

# 2017 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver

## PRELIMINARY DATA REPORT

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Prepared by BC Non-Profit Housing Association and M. Thomson Consulting

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For the Homelessness Partnering Strategy's Community Entity Metro Vancouver

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March 31, 2017

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## Acknowledgements

2017 partners were



Significant in-kind support was provided by



The Homeless Count Logo is provided by the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy, a partner of the 2017 Homeless Count: <http://www.gvss.ca/>

The implementation of the 2017 Homeless Count is only possible due to the ongoing and dedicated work of Local Community Homelessness Tables and those hundreds of volunteers across the region who participated on March 7/8, 2017. Thank you!

The 2017 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver was implemented by



Please contact [research@bcnpha.ca](mailto:research@bcnpha.ca) with any questions, comments or concerns regarding the information provided in this report.

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## ABOUT THE 2017 HOMELESS COUNT IN METRO VANCOUVER

The 2017 Homeless Count is a 24-hour snapshot of people who were homeless in the Metro Vancouver region on March 8, 2017. Its purpose is to estimate the number of people who are homeless in the region, obtain a demographic profile of this population, and identify trends compared to previous counts.

During the Homeless Count we counted and obtained demographic information from people who do not have a place of their own where they could expect to stay for more than 30 days and do not pay rent. This includes people who

- stayed overnight, on the night of March 7, in homeless shelters including transition houses for women fleeing violence and youth safe houses, people with No Fixed Address (NFA) staying temporarily in hospitals, jails or detox facilities,
- live outside or stayed temporarily with others (couch surfing) and/or those using homelessness services on March 8.

Homeless Counts have been conducted across Metro Vancouver every three years since 2002. Decision-makers, funders and community agencies have relied on the regional count to understand trends in the visible homeless population. Count numbers are understood to be the minimum number of people who are homeless on this given day in the Metro Vancouver region. We know the count underestimates the number of people who are actually homeless.

### What's the Same in 2017?

The 2017 Homeless Count followed the same stringent research methodology as in previous counts.

Representatives from the HPS Metro Vancouver Community Advisory Board and Community Homelessness Tables provided oversight for the count methodology. As in previous years, InFocus Consulting served as the Indigenous/Aboriginal Coordinator and worked in partnership with the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee (AHSC) and Indigenous/Aboriginal service agencies to implement an **Aboriginal strategy**.

During the implementation the Consultants were assisted by Community Homelessness Tables, as well as the City of Vancouver, the City of New Westminster and many homeless-serving agencies throughout the region. Twenty-one local Count Coordinators were engaged to assist in managing volunteers, mapping survey locations and coordinating activities on count day and night. A total of 22 formal training sessions were held for approximately 1,200 volunteers that were actively surveying people. Data on sheltered homeless people were obtained through collaboration with jails, hospitals, detox facilities, transition and safe houses and all shelters across the region.

Through funding for a **youth strategy** provided by the Vancouver Foundation, additional efforts were made to connect with all youth-serving agencies in the Metro Vancouver Region early on in the process. Many partner agencies organized *Connect Events* for youth. In several areas, surveys were conducted by support workers in partnering schools.

### What's New in 2017?

For the first time since starting the Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver in 2002, **Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters were open across the region due to extreme weather conditions**. This provided an opportunity to count people at these night-time locations.

Shelter providers and community partners report that the populations who access EWR shelters are typically much more street entrenched, and would likely be unsheltered on nights where EWRs do not operate. Because they were sheltered during the night of the Count, individuals in EWRs are included in the sheltered homeless total in the report. However, wherever possible we have broken out EWR users into a distinct column for comparison to both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population.

