POVERTY, HOMELESSNESS AND MIGRATION IN NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO, CANADA

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Abstract: This special issue describes a multi-year community-university research alliance that explores issues related to poverty, homelessness, housing and migration in a vast region within northern Ontario, Canada. This introductory article explains the approach to the methodology used in the project and provides and an integrative perspective to the studies undertaken. The six articles presented in this special issue are placed in a broader context and briefly summarized. The articles deal with poverty, migration, period prevalence counts of homelessness, studies conducted within two First Nations and a theoretical perspective on the use of public space by homeless people.

Keywords: First Nation, urban Indigenous, homelessness, migration, northeastern Ontario, space.

I. THE PROJECT

Poverty, Homelessness, and Migration (*PHM*) is an interdisciplinary project created in 2010 to study factors related to extreme poverty, homelessness and migration in northeastern Ontario.[1] *PHM* focuses on issues that must be examined in short and long term ways. A collaborative university and community-based project, *PHM* examines economic, political and social structures that limit the choices available to northern communities attempting to deal with these issues. This project provides training in community research, strengthens existing expertise in the North, and shares and applies knowledge learned through practical projects and social action. The research alliance is composed of a multi-disciplinary university research team and community partners from four First Nations, four towns and three cities.

It has three main goals. First, *PHM* seeks to provide in-depth knowledge of the interconnections between social, economic, health, political, historical and environmental forces as they relate to northern people's experiences of homelessness/housing need and movements between northern rural or remote communities and urban centres in the near-north. Secondly, *PHM* examines the relationships between colonialism including residential schools, discrimination, racism and the social organization of homelessness among Indigenous peoples and other northern groups. Thirdly, it seeks to mobilize northern communities to address the local issues related to poverty, housing need, homelessness and migration through increased knowledge and awareness, the development of expertise in northern communities, and the application of research knowledge to make positive change in the north and take concrete steps toward social development.

Poverty, core housing need and homelessness are among the most pressing social problems affecting communities across the country. While the consequences of these problems on large urban communities have had the benefit of numerous studies, prior to 2010 no systematic study had been undertaken to examine the impact of these issues at a regional level within northeastern Ontario by studying rural and remote communities, towns and cities. A goal of the studies presented in this volume is to fill some of the gaps in the literature; it also aims to provide a better understanding of the extent, nature, processes and dynamics within communities in the northeastern Ontario region in order to provide a sound basis for problem resolution. All of the studies related to homelessness and housing issues presented here adopt the same definition of homelessness—viewing

[1] This project is funded by the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board, and Laurentian University.

it as a spectrum—ranging from absolute homelessness to living in conditions that place individuals at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

1. The context

Any attempt to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of homelessness and housing in northern Ontario and of their related circumstances must address several particular challenges. Firstly, northeastern Ontario[2] encompasses a large geographic area, approximately 250,000 square kilometers, yet it is sparsely populated with just over 500,000 inhabitants. Since the 1996 census, its population has decreased by 6%. Secondly, it is home to a population that includes urban, rural and remote communities. Sudbury, its largest city, has a population of 160,000, while the town of Moosonee has a population of approximately 3,500[3] with about 85% being Cree. Thirdly, its population is linguistically, culturally and ethnically diverse. About 25% of the population speaks French as a first language. Some 40,000 are Indigenous persons.

The consequences of poverty, housing need and homelessness are felt as deeply in northern and southern communities in Canada, and are as prevalent in economic recessions as economic booms. Until *PHM* began its research, little information was available about homelessness in communities north of Sudbury. We know that the extent and nature of the homelessness problem in Sudbury, Ontario remained largely unchanged between 2000 and 2009 (Kauppi, Gasparini, Pallard, Garg, Montgomery & Webster, 2009). However, the quality of housing available to low income people has deteriorated since 2000 given a rental vacancy rate below 1% (CMHC, 2008). Communities of northern Ontario in the Arctic watershed along Highway 11 between Timmins and Hearst and the western James Bay region have strong links to Sudbury and North Bay, which are key providers of health, education and social services to communities further north, and people migrate to the near-north cities of Sudbury and North Bay in search of employment, education or services. Nine studies of homelessness indicated that up to 28% of homeless people in Sudbury have migrated from other communities (Kauppi et al., 2003; 2009). However, prior to 2010, little systematic research had been conducted to examine migration and homelessness in North Bay, Timmins, Hearst, Cochrane or the western James Bay communities of Moosonee/Moose Factory, Fort Albany and Kashechewan.

