather information for clients
- Networking to learn about ideas and things in the city, and meet people in the community
- Massages
- Places to learn about ancestry
- Services for people with disabilities
- Learn about diabetes and healthy living
- A chance to volunteer

In regards to levels of satisfaction with the event, 33% felt the event was excellent, 30% thought it was very good, 2% said it was good, 29% felt the event was fair, 4% said they event was poor. The remaining 2% said they didn't know (Table 4).

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Table 4.

Future YXE Connects events

Participants also shared ideas they had for organizers planning future YXE Connects events. The responses are grouped in four (4) themes: structure and schedule, community building, advertising, increased services and learning opportunities.

Structure and schedule of event
- Hand out maps, lists of the services, and schedule of events
- Maybe have the event on a weekend
- Close the block outside and have services outside as well
- Have more speakers and entertainment
- Host more than once a year

Community building
- Set aside spaces to share stories
- Recruit and involve more homeless and Aboriginal people in the planning and volunteering
- Involve more local small businesses

Advertising
- Ensure better advertising and more food
- Hand out posters on streets
- Recruit volunteers in advance

Increased services and learning opportunities
- Have a broader range of education programs
- Ensure more variety of services and employment opportunities

- Offer opportunities to learn about First Nations culture and where to learn about medicines
- Involve organizations that can help us learn about family trees, ancestry, history
- Provide more clothing options and personal care items (blankets, tents, back packs)

Service use

The survey also asked participants what services and supports they accessed in the last 6 months and any problems as well as positive experiences they had accessing these services. A significant number of participants (64%) accessed the Food Bank in the last 6 months. Health clinics were also highly used (60%) in the last 6 months, while 47% of participants reported accessing hospitals or emergency rooms. A total of 44% used church-related services, 36% accessed drop-in centres, 23% used services of the Saskatoon Housing Authority, and another 22% accessed shelters (Table 5).

Table 5.

Services and supports used in the last 6 months	Percent
Health clinics	60%
Job training	18%
Detox	11%
Shelters	22%
Drop-ins	36%
Food Bank	64%
Hospitals/ Emergency	47%
ID help	31%
Saskatoon Housing Authority	23%
Churches	44%
Other	12%

Participants also accessed supports to get identification (31%); only 11% of participants reported accessing detox in the last 6 months. 12% of participants also listed other services they accessed:

- Friendship Inn
- Quint Development Corporation
- Lighthouse in North Battleford
- MACSI (Addiction program)
- Mosque
- Police services

- 911
- Salvation Army
- Welfare, Ministry of Social Services
- Legal agencies
- Home owners group

The majority (63%) of the participants said they did not have problems accessing any of these services in the last 6 months. However, 33% said they did and four participants (4%) had no response. In regards to problems accessing services, some themes emerged that highlighted participant frustration with and difficulties around accessibility of services, discrimination and abuse, and housing concerns.

Accessibility

Wait times as well as complex application processes and no accessible offices were perceived as barriers when trying to access a service. For example, one participant commented: "There are problems with accessing a health card; the application process is so difficult. There is no central office here (Saskatoon) where we can talk with someone. Waiting is the problem."

A similar issue with wait time (and families given priority over single women) was expressed when at the hospitals: "It's hard to find shelter. Long waits at a hospital and the primary targeted services are for families. I feel there is no real help for a single female." There were also issues with trying to access help from social services: "It is very challenging accessing assistance from the social services department; you can be waiting for days to hear anything or sometimes they forget to get back to you, can be a problem."

Discrimination and abuse

In addition to a single woman feeling disadvantaged in hospital care, others reported discrimination when accessing certain services and supports in Saskatoon: "You get different treatment in the emergency if you're an Indian. Going can be a waste of time or worse you get treated terribly and they assume you're a drunk Indian and on drugs." Negative perceptions around mental health issues/concerns were also raised: " If you have a mental illness or want help there is a stigma. The Salvation Army has ignorant staff that turn people away; in hospitals you can be attacked by security and they are judgmental." Another participant felt that the YXE Connects event itself excluded their voices: "I didn't like that we were being marginalized. What we want is the planning committee to include our lived experiences in the event."

There were also issues with social workers not being helpful when it came to issues with sexual abuse in shelters: "I was placed in a shelter with another woman, and the person ended up abusing me sexually. I told my social worker about this and she was not helpful at all. She judged me." One participant also perceived that help was

given only if you were of a certain religious faith: "Churches are bad cause they only help if you accept their views and bible."