A number of activities took place in the 2017 Homeless Count to enhance our ability to connect with homeless people who may not be enumerated otherwise:

- A **rural strategy** saw increased numbers of routes in rural areas, as well as *Connect Events* focused on providing space, and usually food, for people to have the opportunity to get counted in. This was made possible with the support of the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society.
- The **Surrey Enhanced Urban Strategy (SEUS)**, enabled by the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society, was a pilot approach to count people in a limited geographic area of Surrey for an extended period of time.
- The **Waterways Count** surveyed homeless people on Metro Vancouver's waterways. We appreciate the support by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to enable this pilot approach.
- We appreciate the collaboration of both **health authorities** who facilitated the surveying of people with no fixed address in four hospitals in the region (two Fraser Health hospitals, two Vancouver Coastal Health hospitals). While people without fixed address have always been counted, this strongly enhances our understanding of their demographic profile.

To ensure longitudinal comparability results from the SEUS and the Waterways pilots are not incorporated in this report.

## PRELIMINARY REGIONAL RESULTS

The following results are based on our initial analysis and are subject to change upon completion of our analysis and final report in mid-2017.

### Total Homeless Population

- A total of 3,605 people in the Metro Vancouver region were identified as homeless on March 8. Of those 1,032 were unsheltered and 2,573 sheltered.
- Among the sheltered, 256 individuals stayed in Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters due to the inclement weather. With shelters across the region operating at capacity, those staying in EWR shelters would likely have been counted on the street were the EWRs not operating.
- The sheltered homeless population also included 2,050 people staying overnight in homeless shelters, transition houses and safe houses and 267 people with no fixed address staying in hospitals, jails and detox facilities.
- Not counting EWR clients, the unsheltered homeless population included 1,032 people living outside or staying temporarily with others (couch surfing) and using homelessness services on the day of the count.
- The largest homeless population can be found in Vancouver, with 2,138 people, followed by Surrey with 602 people.

**Table 1. Total Unsheltered and Sheltered Homeless Populations in Metro Vancouver by Sub-Region (2017)**

Sub-Region	Unsheltered Total	Sheltered			Total Homeless	
		Total	EWR Shelters <sup>1</sup>	Shelters <sup>2</sup>		No Fixed Address <sup>3</sup>
Burnaby	49	20	7	12	1	69
Delta/White Rock	23	23	13	9	1	46
Langley	79	127	31	92	4	206
Ridge Meadows	30	94	10	78	6	124
New Westminster	30	103	27	66	10	133
North Shore	11	89	11	66	12	100
Richmond	29	41	16	20	5	70
Surrey	203	399	44	286	69	602
Tri-Cities	41	76	33	40	3	117
Vancouver	537	1,601	64	1,381	156	2,138
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>2,573</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>2,050</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>3,605</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters.

<sup>2</sup> Includes Shelters (incl. Temporary Nightly Shelters, Winter Response Shelters and other shelter programs), Safe Houses and Transition Houses.

<sup>3</sup> Includes Jails, Detox Centres and Hospitals/Short-term Medical Facilities.

- Region-wide, 828 more people were identified as homeless in 2017 compared to 2014, representing a 30% increase in homelessness and the highest number to date.
- Homelessness increased in all communities except on the North Shore, between 19% (Burnaby) and 142% (Delta/White Rock).
- The highest absolute increases occurred in Vancouver (335), Surrey (199) and Langley (114).

**Table 2. Changes in the Total Homeless Population in Metro Vancouver by Sub-Region (2005 to 2017)**

Sub-Region	2005 Total Homeless	2008 Total Homeless	2011 Total Homeless	2014 Total Homeless	2017 Total Homeless	2014 – 2017 Change	
						#	%
Burnaby	42	86	78	58	69	11	19%
Delta/White Rock	12	17	14	19	46	27	142%
Langley	57	86	103	92	206	114	124%
Ridge Meadows	44	90	110	84	124	40	48%
New Westminster	97	124	132	106	133	27	25%
North Shore	90	127	122	119	100	-19	-16%
Richmond	35	56	49	38	70	32	84%
Surrey	392	402	400	403	602	199	49%
Tri-Cities	40	94	48	55	117	62	113%
Vancouver	1,364	1,576	1,581	1,803 <sup>4</sup>	2,138	335	19%
Unspecified	1	2	13	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,174</b>	<b>2,660</b>	<b>2,650</b>	<b>2,777</b>	<b>3,605</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>30%</b>