A study in Sudbury showed a gap in the published literature on homelessness and migration within Canada and particularly within northern Ontario (Kauppi et al., 2009). However, migrants often include the most disadvantaged persons among the homeless population. Indigenous people are greatly over-represented among homeless migrants; grappling with homelessness in northern and First Nations communities requires an understanding of interconnected social, economic, political, environmental and historical processes (Kauppi et al. 2009; Kauppi, Pallard, Stephen & Neegan, 2013). The Conference Board of Canada (2009) reported that Canada scores poorly on measures of social performance, particularly in child and working-age poverty; yet research is needed to examine the greater disparities in inequality between northern versus southern communities.

Research is required to understand how the conditions of life in northern communities are related to core housing need, homelessness and decisions to move away from a northern community. Several challenges for people in these communities are evident, including the limited availability of housing, transportation, and services to support individuals as well as cultural differences between rural and remote communities compared with urban centres of the Canadian near-north and south.

2. Approach to the methodology

The methodology used in a number of studies in this special issue built on a participatory approach that was used in Sudbury between 2000 to 2009 to study the problem of homelessness through extensive collaboration between a local network of service providers, homeless and formerly homeless persons, planners and policy-makers, students, and university researchers at Laurentian University. Continuing with this methodology enabled all project partners, including people affected by poverty and homelessness, to participate by identifying research questions, appropriate project designs, and the data required in order to address pressing local needs.

The *PHM* project centres on research about migration, homelessness and poverty in the participating northern communities. Research conducted in Sudbury and North Bay (in the near-north) included

[2] Northeastern Ontario encompasses an area lying east of Lake Superior, north of Lake Huron and the French River, west of the province of Quebec and south of the Albany River.

[3] According to Statistics Canada (2011), Moosonee's population is 1,735, a decrease of 281 since 2006. However the Town of Moosonee asserts on its website that it has a much greater population; it maintains that Indigenous persons are systematically undercounted given their lack of participation in census counts. Allan Pope (2006) found that Canada had systematically underrepresented, from 40% to 55%, the population of Kashechewan. See *infra*, section II.4: "The debate on relocating Kashechewan."

persons who had migrated from more northern communities. Collecting base-line comparative data helped us to understand the definitions, extent, nature, forms and central causes of homelessness and migration in the more northern community of Timmins and the two near north communities of Sudbury and North Bay. The mixed methods research design for the project utilized a concurrent transformative strategy (Creswell, 2014) that gives equal priority to quantitative and qualitative approaches by incorporating both types within the data collection activities and analysis. Our approach was guided by the principles of community-based PAR, feminist research, and decolonizing methodologies (Brooks et al., 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). A collaborative form of research is central to the goal of achieving social change. The study population includes vulnerable and marginalised groups; for example, a significant proportion of homeless people have been traumatized by experiences of abuse and violence (Kauppi & Garg, 2003). Furthermore, Indigenous people are greatly over-represented among the homeless population. Thus, a heightened sensitivity to the perspectives of colonised peoples and subordinate groups undergirds an appropriate methodology. By adhering to principles and practices of PAR, such as those outlined by Boston et al. (1997), Humphries & Martin (2000) and Tuhiwai Smith (2001), we have engaged in co-operative inquiry that was (i) practical in promoting positive social change and (ii) egalitarian in respecting the perspectives of the various stakeholder groups, while (iii) retaining the qualities of rigorous research design and practice.

The use of a mixed-methods design has enabled *PHM* to draw upon the combined strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and made possible various forms of triangulation for the corroboration of research findings. Such an approach allows for data, methods, investigator, and theory triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002) drawing on the involvement of a multi-disciplinary, multi-site team of investigators that includes community partners. The research is also sensitive to the needs of the Aboriginal, Francophone and Anglophone populations being studied. It seeks to examine local perspectives, practices, events and the impacts of government policies on communities in the north, including health and social services and social spending, colonialism and racism, unemployment, local economy and housing markets, access to decent, affordable housing, and views pertaining to poverty, housing and homelessness.

