



Current members of GMHSC:

- AIDS Moncton Inc.
- Atlantic People's Housing Ltd.
- Blankets for Moncton
- BUILT Network Moncton Inc.
- CMHC
- Codiac RCMP
- Community Chaplaincy for Ex-Offenders
- Elizabeth Fry Society of NB
- John Howard Society of Southeastern NB Inc.
- MAGMA
- Maison Nazareth House
- Mobile One Community Services Inc.
- Moncton Youth Residences Inc.
- New Life Mission Inc.
- Salvus Clinic
- The Salvation Army
- YMCA
- YWCA

MANDATE

The Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee is an inter-agency committee representing agencies in Greater Moncton that work with the homeless population and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Established in 2000, the GMHSC provides leadership and coordinates communication among stakeholders and service providers to ensure the implementation of the Greater Moncton Community Plan on Homelessness. It also works to create public awareness about issues surrounding homelessness, poverty and housing.

www.monctonhomelessness.org

At Home/Chez Soi project addressing homelessness in Greater Moncton

In 2008, Moncton was one of five sites in Canada chosen for a research demonstration project on chronic homelessness and mental illness. Sponsored by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the At Home/Chez Soi project is based on a "housing first" approach where people are housed and then given supports to help them maintain their housing. The following is an update provided by Joanne Murray, Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Southeastern NB and a member of the Local Advisory Committee.

The At Home/Chez Soi project is supported by a Local Advisory Committee (LAC), the mandate of which is to identify ways to continue successful aspects of the project and to promote the results.

The members of the LAC provide advice and feedback to the Local Project Team for planning and making sure local concerns are considered. In order to fully meet this mandate, members of the LAC are strongly encouraged to participate in one of the five functional areas of the project: Housing, Vocational, ACT Team, Rural and Research. The role of each LAC member on these Sub-Committees is to ensure a flow of information and communication back and forth from Sub-committee to LAC and the project's site coordinator, Claudette Bradshaw.

"The At Home/Chez Soi project has already relieved the stresses or service burden on existing services... hospitals report less crowding; shelters are reporting less use; clients are saying they can 'get in' places without waiting long."

As a member of the Research Subcommittee, I have attended regular Research Team meetings at the Université de Moncton over the past year and a half. The Research Team is made up of about 20 people, and consists of field researchers and lead researchers from both the Moncton site and the Rural site. This group is led by Dr. Jimmy Bourque from UdeM and Dr. Tim Aubry, the lead researcher from U of Ottawa.

The goal of the research component of the At Home/Chez Soi project is a) to see if providing people who are homeless with a place to live and the support they need is more helpful to that person than what we are currently doing, and b) to find out how the associated costs compare to the usual services. People are referred to the project by helping agencies in the community, hospitals, prisons, social service agencies and other organizations or government departments that work with people who are struggling with housing. They can also self-refer.

Because it is a research project, it was necessary to create a randomized sample from the referrals. This meant that half of the people referred would be selected for the Housing First group, and be offered a place to stay and all of the services they need. The other half would be selected for the control group, where they would continue to receive services they were currently using and serve as the basis for comparison. The concept of having a computer randomly choose who would get the full service model and who would be screened into the control group created a great deal of concern among the non-profit community. The community felt that this could mean that those with the greatest need (cont'd pg 2)

(cont'd from pg 1) would not necessarily receive it, that people with very fragile emotional states could be further devastated by rejection, that this process might jeopardize trust and valuable relationships with essential service agencies. It was a huge risk to refer a valued client to the project.

In the end, agencies did refer their neediest clients, half of whom received “full services;” the other half, “service as usual.” Early on, we learned that, even though front-line workers spent time explaining that there was literally a 50-50 chance that they would get selected for the control group, many people who ended up in the control group experienced significant emotions with that decision. And, we would soon learn, so did the researchers who had to deliver the news to the person sitting in front of them.

For many, it was devastating news. It felt like another huge rejection. Some felt a great sense of hopelessness about their future. As a result, extra efforts were expended to debrief the person right away and then to follow up over the next day or two to make sure they had some support in the community to deal with this. Members of the research team received support and debriefing as well. So while the concerns of the non-profit community at the beginning of the project were, in fact, valid, the care and concern with which the research team responded became exceptional.

As of April 30th, Moncton was the first of five sites nationally to reach its target. A total of 198 people are participating in the project. Of these, 100 have been given housing and services for mental health needs, addictions, socialization and medical care for a period of up to three years. The other 98 are being served in the community as they always have been, but have been invited to share their experiences at regular intervals through the research project. As of June 6th, the total sample size was 196, following the recent passing of two participants, one in each group.

The experiences and outcomes of these two groups will be compared over the next two years to identify whether Housing First is a better way to meet the needs of homeless people with mental illness, and also whether it is more cost effective than servicing them in hospitals and prisons. The data collection phase will continue until April 2013, with initial findings becoming available some time after May 2012 (once the last person accepted into the project has completed a full 12 months of housing and services).

While the hard data will only be available sometime next year, there are a few things that we know already. First, the At Home/Chez Soi project seems to have relieved the stresses or service burden on existing services by taking 100 people out of the ‘traditional system,’ thereby ‘opening up’ space for others to get better service. Anecdotally, hospitals report less crowding; shelters are reporting less use; clients are saying they can ‘get in’ places without waiting long.