Housing concerns

Participants also expressed a concern with the level and quality of homes they were living in: "I've had no heat since February, and it's still not fixed. There are problems with housing, landlords, and neighbours." Another participant indicated an issue with the high rent: "The cost of houses is so high here, and the wage you start at is too low, yet all the things you need to live are going up. So your choices in good housing is low."

Issues with age discrimination was perceived as a barrier when accessing help with housing. " I was young, and maybe I didn't know a lot back then but sometimes I felt that landlords didn't want to rent to me cause I was not responsible or that I would just party. That was the problem," commented one person concerned with the level of service and treatment when attempting to access help.

Positive experiences

If there were challenging experiences, participants also shared positive, community building experiences, including those at YXE Connects. Being able to take part in YXE Connects was perceived as a great way to volunteer and get to know the community. One participant took obvious pride in being involved: "It is nice to see a variety of services here today, and I also got a chance to volunteer and see people from the community. This was a really good event."

Some service organizations or agencies were also perceived as places to build positive relationships. For example, "I like to volunteer, I find them enjoyable at the Food Bank. I made some friends and met some good, nice people." Moving into neighborhoods that others felt were unsafe actually proved otherwise for one participant who felt welcomed: "When I moved into Appleby there was a black family that was really nice to us. They welcomed us and made us feel a part of the neighborhood, very helpful. Some people say that area is bad but that was not what we seen when we moved there." Other services or agencies with which participants had good experiences are these:

- The Lighthouse
- Food Bank and Learning Centre
- Westside community clinic SWITCH
- Avenue Community Centre (now OUT Saskatoon)
- Friendship Inn
- Detox supports
- Open Door Society
- St. Mary's Church – support group

Unmet services and needs

In terms of services that would improve their lives, housing, education and training, employment and job search supports, and transportation topped the list (Table 6). The majority (72%) felt housing services would make significant improvements in their lives, along with 53% indicating more opportunities to further their education and employment (49%). For an important 49% of the participants, transportation services would improve their lives, along with help finding jobs (45%).

Table 6.

Services and supports that would improve quality of life	Percent
Housing	72%
Education and training	53%
Employment	49%
Job search supports	45%
Food security	38%
Health resources	38%
Drug or alcohol treatment	27%
Mental health supports	30%
Legal supports	37%
ID help	30%
Application help	25%
Immigration issues	10%
Language supports	18%
Recreational and leisure	32%
Transportation	49%
Childcare	29%
Eldercare	20%
Cultural supports	31%
Other	6%

In addition, improved access to services related to health resources (38%), food security (38%), and legal supports (37%) were perceived to be beneficial to the quality of their lives. Other services and supports that would improve their lives were recreational and leisure (32%), cultural supports (31%), help getting identification (30%), help with child care (29%), drug and alcohol services (27%), assistance with applications (24%), elder care (20%), language supports (18%), and immigration services (10%). Of additional services that could improve their lives, participants listed these:

- Cree language supports
- Disability services
- More help for single women
- Healthier food choices and opportunities to garden
- Support for anxiety and depression
- United Way would like all the above services accessible

Responding to a question asking if there was anything else they would like to share that was both important and likely to make their own or other people's lives better, participants raised four (4) themes: services and needs, planning of the event, housing and shelters, and opportunities to contribute.

Services and needs
- Address barriers between haves and the have-nots.
- Offer greater variety of counselling services.
- Ensure more homes for people with disabilities.
- Increase support to help mothers get their kids back.
- Offer more services dealing with the effects of residential schools.
- Provide more supports for people living with HIV, including a place where they can connect, talk, and share.
- Improve transportation. It is an issue in this city; it's very hard trying to get around to appointments and stuff.
- Provide more accessible streets and sidewalks for people with disabilities.
- Invest in more mental health services.

Planning of the event
- Plan to have more children's activities here.
- Plan food. Food was a great idea but they ran out; should have talked to Friendship Inn to get an idea of how much food to plan for.
- Provide a place next year where people who are homeless can share their stories. Like this talking with you felt really good, like a weight was lifted off my shoulders.

Housing and shelters
- Need support to become part of the community and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- Need safer locations for shelters, and better places to live.
- Need better housing supports for youth and single people who face or are experiencing homelessness.
- Open services and shelters after hours when you're dealing with the homeless. Build around their hours,

and should have books or resources to look for services.

- Need more affordable housing. A major thing is stability.

Opportunities to contribute

- I appreciate the event and the opportunity to talk about poverty. I appreciate all the hard work that went into it.
- Would like to be part of the task force that addresses housing problems and offer mental help supports to others.