Guided by the principles and practices of PAR, the *PHM* project began with a meeting of our community partners. We began by re-examining our existing protocols, data collection tools, instruments and procedures used previously in our research in Sudbury on homelessness and migration with a view to understanding how they needed to be revised for the *PHM* project. We also conducted a secondary analysis of our extensive databases on Sudbury (qualitative data from 70 in-depth interviews and quantitative data from 3,518 homeless persons) to extract relevant findings that could be a useful starting point for community partners to understand the kind of information that could be generated from the research activities previously undertaken. The review of prior findings, including those from a photovoice project on housing and health (Kauppi, Etches & Montgomery, 2008), instruments, procedures, and techniques have enabled us to develop/refine the five-year plan for the activities of the *PHM* community-university research alliance.

The surveys gathered information on experiences and opinions about homelessness, housing conditions and circumstances, in- and out-migration, knowledge of services, needs and perceived solutions to homelessness. The surveys also attempted to locate formerly homeless and "hidden homeless" persons who stay in temporary accommodation with friends or extended family. Interviews were conducted with hidden homeless and formerly homeless people to gather information on risk factors linked to the loss of housing and the circumstances for those who regained or retained housing.

This project seeks to mobilize local communities to address the issues of deep poverty, housing need, and homelessness by engaging community partners and community advisory committees (CAC) in collaborative, action research. An intended outcome of the research is to involve local communities in the formation of social and economic policy, enhance social inclusion and promote social justice.

When conducting community-based research, CAC members and community partners are actively involved in the entire research process, including the design of research approaches. *PHM* research is conceptualised according to individual community needs. Many of our community partners expressed a need to obtain quantitative data regarding the number and characteristics of homeless persons. This type of data is gathered through period prevalence counts (PPCs), which are typically conducted in large communities. To be responsive to these requests and yet conduct the research activities in a sound, rigorous and effective manner, the standard service-based methodology needed to be adapted in order to gather information about the nature and prevalence of homeless people in smaller northern communities where services are limited. In smaller communities such as Hearst and Moosonee, in addition to a service-based survey, a door-to-door survey was

administered to residents. In Hearst, Moosonee, North Bay and Sudbury, focus group questions were conceptualised with community partners and CAC members in order to reflect these communities' needs. This participatory approach, while time-consuming, ensures that the data gathered would be deemed relevant to community partners.

In the next section, the articles in this special issue are described. They represent examples of the adaptation of existing methodologies in order to meet particular community needs and to provide information gathered from community-based research with First Nations. In addition, a theoretical approach to conceptualizing public and private space is presented.

II. THE STUDIES

The studies in this special issue present the results of several important activities undertaken by *PHM* researchers. The first and second articles present the results of the period prevalence counts of persons at risk of homelessness and absolutely homeless in Timmins and North Bay in 2011. The next article is quite unique as it examines the extent of homelessness in a First Nation community. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first study published about an actual count of homeless persons in a First Nation. The fourth article describes the characteristics of homeless people who had migrated to Sudbury and examines the factors related to migration amongst this subset of homeless persons, based on data collected between 2000 and 2009. The fifth article, by Emily Faries, deals with housing-related issues in a First Nation community, Kashechewan, on the James Bay. By exploring and describing the residents' relationships to the land, it seeks to explain why they refused to move to a new community some 500 kilometers away, despite severe problems caused by the location of their community in a flood zone. The final article by Doucette-Préville takes a theoretical perspective on space and examines how the private use of public space by unhoused persons challenges the assumptions of housed persons and how the latter react to this challenge.

1. Period prevalence counts—Timmins and North Bay

The first two articles address the period prevalence counts of persons at risk of homelessness and absolutely homeless in two northern Ontario cities, Timmins (population 43,165) and North Bay (population 53,651) in 2011. Emergency shelters, social service agencies, and other services were included as sites for research. Service based prevalence counts have the potential to capture from 90% to 95% of the homeless population (Peressini et al., 2010). However by their very nature, they underestimate the number of homeless individuals. Nevertheless, they make it possible to obtain a fairly accurate count of a population that is difficult to delimit.

The total homeless population in Timmins (n=720) included 257 infants, children and adolescents under age 15. The majority of homeless people were adults aged 20 to 59. In North Bay, the total homeless population (n=513) included 150 infants, children and adolescents under age 15. The majority of homeless people were adults aged 20 to 49. In both cities Indigenous people were greatly over-represented among the homeless population when compared to their proportion in the general population, 8% in Timmins and 6% in North Bay. In Timmins, they constituted 39% of the total homeless people and in North Bay 26%; they constituted 41% of the absolutely homeless population in Timmins and 29% in North Bay. A variety of factors explain this over-representation. Indigenous people were historically subject to forced moves and displaced from their ancestral homelands. The system of residential schools—too often perpetuating physical and sexual abuse—led to a breakdown of Indigenous social structures and a loss of cultural identity; the destructive policies and practices associated with colonization and residential schooling explain the rates of suicide, substance abuse and violence in families. Poverty, reduced economic activity, poor living conditions and a lack of education exacerbate the challenges faced by Indigenous people.