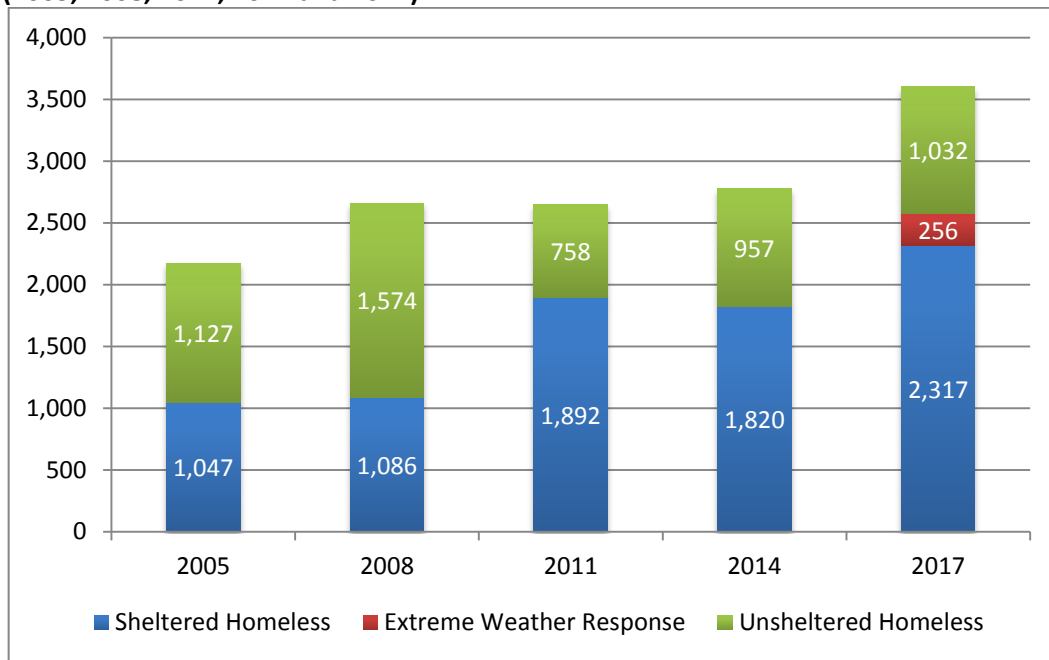
- 2017 is the only year in which EWR shelters were opened region-wide during the Homeless Count, substantially increasing the amount of available shelter spaces. EWR clients accounted for 7% of the total sheltered population, resulting in a total of 71% of the homeless population being sheltered.
- As a result, 29% of the homeless population was unsheltered in 2017, on par with 2011, the lowest unsheltered rate to date.

**Table 3. Changes in the Unsheltered and Sheltered Homeless Population in Metro Vancouver (2005 to 2017)**

Homeless Category	2005		2008		2011		2014		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Unsheltered Homeless	1,127	52%	1,574	59%	758	29%	957	34%	1,032	29%
Sheltered Homeless	1,047	48%	1,086	41%	1,892	71%	1,820	66%	2,317	64%
EWR Shelters									256	7%
<b>Total Homeless</b>	<b>2,174</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,660</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,650</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,777</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,605</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>4</sup> The City of Vancouver undertakes an annual homeless count following the PiT count methodology. In 2016, a total of 1,847 people were counted as homeless.

**Figure 1. Proportion of the Unsheltered and Sheltered Homeless Population in Metro Vancouver (2005, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017)**





## The Unsheltered Homeless Population

The **unsheltered homeless** are people living ‘outside’, including in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks and vehicles. This category also includes people who are couch surfing and accessing homeless services on the day of the count.

- A total of 1,032 homeless people were identified as unsheltered in the Metro Vancouver region on March 8. This is an 8% increase compared to 2014 when 957 unsheltered homeless people were counted.
- The largest number of unsheltered homeless people was found in the City of Vancouver with 537 people, followed by Surrey where 203 unsheltered people were identified.
- It is likely that many EWR clients, who were sheltered on the night of the count, would likely have been found on the street without an extreme weather alert.