Conclusion

The voices reflected in this report highlight current service use patterns of those who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness and attended YXE Connects, their unmet services and needs, and ideas to plan future YXE events. Interestingly, 90% of the 98 participants (90% of whom were over 25 years of age, 60 % female, and 61.2% Aboriginal) who took time to share their experience listed Saskatoon as home and had lived in the city for 1-5 years (12.2%) or more than 5 years (64.3%). Forty-three percent of those attended had heard about the event through posters, word of mouth, or particular organizations (Lighthouse and Saskatoon Health Region), while 53% reported traditional and social media as well as other organizations. Participant motivation to attend was most commonly connected to housing and health supports (32% each); food and clothing (29% each); skills training, ID clinic, and personal care items (23% each); and legal, eye, and dental, mental health, and cultural supports (between 16 and 19%). Other expectations included other health interests (diabetes and disabilities) as well as community building opportunities. A recurrent theme in these and other responses was the desire to be heard and respected, to be included and welcomed and to end the cycles of discrimination and abuse. Several participants reported volunteering at the event and others expressed a desire to be included in future event planning and implementation. In fact, volunteering emerged as an important means for people to feel included and valued in the community.

The level of satisfaction with the YXE Connects was high with 65% finding the event excellent, very good, or good. Only 4% rated the event poor. As such, the first annual YXE Connects event was a success. Some promising features that have been linked to YXE Connects success are its involvement of community resources, services, agencies, and volunteers. Overall participants were satisfied with the event and are looking forward to future events. A theme resonating throughout the report is that the participants appreciate the opportunity to be involved with the event and build a sense of community. They indicate that the organizing committee of YXE Connects should consider hosting more than once a year, involve more local businesses, and engage those with lived

experience and Aboriginal people in planning and organizing. Other recommendations include the following: more food; improved advertising of the event and materials (maps, list of services, schedule of event); outdoor as well as indoor locations; increased variety of services, speakers, education and entertainment, including children's activities; engaging diverse communities of Saskatoon, and adding opportunities to hear one another's stories. The heart and strength of YXE Connects are the volunteers and the Saskatoon community.

Overall the current services that were accessed most frequently were the food bank (64%), health clinics (60%), hospital-related services (47%), church-related services (44%), drop-in centres (36%), ID supports (31%), shelters (22%, and Saskatoon Housing Authority (22%). The majority (63%) of the participants indicated that they did not have any problems accessing these services, while 33% reported difficulties with accessibility, discrimination, and abuse. By contrast, others listed organizations (Lighthouse, Food Bank, West Side Community Clinic and SWITCH, Avenue Community Centre (OUT Saskatoon), Friendship Inn, Open Door Society, St Mary's Church) where they had good and positive experiences. One participant commented on how important the Food Bank was as a place to make friends and volunteer together. In terms of unmet needs, those rated most highly were the cases of housing (72%), education (53%), employment (49%), job help (45%), and transportation services (48%).

Four themes emerged among important considerations that would make people's lives better: services and needs, planning of the event, housing and shelters, and opportunities to contribute. Growing inequality between the haves and have-nots underpinned a reported need for more supports for those experiencing the intergenerational effects of residential schools and other disadvantages (those with disabilities, HIV, mental health issues; mothers and children) and for YXE Connects activities to include children's activities and story sharing opportunities. Housing and shelter supports were key to addressing issues of isolation and loneliness and to building a safe, inclusive community where those most vulnerable (including youth, single people, the homeless) could access safe, affordable, and better housing—and find opportunities to contribute, to address poverty, housing, and mental health concerns.

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Participant Consent Form

Project title: "YXE Connects—Participant Research."

My name is ------------------ and I am the research assistant on this research led by Dr. Isobel Findlay, Professor, Management and Marketing, Edwards School of Business, who may be contacted at (306) 966-2385, or by email at findlay@edwards.usask.ca.

Purpose: This study aims to do the following:
1) To hear from those attending YXE Connects about their needs relating to housing
2) To learn about people's service use patterns and needs
3) To identify needs that may currently be unmet or under-serviced.
4) To gather information to help plan future YXE Connects events.

Procedure:
This study involves a voluntary interview. I will explain to you what the study is about, and what you may expect during this interview. Ask any questions at any point. This survey will take 10 minutes. If you agree, I will give you this consent form to sign or you can signal orally that you agree and I will write down that you agree and understand. I will keep the copy for our records. Then, if you agree, we will start the survey. If you don't want to provide your name for consent, we will consider your consent implied by participating in the interview.

