Research Grant Proposal: What are the causes of Indigenous Homelessness in Vancouver

Jenna-Marie Bilow

HRSJ 5030: Problem Solving in the Field

Dr. Wilson Bell & Dr. Sarah Moritz

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Jenna-Marie Bilow

**“What are the causes of Indigenous homelessness in the Vancouver area?**

**Objective:** My research addresses the increasing rates of Indigenous homelessness and the many societal factors that have led them into a life of homelessness. Indigenous homelessness is an ongoing and growing social issue that warrants exploration. As an MA grad student of the Human Rights and Social Justice program, I intend on studying the causes of Indigenous homelessness from the Indigenous population themselves utilizing Indigenous Research Methodologies, interviews, and narrative analysis.

There are a couple of areas of focus for this paper that will be addressed. One of the areas that I will be looking into is how by using fifteen to twenty interviews can I document the life stories of Indigenous people in the Vancouver area. The goal of this is to listen to what they feel are the causes of their homelessness. The next point is to investigate the lives of Indigenous people through the interviews and determine how their stories demonstrate the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples as they navigate Western society and its attempts at oppressing the Indigenous population.

My research will focus on Indigenous people who live in Vancouver, away from reserve life. I plan to view how marginalization in the urban centers contributes to their ongoing struggles to maintain day-to-day life. I chose Vancouvers migration of Indigenous persons into urban areas increased starting in the 1950’s (Peters, E. 2012) and continues today (Gabriel, 2023) with only roughly 40% remaining on reserve (Lyeo, Wong, Clyke, Big Canoe, Kinnear, Stopps, Spence & Haines 2024). What this researcher wants to know is what has been and continues to be the causes and potential barriers of Indigenous people in the Vancouver area through the lens of the individuals.

According to a study done in 2023, the Indigenous people make up 2% of Vancouvers population yet they make up 33% of the homeless population (Collins, 2023). Other studies report that Vancouvers Indigenous population makes up 6% of the population yet represent 40% of the homeless population (Bingham, Moniruzzaman, Patterson, Distasio, Sareen, O’Neil & Somers, 2018). In either case, it shows the high amount of the vulnerable Indigenous population in Vancouver, and this is why it is important to study the Indigenous homeless. The population represents such a small percentage of the Vancouver population, yet much of the homeless population, like the national average where Indigenous people are eight times more likely to experience homelessness (Bingham et al, 2019).

National reports state that causes of Indigenous homelessness range from low socioeconomic status, history with reserves, reserve housing, addiction, domestic violence, low education and systemic racism experienced in the employment and housing sectors (Bingham, et al., 2018; Peters & Robillard, 2009; Peters, 2012; McConkey, Iannace, Snyder, Bourgeois & Smylie, 2024; Buck-McFadyen, 2021; Gabriel, 2023; Serrato, Hassan & Forchuk, 2019). It is this researcher’s desired outcome to gather firsthand knowledge from Indigenous homelessness in the Vancouver to determine if any of these factors are the causes of their homelessness and possibly barriers that leads to a continuation of their homelessness.

Indigenous homelessness is a violation of human rights and social justice. According to The National Right to Housing Network (2025) in 2019 the National Housing Strategy received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. What this means is that is that everyone has the right “live somewhere in security, peace and dignity” as according to the United Nations (no page). Indigenous people face homelessness due to poor reserve conditions where there is lack of housing, inadequate housing, or overcrowding, or having to leave the reserve for education (Gabrial, 2023). This leads Indigenous people away from reserves and rural areas to urban centers where they are not prepared to live. Many will leave with little income from social assistance or leave for education where there is a chance they will have little to no income. Employment is a struggle to obtain due to systemic racism (Peters & Robillard, 2009) which limits their ability to afford housing. All the barriers in place that prevent Indigenous people from finding housing are all violations of their human rights. Indigenous homelessness violates social justice due to the systemic injustices that they face when the federal government fails to invest in reserve housing (McCartney et al., 2019) thus pushing Indigenous people into urban centers. The excessive costs of housing in Vancouver are not meant to appeal to low-income residents. Thus, the city violates social justice rights with their lack of low-income housing.

**Context:**

One must wonder why so many Indigenous people choose to leave their home on reserve. According to research gathered through the Thompson Rivers University online library, it was found that reserve life is not highly sought after by Indigenous peoples as they often come with inadequate funding. The reserves are also placed on small pieces of land that were assigned by settlers, this land has not been adjusted to accommodate the growing Indigenous population (McCartney, Herskovits & Hintelmann 2018). The conditions on reserves are often deplorable with mold, overcrowding or in dire need of repairs, and that is if you could get housing to begin with as they are facing a housing shortage (McCartney et al, 2018; Peters & Robillard, 2009). The reserve system was created in the past and remains to this day and this researcher agrees that it is the reserve system that is bringing many Indigenous people to urban areas (Peters & Robillard, 2009; McCartney, et al., 2018).