Participants reported that the two principal reasons for homelessness were unemployment (30% in Timmins and 28% in North Bay) and problems with social assistance (56% in Timmins and 46% in North Bay). Domestic violence, mental illness and substance use accounted for 31% of the reasons in North Bay and 24% in Timmins. Despite the differences in the relative importance of self-reported reasons for homelessness, the central reasons were the same: structural and systemic problems associated with unemployment, problems with accessing social assistance, and a lack of affordable housing were common.

Absolutely homeless people constituted 30% of the homeless people in both Timmins and North Bay. Women with children and youth under age 20 constituted about two-thirds of those who are absolutely homeless in Timmins and in North Bay.

In both communities, Francophones were under-represented in the homeless population in comparison to their numbers in the general population. This is consistent with the results from the previous studies conducted in Sudbury (Kauppi et al. 2003). The reasons for this under representation remain poorly

understood. On the one hand, it may be that Francophones, given that they are a minority culture in northeastern Ontario, show more social and family solidarity, are less likely to access services and are more likely to turn to family and friends for support. On the other hand, Francophones may self-identify as Anglophones in order to overcome any real or perceived resistance on the part of service providers to provide services to Francophones.

The number of individuals who were at risk of homelessness or absolute homelessness during the week of the study in North Bay and Timmins was higher than expected. The crisis of homelessness is being felt in northeastern Ontario communities in a manner similar to larger urban centres in other regions of the province, or indeed the country. A majority of homeless people are predominantly children, adolescents and women. This reflects, in a startling manner, the dramatic shifts in the nature of homelessness in recent years within Canada (Kauppi, Pallard & Shaikh, 2014). Moreover, given the great over-representation of Indigenous people in the homeless population, approximately four or five times their proportion in the general population, it is important that Indigenous peoples living in urban centres receive culturally safe supports.

Strategies to end homelessness in northern communities must take into account the needs of Indigenous people who are so greatly over-represented amongst those without stable housing. Moreover, policies and practices must recognise the lack of access to employment among many homeless people, as well as the women, children and adolescents dealing with the impacts of family struggles, abuse and violence, people experiencing mental illness or physical disabilities, those struggling with substance abuse and those who are making the transition from incarceration to community life.

2. Period prevalence count—NEO FN

This article is quite original as it appears to be the first to examine homelessness on a Northeastern Ontario First Nation (NEO FN). Published studies on Indigenous homelessness address it in the urban context. Studies on homelessness within First Nation communities, to the extent that they exist, are not readily available.

At the time of the study conducted in June 2009, the NEO FN had a population of 1,018 and 120 houses as well as 30 cottages. The existing housing stock did not meet the needs of the community. In June 2009, the NEO FN opted to collect data to examine the characteristics and reasons for homelessness, the size of the at risk population, service utilization, the impact of homelessness and models of collaboration between agencies. The NEO FN wanted to develop a community-based strategy to address homelessness, including the possibility of establishing transitional housing.

The sample for the survey was 86 participants, men and women between the ages of 16 to 75. Twenty-seven people also participated in focus groups. Thirty-six (42%) survey participants had experienced homelessness in their lifetimes or within the previous year; 24 had been absolutely homeless. The lack of available housing was the reason given by approximately three-quarters of those at risk of homelessness. Unemployment or a lack of income and lack of housing was the reason given by over half of those who were absolutely homeless. Youth under the age of 24 constituted 40% of the homeless. Adults between the ages of 26 and 69 made up a majority of the homeless population which was 54% female and 46% male.

According to the participants, traditional Indigenous values were important to the community; these values guided families to take care of their own members and to find ways to provide them with accommodation. Participants thought that the community should develop new affordable housing units, establish a traditional lodge shelter, and enhance services for those experiencing absolute homelessness as well as near homeless people. They also emphasized the importance of education.