Potential Risks:
The interview will create little or no risk to you, and I will try to make sure you are comfortable answering the questions. If you are not comfortable, you may refuse to answer any questions. You may stop and withdraw from the interview at any time and your forms will be destroyed. Your participation is entirely voluntary and there will be no penalty to you if you to stop. Your confidentiality is important, and I will make every effort to ensure it is protected. We will discuss limits to confidentiality in another section.

Benefits of your Participation:
This is an opportunity for you to share your experience, to tell us about your hopes and needs. Through this study, we hope to help organizations and individuals better meet people's needs. The outcomes may allow better decisions by people in charge, and improve access to or delivery of service, although we cannot guarantee these results.

Confidentiality:
I will make every effort to ensure that you and our discussions are confidential. Your name will not be connected in any way with the information you share. Only the project researchers will see the surveys. When the final report is completed (or any information from the report is shared), your name will not be used, and no one will be able to connect your name to what you say. Your name or any identifying information will NOT appear in any publication

or presentation. If quotes are used in reports, names will not be revealed; for example, "One woman said…," may be used to protect your identity. The research findings will be shared in a report, in short summaries, on CUISR's website, social media, and at a community event that will be widely publicized. Findings may be used at conferences, or in articles. In whatever form, your identity will be protected.

Storage of Data: Dr. Isobel Findlay is the main researcher on this project and is ultimately responsible for safe keeping of the data. The consent forms will remain separate from the surveys, so that your confidentiality will be protected.

Right to Withdraw:
- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- If you are not comfortable answering any questions, you may skip them; if you are uncomfortable with the interview, you may withdraw. If you choose to withdraw, all information will be destroyed. Since we are not collecting any personal information, once the interview is complete we will not be able to identify your interview to withdraw your contribution.

Follow up:
You can learn about the results at a community forum or on CUISR's website or you may pick up a short summary from any of the YXE Connects organizing group.

Questions:
Please feel free to ask questions at any time. The study was approved by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board on April 24, 2015. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Ethics Office at ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975. If you are calling from outside of Saskatoon, you may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Consent to Participate:
I have understood the description and had a chance to ask questions. I agree and consent to participate in the study.

_____   _____

Participant   Date

_____   _____

(Signature of Participant)   (Signature of Researcher)

Oral consent
I read and explained this consent from before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of the contents and appeared to understand.

_____   _____   _____

(Participant)   (Researcher signature)   (Date)

Implied consent
By participating in the interview, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study.

CUISR
Community-University Institute for Social Research

YXE Connects Survey Questionnaire

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer with the Community-University Institute for Social Research at the University of Saskatchewan. On behalf of the YXE Connects event organizers, we are talking with participants to gather information about people's hopes and experiences of today's event to help identify service and other needs and to help plan future events.

Would you be willing to answer a few questions? It will take about 10 minutes to complete.

If YES, complete questionnaire with respondent. If NO, thank them.
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Thanks for agreeing to participate in the survey. You will be completely anonymous and only group data will be reported. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can skip a question or stop the survey at any time, for any reason.

Part One: *(First I'd like to ask some questions about yourself.)*

1. May I ask you how old you are? _____ years

If unknown or refused, estimate by these ranges:
- ❍ 25 years or younger
- ❍ 26 to 49 years
- ❍ 50 years or older

2. What is your gender identity?
- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female
- ❍ Other (specify): _____
- ❍ Refused/no answer

3. How would you describe your ethnic or racial background? *(Read all options as necessary)*
- ❍ **Aboriginal** (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
- ❍ **Other North American (**Acadian, American, Canadian, New Brunswicker, Newfoundlander, Nova Scotian, Ontarian, Quebecois)
- ❍ **French origins** (Alsatian, Breton, French)
- ❍ **British Isles origins** (Channel Islander, Cornish, English, Irish, Manx, Scottish Welsh)