The Indigenous homeless population is unable to afford standard housing within Vancouver as the average rent is now $2,896 (Vancouver Housing Market, 2025). When you live off income assistance in the province of British Colombia you only make $1,060 (British Columbia, n.d.). Indigenous people face challenges locating affordable housing because of this (Bingham, Moniruzzaman, Patterson, Distasio, Sareen, O’Neil & Somers, 2018; Peters & Robillard, 2009; Peters, 2012; McConkey et al., 2024; Buck-McFadyen, 2021; Gabriel, 2023). Finding employment to offset the costs of high rent is also challenging due to the systemic racism that Indigenous people face in the urban centers. Pathways into homelessness vary by article, however, the most prevalent cause of homelessness that I found through research was the lack of affordable housing.

There is limited research that dictates the causes of Indigenous homelessness in Vancouver. It is through research that I found studies done that indicate Indigenous homelessness is overrepresented in the overall homeless populations. Another study has shown that 64% of those experiencing homelessness did so before the age of twenty-five and sadly, 5% of elders ended up homeless due to the many factors that Indigenous people face. The pathways to homelessness that appeared after lack of affordable housing were low socio-economic status, intergenerational trauma, addiction, poor reserve housing, residential school history and systemic racism.

**Methodology:**

The process of my research will require that I use Indigenous Research Methodologies, interviews, and narrative analysis. I have chosen to use Indigenous Research Methodologies due to the population I will be interviewing, specifically a relational approach. I will be respectful of those who have taken their time to sit with me and share their stories as to why they are experiencing homelessness. I will be getting approval to share my findings with the world from the bands of those I interviewed with which may include Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. I will set up a meeting with each of the bands in order to share my findings to make sure they are respectful. I will be offering a $20.00 visa gift card to all those who agree to sit down and talk with me. I plan on using qualitative techniques such as interviews and narrative analysis as my form of gathering knowledge. Interviews and narrative analysis will allow me to gather knowledge that I might not have been able to get through statistics, and that is through their stories. All together I hope to interview fifteen to twenty individuals.

There will be a research ethics board application that I will be completing prior to starting my research. The reason I will be obtaining approval is because of the interview process that will be taking place. It is with my research methodologies that require interviews, and my proposed research is asking sensitive questions. Because of the sensitive information and the possibility of retraumatizing, I will ensure that there is contact available for a counselor should anyone require assistance. There will also be consent obtained. My research assistant’s role will be to obtain written consent from each participant. This will also include verbal consent. The subjects will know that at any time, their consent can be withdrawn and their information destroyed. The subjects will also be informed that once their information has been used for the purposes of the research, the documentation and recordings will be destroyed. The subjects will also be notified that they will remain anonymous.

An example of the questions that I will be asking are as follows and contain both closed and open-ended questions.

1. Do you identify as First Nations, Metis or Inuit
2. Were you previously living on reserve? If yes, what was your reason for leaving?
3. If you were not living on reserve, where were you living and what was your reason for leaving?
4. Were you or a member of your family in residential school?
5. When did you first experience homelessness?
6. What do you feel led to this?

There are several more questions that I plan on asking, the ones listed are more of the sensitive questions. Other questions include demographics and financial questions. I plan on recruiting participants through flyers in each of the chosen homeless shelters. I am hoping that with the flyers and through word of mouth that I will recruit twenty participants. With the questions I plan on asking, there are certain themes that I am expecting to discover and others that may not be as expected. The themes I am expecting are around reserves and whether they previously lived on reserve. I’m expecting to get most respondents claiming to have lived on reserve. The other question where I expect a higher response is attending residential school. I am querying that there are higher rates of Indigenous homelessness in those who have attended or have had a relative attend residential school. Based on the research that I have read, there is higher rates of mentions of Indigenous homelessness being caused by unaffordable housing, systemic oppression and low socioeconomic status to name a few, these are other possible themes that may arise.

What I feel my limitations are is the fact that I will be only interviewing in Vancouver. The limitation is that my data that will be gathered can be adapted into Vancouver as a form of knowledge regarding their homeless population, but the data would not be useful in other areas. Hidden homelessness is another hidden variable that is not considered. Through my research I came across articles that listed hidden homelessness as a form of homelessness. This is for those who are homeless and, for example, are staying on someone’s couch. They don’t have a home of their own yet are not living on the streets or in a shelter (Buck-McFadyen, 2021). For that reason, this is another limitation to my research.