The results of this study were compared with the results obtained from a 2003 household survey in low-income neighbourhoods of NEO City. Five times more NEO FN community members had experienced homelessness in the past compared to the residents in NEO City. Many NEO FN community members are apparently vulnerable to homelessness.

One of the results of the study was the development of a new housing subdivision. This required determination to obtain funding for additional housing and substantial capital investment by the NEO FN.

3. Migration and homelessness

The authors describe the migration of homeless persons in order to provide a better understanding of issues related to defining migratory and transient homelessness within the northern Ontario context, to determine the extent, nature and impacts of this form of homelessness, and to examine how best to mitigate its consequences. The city of Sudbury was chosen for this study given that previous studies had shown that people from smaller communities in northern Ontario travel to Sudbury in search of opportunities, since it is the major urban centre in northeastern Ontario. The literature review identified a gap pertaining to migratory and transient homelessness; relatively few articles focused directly on these issues. In many of

the studies, no distinction was made between transience and homelessness. In some studies, homeless persons who migrated to a different community were not differentiated from those who had remained in their communities of origin. Other studies seemed to assume homelessness involved transience (cf. Frankish, Hwang, & Quantz, 2005; Lambert & Caces, 1995; Swick, 1999).

A mixed-methods study was designed to analyze existing databases and to collect new data to address the objectives of the project. With regard to the quantitative analysis, a secondary analysis was first conducted on the data gathered during eight previous period prevalence homeless counts in Sudbury from 2000 to 2007. The total sample was 2,472, of whom 421 were migratory and 2,051 non-migratory. In the last two counts, migrants constituted about a quarter of the homeless population. At any one time, there may be as many as 120 homeless migrants in Sudbury. About 30% of migrants were women while 45% of non-migrants were women. Indigenous people were over-represented, comprising 25% of the migrants yet constituting approximately 7% of the general population.

In 2009 a ninth period prevalence count revealed that over three-quarters of migrants had come from a region in Ontario. Recent migrants constituted more than 40% of the total migrants and were more likely to have moved once or twice in the year prior to the study.

With regard to their background characteristics, recent and intermediate-term migrants were similar in a number of respects: a large majority were men who did not have custody of any children. Physical and mental health problems were prevalent among migrant homeless persons. Their principal reason for migrating was unemployment or inability to obtain employment or decent wages. Most homeless/transient migrants had extensive histories of absolute homelessness.

A qualitative analysis was conducted on the database of interviews from 2002 and 2004 and the focus groups from 2009. This allowed for insights into the lived experiences of those who were impacted by homelessness and migration. Migratory/transient homelessness is linked to intersecting individual-level and community-level problems. The main themes that emerged from discussions with service providers and people accessing services dealt with reasons for leaving a community, processes related to migration/transience, the impact of the issue on homeless persons and service providers and mitigation of the issue.

The qualitative analysis yielded the same themes with regard to reasons for leaving a community as those identified through the quantitative analysis of the survey data on migrants. A number of processes were viewed as being central to migration, such as a short visit to Sudbury, repeated travel between two communities in cycles, the formation of social networks between homeless persons and sharing of information, and barriers to returning home, such as family issues.

According to the findings from qualitative data, the human costs of migratory/transient homelessness are high. The emotional impacts—which include loneliness, culture shock, isolation, guilt, shame, and fear—are compounded by the negative reactions from mainstream society. The actions identified by service users and providers in order to address the issues faced by homeless migrants/transients can help to address the challenges and issues of non-migrant homeless persons.

In addition to shortages in resources to operate front-line services, some service providers struggled with agency mandates that may conflict with the needs of people seeking support. The study revealed some unique service pressures that stem from the circumstances surrounding individuals who have migrated from another place and are often unfamiliar with their surroundings. In so far as migrant homeless persons differ from the general homeless population they were seen to place further pressures on particular types of agencies, programs or services.

The network of services at the local level is not adequately funded to provide the continuum of services that is required. At the same time, the local service networks have made efforts to make improvements and service providers believe that a basic set of quality services exists. Agency staff expressed a commitment to resolving issues that confront migratory/transient persons. Yet when the system is over-whelmed by many people with high needs, this can lead to staff burn-out.

The five areas for issue mitigation identified through this project involve housing, agency services, addressing the social and health needs of homeless persons, funding and responsibilities of government. Service users and providers emphasized the complexity of migratory/transient homelessness. This problem must be addressed through the development of a comprehensive action plan that includes the five areas for issue mitigation, followed by its implementation.