**Table 4. Changes in the Unsheltered Homeless Population in Metro Vancouver by Sub-Region (2014 and 2017)**

Sub-Region	2014 Total Unsheltered	2017 Total Unsheltered	Absolute Change	% Change
Burnaby	44	49	5	11%
Delta/White Rock	5	23	18	360%
Langley	54	79	25	46%
Ridge Meadows	39	30	-9	-23%
New Westminster	34	30	-4	-12%
North Shore	60	11	-49	-82%
Richmond	22	29	7	32%
Surrey	140	203	63	45%
Tri-Cities	23	41	18	78%
Vancouver	536	537	1	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>8%</b>

## The Sheltered Homeless Population

The **sheltered homeless** are people staying in emergency shelters for the homeless, transition houses for women fleeing abuse, and safe houses for youth. The sheltered category also includes people with no fixed address who are in health, correction and detox facilities on the night of the count. Extreme Weather Response shelters are also included. EWR guests would have likely been unsheltered without an extreme weather alert.<sup>5</sup>

- A total of 2,573 homeless people in the Metro Vancouver region were identified as sheltered on March 8. Up by 753 people, this is a 42% increase compared to 2014 when 1,813 sheltered homeless people were counted.
- The number of sheltered homeless increased in every community across the region. The largest actual increases of sheltered homeless people occurred in the City of Vancouver (334) followed by Surrey (136), Langley (89) and Ridge Meadows (49).

**Table 5. Changes in the Sheltered Homeless Population in Metro Vancouver by Sub-Region (2014 and 2017)**

Sub-Region	2014 Sheltered Total	Total	2017 Sheltered		Actual Change	% Change
			Shelters & NFAs <sup>6</sup>	EWR Shelters		
Burnaby	14	20	13	7	6	43%
Delta/White Rock	14	23	10	13	9	64%
Langley	38	127	96	31	89	234%
Ridge Meadows	45	94	84	10	49	109%
New Westminster	72	103	76	27	31	43%
North Shore	59	89	78	11	30	51%
Richmond	16	41	25	16	25	156%
Surrey	263	399	355	44	136	52%
Tri-Cities	32	76	43	33	44	138%
Vancouver	1,267	1,601	1,537	64	334	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,820</b>	<b>2,573</b>	<b>2,317</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>42%</b>

<sup>5</sup> People living on vessels are not accounted for in this report. Findings from the new waterways approach will be reported on separately.

<sup>6</sup> Includes all Emergency Shelters, Safe Houses, Transition Houses and NFAs (hospitals, jails or detox facilities).

## The Indigenous/Aboriginal Homeless Population

- The total number of Indigenous/Aboriginal people reported is a count of those who participated in the survey and self-identify as Indigenous/Aboriginal. A total of 746 survey respondents identified as Indigenous/Aboriginal, representing 34% of all respondents.
- With 34%, Indigenous/Aboriginal people continue to represent about one-third of the homeless population in the region. This is the highest share reported to date in a regional count and constitutes a very strong over-representation compared to the total population.
- The reported number of 746 is only a reflection of the participation rate. Indigenous/Aboriginal homelessness is more accurately expressed as a share of the total number of homeless people. Assuming that the share of 34% is reflective of the total population, then up to 1,226 individuals who identify as Indigenous/Aboriginal were homeless on March 8.

**Table 6. Changes in the Indigenous/Aboriginal Homeless Population in Metro Vancouver (2008 to 2017)**

Indigenous/Aboriginal Identity	2008 Total Homeless		2011 Total Homeless		2014 Total Homeless		2017 Total Homeless	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Indigenous/Aboriginal	688	32%	394	27%	582	31%	746	34%
Non-Indigenous/Non-Aboriginal	1,453	68%	1,074	73%	1,282	69%	1,453	66%
Total Respondents	2,141	100%	1,468	100%	1,864	100%	2,199	100%
No Answer	519		1,182		913		1,406	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,660</b>		<b>2,650</b>		<b>2,777</b>		<b>3,605</b>	

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- Sixty percent (60%) of homeless Indigenous/Aboriginal respondents were found in Vancouver and 18% in Surrey.
- Three hundred eighty seven (387) Indigenous/Aboriginal individuals who were surveyed were unsheltered, while 47 stayed in EWRs and 312 were in other forms of shelter. This results in a share of 52% of all Indigenous/Aboriginal homeless being unsheltered compared to 29% for the overall homeless population.<sup>7</sup> Hence, Indigenous/Aboriginal people are not only more likely to be homeless than non-Aboriginal people, but Aboriginal homeless are also more likely to be unsheltered compared to non-Aboriginal homeless.