- **Western European** (Austrian, Belgian, Dutch, Flemish, Frisian, German, Luxembourger, Swiss)
- **Eastern European** (Bulgarian, Belarusian, Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Moldovan, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian)
- **Northern European** (Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish)
- **Southern European** (Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Cypriot, Greek, Italian, Kosovar, Macedonian, Maltese, Montenegrin, Portuguese, Serbian, Sicilian, Slovenian, Spanish, Yugoslavian)
- **Other European** (Basque, Jewish, Roma, Slavic)
- **Caribbean origin** (Antiguan, Bahamian, Barbadian, Bermudian, Carib, Cuban, Dominican, Grenadian, Haitian, Jamaican, Kittitian/ Nevisian, Martinican, Montserratan, Puerto Rican, St. Lucian, Trinidadian/ Tobagonian, Vincentian/Grenadian, West Indian)
- **Latin, Central, and South American**
- **Central and West African** (Akan, Angolan, Ashanti, Beninese, Cameroonian, Chadian, Congolese, Gabonese, Gambian, Guinean, Ibo, Ivorian, Liberian, Malian, Nigerian, Peulh, Senegalese, Sierra Leonean, Togolese, Yoruba)
- **North African** (Algerian, Berber, Coptic, Dinka, Egyptian, Libyan, Maure, Moroccan, Sudanese, Tunisian)
- **Southern and East African** (Afrikaner, Amhara, Bantu, Burunduian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Harari, Kenyan, Malagasy, Mauritian, Oromo, Rwandan, Seychellois, Somali, South African, Tanzanian, Tigrian, Ugandan, Zimbabwean, Zulu)
- **West Central Asia and Middle Eastern** (Afghan, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Iranian, Iraqi, Israeli, Jordanian, Kazakh, Kurd, Kuwaiti, Lebanese, Palestinian, Pashtun, Saudi Arabian, Syrian, Tajik, Tatar, Turk, Uighur, Uzbek, Yemeni)
- **South Asian** (Bengladeshi, Bengali, East Indian, Goan, Gujurati, Kashmiri, Nepali, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sinhalese, Sri Lankan, Tamil)
- **East and Southeast Asian** (Burmese, Cambodian [Khmer], Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Mongolian, Singaporean, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese)
- **Oceania** (Australian, New Zealander)
- **Pacific Islands** (Fijian, Hawaiian, Maori, Polynesian, Samoan)
- Refused/no answer
- Other (specify): _____

4. Where is home for you?
- Saskatoon
- Other (specify) _____

5. How long have you been in Saskatoon?
- Fewer than 3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1-5 years
- More than 5 years

Part Two: (*Now I'd like to ask questions about your experience of YXE Connects.*)

6.   How did you hear about YXE Connects?
- ❍ Posters
- ❍ Word of mouth
- ❍ City Centre Church
- ❍ The Lighthouse
- ❍ Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre
- ❍ Saskatoon Health Region
- ❍ Other (specify) _____

7. What did you hope to get out of the event (check all that apply)?
- ❍ Employment counselling
- ❍ Skills training
- ❍ Food
- ❍ Foot, hair care
- ❍ Eye and dental care
- ❍ Housing help
- ❍ Clothing
- ❍ Personal care items
- ❍ ID clinic
- ❍ Legal support
- ❍ Health resources
- ❍ Mental health supports
- ❍ Cultural supports
- ❍ Refugee and immigrant support
- ❍ Childcare
- ❍ Other (specify)

8. What has been your experience of the event?
- ❍ Excellent
- ❍ Very good
- ❍ Good
- ❍ Fair
- ❍ Poor
- ❍ Don't know

9. Do you have any suggestions that might help organizers plan events in future?

_____

Part Three: *(Now I'd like to ask you questions on services that you are accessing or would like to access.)*

10.   a) Have you used any of the following services in the last 6 months? (Read list and ask yes or no for each question and check their response to each) (If none, move to Q10e).

	Yes	No
Health clinics	O	O
Job training/Job supports	O	O
Detox	O	O
Shelters	O	O
Drop-ins	O	O
Food bank	O	O
Hospital/emergency room	O	O
Services that help you get ID	O	O
Saskatoon Housing Authority	O	O
Churches	O	O
Other (specify):	O	O

c) Have you had any problems accessing <u>any of the services you just mentioned?</u>
   O Yes
   O No *(Go to Q10e)*

d) *(If yes),* what problems have you had?

_____

_____

_____

(e) *(If no)*, are there good experiences that you'd like to share?

_____

_____

_____

11. What services, supports, or opportunities would make your life better?
   O Housing
   O Education and training
   O Employment
   O Job search supports
   O Food security
   O Health resources
   O Drug or alcohol treatment
   O Mental health supports
   O Legal supports

- ⭘ ID help
- ⭘ Help with application for services
- ⭘ Immigration issues
- ⭘ Services in languages other than English
- ⭘ Recreation and Leisure Services Facilities
- ⭘ Transportation
- ⭘ Childcare
- ⭘ Elder care
- ⭘ Cultural supports
- ⭘ Other (specify)

12. Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not talk about that is important and would make your own or other people's life better?

_____

_____

Volunteer Closing Script (Please read):

That concludes our survey. Thank you for participating. Your answers will help the YXE Connects organizing group and service providers in the city of Saskatoon better plan its services to meet people's needs.

Thank you again for your assistance.

**This study has been reviewed by, and received approval
through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan.**

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