4. The debate on relocating Kashechewan

In 1957, the federal government established the Kashechewan First Nation on the lowlands of the James Bay, despite being told that such a decision was problematic (Toronto Star, 2007), Because the

community was built on the flood plain of the Albany River, it was subject to periodic flooding. In order to remedy the problem, a ring dike, was built in 1997. This dike, which completely surrounds the community, is 5.3 kilometers in length and three meters in height (Wakenagun, 1999). However the community remains susceptible to flooding.

It appears that the dike was improperly constructed (Hatch, 2015). According to the as-built drawings, a core trench, two to three meters deep was dug on the entire length of the dike. However, subsequent studies revealed that there is no core trench—its absence increases the likelihood of seepage. Moreover, the dike was built on a peat deposit that was only partially excavated to a depth of about one meter; the remaining materials were not adequately compacted. This results in localized seepage, erosion, uneven settlement, and depressions in the crest of the dike. Furthermore, improper materials were used in its construction, leading to rutting and cracking of the crest.

The spring floods, inadequate housing and unsatisfactory water quality led to the periodic evacuation of its inhabitants. In October 2005, the federal government under the Liberal Party agreed that the only solution was to move and rebuild the community on higher ground. Shortly afterwards, the Liberals lost the election and the Conservative Party formed a new government in February 2006. The flood of that spring led the government of Canada to commission a report from Alan Pope on the issues that Kashechewan faced and on the need to relocate the community to a safer location. He submitted his report in October 2006 (Pope, 2006).

Emily Faries examines the reaction of the Kaschewan First Nation to the recommendation made in the Report on the Kashechewan First Nation and its People (the Pope Report) to move the community some 450 kilometers south, from the Albany River on the James Bay lowlands to the City of Timmins. The Canadian government had commissioned the report in order to determine how to deal with the ongoing issues that the community faced. The Pope Report addressed the undercounting of the population of Kashechewan and its consequent underfunding, the deteriorating dike surrounding the community, its health services, the housing situation, water treatment plant and water services, waste treatment and disposal, policing, fire protection, schools, and economic development

The Pope Report found that the government of Canada had underestimated the population by 40%. This had an adverse effect on Kashechewan's finances as the First Nation had to spend more on housing and services than the amount allocated to it by the government. Inadequate funding was the source of the problems with the housing and services provided to the community. The report also found that the dike surrounding the community had been improperly designed and constructed. Despite a report setting out the problems with the dike and a warning that the dike could fail if repairs were not made, nothing had been done. Health care services were found to be incomplete, inconsistent, inadequate, spotty and often nonexistent. Inadequacies and operational deficiencies were found in the water treatment plant, water services, water treatment and waste disposal site.

In 2005 Kashechewan's elementary school was closed due to mould and other concerns. The report found that the "quality and availability of education services is actually declining in Kashechewan." (p. 8) Since the school's closure, students have been schooled in portable units. The school burnt down in 2007 (CBC News, 2014). The government recently committed funds to build a new school.

The Pope Report indicates that housing was inappropriate both from a design and an accommodation point of view. Given the family sizes and traditional living arrangements in the community, the houses were found to be too small. "Many two bedroom homes now have three or four additional bedrooms in the basements and accommodate nine or ten adults. The central areas, kitchens and washrooms are inadequate and dilapidated. Many homes do not meet current provincial or federal standards with respect to building, fire, electrical, or environmental codes. They are not only inappropriate for local temperatures and climate conditions but also obviously have been assembled or constructed without proper supervision or inspection." (Pope, 2006, n.p.).

According to the Pope Report, a confidential community survey revealed that a majority of the community wished to move to a more southerly location situated closer to an important centre of population. The report consequently recommended that a new reserve be created near Timmins. However this recommendation was conditional upon allowing the Kashechewan First Nation to retain its rights and access to traditional lands. The government has never released the report on the survey, leading some to question its methodology and its conclusions.

In the wake of the Pope Report, the Kashechewan First Nation commissioned Emily Faries to conduct a survey of the community. She came to quite different conclusions about the desire of the community to leave its traditional lands. As is noted in her article, 863 people participated in the study by completing a questionnaire. A large majority (63%) wished to move upriver to higher ground, possibly to a site

some 30 kilometers away. Only 5% wanted to move south to an urban centre and 6.5% to remain in the present location. As a result of the community's refusal to move south, the government in turn refused to move the community to a location upstream, alleging that the cost was prohibitive and instead chose to invest in repairs in Kashechewan.