**Table 7. Number of Unsheltered & Sheltered Homeless Indigenous/Aboriginal People in Metro Vancouver by Sub-Region (2017)**

Sub-Region	Unsheltered Total		Total		Sheltered				Total Homeless	
	#	%			EWRs		Shelters & NFAs			
			#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Burnaby	11	3%	3	1%	2	4%	1	0%	14	2%
Delta/White Rock	6	2%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	7	1%
Langley	24	6%	13	4%	2	4%	11	4%	37	5%
Ridge Meadows	8	2%	15	4%	2	4%	13	4%	23	3%
New Westminster	12	3%	19	5%	10	21%	9	3%	31	4%
North Shore	0	0%	10	3%	2	4%	8	3%	10	1%
Richmond	10	3%	6	2%	5	11%	1	0%	16	2%
Surrey	75	19%	62	17%	7	15%	55	18%	137	18%
Tri-Cities	13	3%	10	3%	7	15%	3	1%	23	3%
Vancouver	228	59%	220	61%	10	21%	210	67%	448	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>7</sup> The overall homeless population includes Indigenous/Aboriginal and non-Indigenous/Aboriginal homeless.

## Homelessness among Youth, Children, Seniors and Women

### Homeless Seniors and Youth

- A total of 199 children under 19 years of age and 179 youth between 19 and 24 years were found homeless on March 8, for a total of 378. Young people under 25 years thereby represented 16% of the homeless population in 2017 compared to 20% in 2014. Young people are the only age group where the count results showed a decrease.
- A total of 380 seniors between 55 and 65 years and another 176 seniors above the age of 65 years responded to the survey on March 8, for a total of 556 individuals. Seniors aged 55 and over thereby represented 23% of the homeless population compared to 18% in 2014. This continues the upward trend of seniors at the total homeless population that has been evident since 2008.

**Table 8. Changes in the Total Homeless Population by Age Group in Metro Vancouver (2008 to 2017)**

Age Groups	2008 Total Homeless		2011 Total Homeless		2014 Total Homeless		2017 Total Homeless	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 19 Years	153	6%	102	6%	191	9%	199	8%
19-24 Years	211	9%	221	13%	219	11%	179	8%
Youth - unknown age	0	0%	74	4%	0	0%	0	0%
25-34 Years	436	18%	275	17%	332	16%	419	18%
35-44 Years	726	30%	328	20%	413	20%	504	21%
45-54 Years	661	28%	397	24%	512	25%	524	22%
55-64 Years	180	8%	210	13%	281	14%	380	16%
65+ Years	32	1%	58	3%	90	4%	176	7%
Total Respondents	2,399	100%	1,665	100%	2,038	100%	2,381	100%
No Answer	261		985		739		1,224	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,660</b>		<b>2,650</b>		<b>2,777</b>		<b>3,605</b>	

### Homeless Accompanied Children and Homeless Youth and Children

- Out of 199 children under the age of 19 found during the count, 117 were accompanied by their parents, compared to 88 children in 2014. These children were primarily sheltered in family shelters and transition houses. Seven children were found unsheltered together with their parents.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 9. Number of Homeless Accompanied Children in Metro Vancouver (2017)**

Homeless Category		Unsheltered Total	Sheltered				Total Homeless	
			Total	EWRs	Transition Houses	NFAs		Shelters & Safe Houses
<b>Accompanied children</b>	#	7	110	0	71	1	38	117
	%	6%	94%	0%	61%	1%	32%	100%

<sup>8</sup> A total of 82 children were found unaccompanied (sheltered or unsheltered).