Another outcome so far that will change service provision in this area is that people involved in the project are reporting seeing their clients differently – seeing their human side. Because they have been able to spend more time with them, have heard more of their “story” – how they became homeless – they are developing a better understanding of people who are homeless. They are also reporting serving their clients differently – being aware of creating dependencies by automatically giving clients the maximum of benefits available, when it may be more helpful to see what clients are capable of and only provide services for the things they cannot do.

I personally have learned that housing and services are not enough. People who have been living on the street have built a community there, and taking them out (even though it’s the best thing for them) can result in significant loneliness, boredom, guilt, fear and isolation. This information has been invaluable as the agency I oversee, the John Howard Society of Southeastern NB Inc., develops its transitional housing component.

I have worked on a number of research projects in the past 17 years, in a variety of capacities, and I can say that this particular project team has been an outstanding example of integrity in research in this field. They have shown a level of care and humanity, without compromising outcomes, that deserves recognition. I have confidence that as they continue to hear the stories and experiences of the 198 people in the project over the next two years, they will be shared with us in a way that is meaningful and will effect change. I, for one, am looking forward to continuing to follow their work. There are over 25 papers being written, or co-written, by the research team at the Université de Moncton on various topics. This work will undoubtedly change the way services are provided to people who are homeless, change the way community thinks about mental illness, and open the doors for more valuable research in this field.

NOTE: Unique to the Moncton site is the inclusion of a rural component. Twenty-five people are receiving full services, and a control group is being created to compare experiences and outcomes. The work that has been done to date is important and hopeful. A full article in a future edition of this newsletter will be dedicated to the rural component.

Central United Church Drop-In celebrating nine years

Contributed by Linda MacDonald

After many months of preliminary meetings with congregational members, church council and ReConnect Street Intervention staff, Central United Church opened its doors at 150 Queen Street in October of 2002 for a weekly Drop-In Centre from 1-3:30pm.

The goals for this much-needed downtown outreach program include providing a warm, friendly, non-denominational afternoon for homeless and near-homeless street people and others in need of a weekly safe place to socialize with one another and with caring volunteers. Refreshments are provided along with friendship, games, information about resources available in the community, direction and assistance in the area of personal needs are offered and pastoral care, as requested. The Drop-In provides a consistent place for Reconnect staff to meet with clients requiring services available in the community (i.e., food banks, housing, birth certificates, transportation, etc).

We are approaching our 9th anniversary. Weekly attendance has steadily increased from an initial six to eight clients to upwards of 40-50 clients weekly. This program is sponsored by our church family, community friends, our dedicated team of volunteers and our ReConnect partnership.

We are pleased to have enjoyed certain “regulars” who have returned week after week since this outreach initiative began. Drop-In clientele look forward with enthusiasm to this mid-week program, and they proudly invite friends and acquaintances to come share in the experience. Several times during the year, we host special parties in recognition of our anniversary, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Easter, Halloween, etc., as well as simply celebrating who we are and what we do. These lively events appear to be enjoyed by all. Thanks to the generosity of Central United members, other church affiliates and our friends in the community, we have been able to provide for most of the clients’ requests for bedding, hygiene products, clothing, etc.

Over the years, we have learned that our clients are mainly looking for friendship, a listening and caring ear, a sense of belonging, ownership in the program, being accepted, opportunities for socializing in a safe environment, a warm hug and most importantly the assurance that each Wednesday we will be there to greet them.

NOTE: The Central United Drop-in closes from June 8th to September 14th. ReConnect Street Intervention Program will hold weekly drop-ins Monday through Thursday during the summer from 1pm to 3pm at 575 Main Street in downtown Moncton.

Community suppers:

- 2nd Sunday of the month, St. George’s Anglican Church, 51 Church Street, Moncton.
- 3rd Sunday of the month, First United Baptist Church, 157 Queen Street, starting at 5pm.
- Saturday and Sunday nights after the 15th of each month at House of Nazareth, 14 Clark St., Moncton.

Summer reading list...

- *All Our Sisters: Stories of Homeless Women in Canada* by Susan Scott. “With uncompromising honesty and a deep sense of empathy, Scott recounts [women’s] stories while highlighting the many underlying problems they face [including] personal histories of abuse, addiction and violence as well as ... a paucity of affordable housing and a lack of social services sensitive to women’s needs.” Scott interviewed 60 women facing homelessness from Vancouver to Ottawa.
- *Safe Haven: The Story of a Shelter for Homeless Women*. Urban anthropologist Rae Bridgman details the development of a housing project for women in Manitoba, and paints a distinct picture of the chronically homeless and those on the front-lines of this live-saving service. She explores in careful and intimate detail the perspectives of the women who work and live at Savard’s, a unique shelter for homeless women in downtown Toronto.

WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS, IDEAS AND FEEDBACK.

SEND TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER SUE CALHOUN moncton.homelessness@gmail.com

If you have questions about the Homelessness Partnership Strategy,
contact Mireille Roy at Service Canada 506-533-5882 or mireille.roy@servicecanada.gc.ca

The 4th Report Card on Homelessness in Greater Moncton is now available at www.moncton.homelessness.org