In her article, Emily Faries sets out the reasons why the community members chose to remain in the general area. They recognised the shortcomings of the present site and that a move represented the potential for a new life, a better community and a more prosperous future. It would also enhance safety and bring stability as the present danger was unacceptable. Central to their motives was their desire to ensure a better future for their children. Remaining on their traditional lands would facilitate the transmission of their culture and traditions and their relationship to the land, especially since the ability to live off the land is a core part of their culture. The participants were strongly committed to preserving their ancestral homelands which were seen as an integral part of their identity. Traditional lands were not restricted to the reserve lands themselves but conceived more expansively. It was on these lands that they practiced their traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities. They not only draw benefits from their relationship to the land, but also described having a sacred responsibility to the land to ensure that it is not abused as they are its custodians.

The move to a southern urban location was perceived to lead to a loss of connection to their traditional lands and a consequent loss of identity. The importance of this factor does not seem to have been noticed by Alan Pope and was not adequately addressed in his report. He recognised that the people of Kashechewan must maintain their links to their traditional lands and yet he does not address the reasons that form the basis for that relationship to the land. The distance between Timmins and their traditional lands and the lack of access by road then became insurmountable obstacles to the relocation. The lived cultural component is at worst absent from the report or at best reduced to a tenuous seasonal presence. This disjuncture becomes apparent upon reading the study of Emily Fairies and explains why the people of Kashechewan rejected the move, notwithstanding the problems engendered by the present location of their community.

Despite the lack of studies on the cost of the move, it was estimated to be $500 million. After receiving the Pope Report, the Conservative government decided that that solution was too expensive and refused to entertain the possibility of moving the community in discussions with the Kashechewan First Nation which found itself forced to agree to repairs *in situ*. It was estimated that the improvements would cost $200 million over five to seven years (Toronto Star, 2007). By the end of 2014, less than $100 million had been spent; but one half of that amount had gone to emergency evacuations or repeated repairs to areas subject to repeat flooding. Full evacuations cost a quarter of a million dollars a day (CBC News, 2015).

While some work has been done on the dike and some funding provided for housing, flooding led to partial or full evacuations of the community during the spring ice break-up in numerous years. The spring of 2015 marked the fourth consecutive year that Kashecewan had to be evacuated. Some 350 residents still reside in Kapuskasing, unable to return to their homes due to flood damage in 2013 (Toronto Star, 2015).

Moreover, an engineering report commissioned by the Kashechewan First Nation has found that the dike is failing and presents an "intolerable risk" to the community (Hatch, 2015, p. E-1 and 6-1). It is estimated that repairs would cost between $4 million and $12 million dollars (CBC News, 2015).

Since the release of the Pope Report, new information has come to light on the circumstances surrounding the signing of Treaty Nine by the Cree First Nations of the James Bay region. According to a recently published study by John S. Long (2010), the terms of the treaty were not truly, honestly or fully presented to the First Nations signatories. In his book, Long uses the personal diaries of the Treaty Commissioner for Ontario, George MacMartin, to show that First Nations chiefs refused to sign the treaty put before them until the Treaty Commissioners for Canada, Duncan Scott and Samuel Stewart, promised that the land would always be theirs. The clause in the treaty allowing the government the right to take up the land was written in English and not explained to the Cree-speaking First Nations. According to the MacMartin diaries, it is clear that the First Nations were not surrendering their land but only agreeing to share it. This archival discovery accords with the oral history version of events transmitted by the elders of the First Nations.

In his report Alan Pope does not hold out much hope for the prospects of economic development in the traditional lands of the Kashechewan First Nation despite the discovery of diamonds and the development of hydroelectric power in the region. He believed that, if it remained isolated with no access to income or employment opportunities, poverty and despair would prevail. However, the recent discovery of the mineral rich Ring of Fire region in northern Ontario shows that the traditional lands of the Cree people have significant natural resources. The desire to have unfettered access to such rich natural

resources was a factor that motivated the government of Canada to deceive the First Nations in the treaty making process.