- With 43%, the majority of homeless youth were found in Vancouver, followed by 17% in Surrey and 13% in Langley.

**Table 10. Number of Unsheltered and Sheltered Homeless Youth and Children (Under Age 25) in Metro Vancouver by Sub-Region (2017)**

Sub-Region	Unsheltered Total		Sheltered						Total Homeless	
			Total		EWRs		Shelters & NFAs			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Burnaby	12	8%	5	2%	0	0%	5	2%	17	4%
Delta/White Rock	10	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	10	3%
Langley	28	18%	22	10%	0	0%	22	10%	50	13%
Ridge Meadows	0	0%	7	3%	0	0%	7	3%	7	2%
New Westminster	3	2%	14	6%	0	0%	14	7%	17	4%
North Shore	1	1%	12	5%	0	0%	12	6%	13	3%
Richmond	4	3%	6	3%	2	25%	4	2%	10	3%
Surrey	34	22%	29	13%	1	13%	28	13%	63	17%
Tri-Cities	18	11%	10	5%	3	38%	7	3%	28	7%
Vancouver	47	30%	116	52%	2	25%	114	54%	163	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Homeless Women

- A total of 607 women who are homeless and answered the survey identified as female. As a result, female respondents represented 27% (607 individuals) of the homeless population compared to the same share of 27% (527 individuals) of the homeless population in 2014.
- Twenty-five individuals identified as another gender, representing 1% of the homeless population in the Metro Vancouver region on March 8.

**Table 11. Changes in the Total Homeless Population by Gender in Metro Vancouver (2008 to 2017)**

Gender	2008 Total Homeless		2011 Total Homeless		2014 Total Homeless		2017 Total Homeless	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Male	1,679	72%	1,452	69%	1,419	73%	1,620	72%
Female	619	27%	652	31%	527	27%	607	27%
Transgender	22	1%	8	0%	9	0%	n/a	n/a
Another gender identity	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25	1%
Total Respondents	2,320	100%	2,112	100%	1,955	100%	2,252	100%
No Answer	340		538		822		1,353	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,660</b>		<b>2,650</b>		<b>2,777</b>		<b>3,605</b>	

## **FINAL REPORT**

The final report is scheduled for release in mid-2017.

It will provide a more complete analysis of the count data and survey questions, including how long people have been homeless, health issues, barriers to ending homelessness, sources of income, and services that people who are homeless tend to use.

## About BCNPHA:



BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) is the provincial umbrella organization for the non-profit housing sector, providing programs, services, research and education to strengthen the capacity of non-profit housing providers. Together non-profit housing societies manage more than 60,000 units of long-term, affordable housing in over 2,000 buildings across the province.

BCNPHA's research arm was established in 2008 to conduct evidenced-based research that supports the non-profit housing sector and demonstrates the need and value of affordable housing in communities across the province.

Our research mandate includes issues impacting the whole housing spectrum and has helped to inform planning and policy decisions that affect the supply of affordable housing for a broad range of BC residents.

Find more information at <http://bcnpha.ca/programs-and-services/research-consulting/> or contact us at [research@bcnpha.ca](mailto:research@bcnpha.ca).

## About M.Thomson Consulting:



M.Thomson Consulting is a housing and homelessness-focused sole-proprietor consulting practice operated by Matt Thomson since 2010. Over the years Matt has worked with a range of agencies and organizations in the field of housing and homeless research, including non-profits, municipal and regional governments, the provincial government and the federal Homeless Partnering Strategy. Matt's work has spanned the province, having worked in Northwestern BC, the Lower Columbia Region, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, the Sunshine Coast, Metro Vancouver and Victoria.

Matt has implemented Homeless Counts in Terrace, Smithers and the City of Vancouver, and conducted research on homelessness across the province. Matt sits on the federal working group advising the Homeless Partnering Strategy on the implementation of a nation-wide Homeless Count.

Matt holds a Master of Arts in Planning from the University of British Columbia, and a Bachelor of English Literature from the University of Victoria.

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