5. Homelessness and spatial practices

The final article by Julien Doucette-Préville examines how spatial practices lead to the increased marginalization of homeless people. The author takes a theoretical perspective to the concept of space in order to examine how homeless people and those who are housed come to different understandings of public space. He uses Henri Lefebvre's theory of space to explain how public space becomes private space for homeless people; however, the public sphere for the domiciled population remains public space as those who are housed have distinct, separate places that constitute their private space. The use of public space as private space leads authorities to adopt measures and policing practices that make such uses illegal. Such measures are often followed up with practices that seek to exclude homeless people from public space as their presence interferes with the use and consumption of public space by the housed population. Perceived as obstacles to the redevelopment and gentrification of public space, homeless people are at the mercy of property owners. In the face of such pressures, homeless people must either find new public space on the margins in order to survive or remain and live in violation of the existing rules. As a result, homeless people then find themselves further marginalised.

The human experience of living is organised around place and space. In a previous study, we used qualitative interviews to examine the relevance of Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" to experiences of homeless people (Kauppi, 2013). Our study found that migrant homeless individuals transformed various spaces that they inhabited into meaningful places by building relationships with others. These places provided them with a sense of identity and of belonging. It appears that place also needs to be considered when examining issues pertaining to those who are marginalised and the excluded. A heterotopia is the antithesis of a utopia or an idealised space; it is founded on sense of place where social ties are reduced or absent and the sense of mainstream social connectedness is lessened. In such a place, deviant or nonconforming behaviour to established norms predominates. This concept provides a useful tool for understanding the mariginalisation and exclusion of homeless persons from those places inhabited by mainstream housed persons. A future study could compare the application of Lefebvre's and Foucault's theories of space to homeless people. Drawing upon both theories could allow for a better understanding of homelessness, space and place.

III. CONCLUSION

The articles in this special issue offer new knowledge about several aspects of homelessness and housing within urban contexts of northeastern Ontario as well as two First Nation communities in the region. In focusing on the northern region in Ontario, it is evident that the dehousing mechanisms, processes and policies that have led to rising homelessness in large urban centres in Canada since the 1980s have also affected northern communities. While the northeastern region is well known for its resource-based industries such as mining, forestry and hydro-electric projects, it is less often regarded as an area of the province or country affected by deep poverty and homelessness. The studies in this special issue clearly show that the wealth present in natural resources does not offer protection against the forces contributing to low income, unemployment and lack of affordable housing.

The two studies conducted in First Nation communities reveal the consequences of historical and systemic discrimination against Indigenous people. The higher prevalence of homelessness in NEO FN in comparison with a non-Indigenous urban community reflects the chronic underfunding of housing for First Nation people, as reported recently by James Anaya (2014), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. The UN has identified adequate housing as a human right (UNHRP, 2003). Following consultations with First Nations leaders in Canada in 2013, Anaya concluded that the state of housing for Indigenous people "has reached a crisis level" (p. 8). His report, *The Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada*, speaks to varied aspects of housing including overcrowding, the need for major repairs, chronic housing shortages and severe underfunding by the federal government (United Nations, 2014). In particular, Anaya commented on the difficulty of reconciling the deplorable conditions for Indigenous people with the general affluence and prosperity in Canada.

The study conducted by Emily Faries in Kashechewan FN describes the strong attachment of the Cree people to their traditional homelands and their resistance to government pressures to move their community hundreds of kilometres away from these lands. Despite an acknowledgement by both the Government of Canada and the residents of Kashechewan that the current location of the community is problematic and dangerous, the government has refused to relocate the First Nation to a safe site upriver. Instead, the government has opted to spend money on an inadequate dike, repairs to deteriorating housing and numerous evacuations. The dire situation for the residents of Kashechewan is indicative of general conditions for Indigenous people in Canada as was

recently reflected in Anaya's (2014, p. 9) statement, "Trying to meet their communities' housing needs is a major contributor to deficits and financial difficulties for indigenous peoples throughout the country." Anaya noted that federal funding is associated with numerous challenges and barriers including the unilateral setting of priorities and amounts, onerous reporting requirements and funding delays. The refusal of the federal government to acknowledge and adhere to agreements made with the Cree people through discussions that led to the signing of Treaty Nine, such as provision for housing, education and ongoing access to traditional homelands, perpetuates harms associated with colonization, residential schooling and policies aimed at assimilation and the destruction of Indigenous culture.

The evidence from these studies indicates that homelessness and lack of access to decent, affordable housing are serious issues for all communities in northeastern Ontario. However, the living circumstances for Indigenous people, whether they reside in urban centres or on First Nation territories, raise serious concerns about Canada's lack of attention to the basic human right of people to adequate housing.

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