The purpose of this research is to determine what the potential causes are of Indigenous homelessness in Vancouver. For the population, they will all be Indigenous status which includes First Nations, Metis and/or Inuit and either men, women or other. The ages of the fifteen to twenty interviewees will range from twenty-five to sixty. The reason I have chosen the ages of twenty-five to sixty is because research that I have found states that many Indigenous peoples face homelessness starting around the age of twenty-five and I chose sixty to represent any elders that may be homeless (Collins, 2023). This causes a limitation in that the research will miss out on gathering data from the population under the age of twenty-five. I am aware of this gap and will only interview the chosen age group so that I may hear from those who have been homeless potentially for a while and if not, will have the opportunity to determine why they become homeless later in life.

The recruitment process will involve contacting four shelters in the Vancouver area. The shelters I have chosen are all run by Lookout Housing and Health Society. The names of the individual shelters are Yukon Shelter, Al Mitchell Shelter, Gateway Shelter and Northshore Shelter. I plan on contacting the agency and discussing my proposed research to obtain permission to use their agency. With their approval, I will have them disseminate knowledge of my research. This information will include the purpose of the interviews, chosen demographics, who will be reading this research, that there will be anonymity if they should choose, and the $20 incentive. I will set up a day of the week while I’m in Vancouver for each shelter. The length of each interview is possibly ranging from 15-90 minutes. These shelters were chosen for their large bed capacity. The reason being I will have a greater chance of obtaining twenty interviews, with five coming from each shelter.

As previously mentioned, I have chosen to complete twenty interviews. I feel twenty will allow me to get a good idea of what the population feels leads to their homelessness. I will wait a month between contacting the shelters to when I plan to conduct the interviews. I am hoping that the month will allow enough time to gather twenty interviews. Should I not gather twenty interviews, I feel ten would suffice.

**Dissemination of Study:**

The dissemination will be broken down into three methods. The first method is using journal articles. Each journal will receive a written research paper designated to that journal. Through research, I have narrowed down my options for journal submissions. The first journal which I have chosen is the Canadian Journal of Public Health. Through all my research, I came across an article that pertained to the topic of Indigenous homelessness. I have used this article and have it listed under references. It was a special issue on our health counts: advancing Indigenous wellbeing in urban and related homelands: original articles. In order to have it available for all to access, I have allotted funding out of the budget to pay for open access.

The next article is BMJ Open Access. I chose this journal as one of the journals to post my research findings in for similar reasons as the article previous. Through reading many articles, I came across a journal that posted similar information as to what I am researching. This journal is a Canadian journal as well. In order to have it available for all to access, I have allotted funding out of the budget to pay for open access.

The final journal I have chosen to post my research findings is the International Journal on Homelessness. I chose this article for a different reason than the previous two. I chose this journal through scouring many journals that have posted research related to homelessness. This journal that I have found pertains to my area of research. I will ensure that my research is available for everyone, so I have allotted funding out of the budget to pay for open access.

The next form of information dissemination is through a conference that I plan on attending in May of 2026. The conference is titled Vancouver Human Rights and Accommodation Conference and will be taking place in Vancouver. I will be presenting my research findings to my colleagues. The final form of information dissemination is through posting in the City of Vancouvers online city statistics, under people and programs. I will contact the city’s office and discuss my finding with them and request that I share my findings with the city of Vancouver.

**Researcher and Assistants’ Skills:**

The skills required for me as the principal investigator are those of a graduate degree in Human Rights and Social Justice. Through this training, I was a research assistant which taught me skills in how to conduct research. What I learned as a student that I am going to utilize in this proposed research is gathering of data. In my time as a research assistant, I spent many hours conducting research for my professors where I assisted with recruitment, interviews (including set up and obtaining consent) as well as gather research and complete literature reviews. I was able to discern from information that was not adequate to information that would be pertinent to the topic at hand. The next skill that I have and will be utilizing is that of interviewing. Throughout my time as a research assistant, I was able to observe many interviews and assist with them as well. My undergraduate degree was in social work, and this has provided me with skills that are necessary in interviewing including how to ask open ended versus closed ended questions. Also, I learned that it is important to provide empathy and compassion to those you are interviewing, especially with sensitive material that you are asking about. The next skill is that of transcribing. I learned this skill while I was a research assistant. This is a useful skill as I will be interviewing an upwards of twenty individuals.

The research assistant will require a similar skill set. The assistant will need to be a graduate student. The skills possessed/needed by research assistant will be like my own. I will require my research assistant to have research skills as they will need to gather articles and create literature reviews of the material. The research assistant will not require the skill of transcribing but must be willing to learn as this is a skill that I will need them to have. Lastly, the research assistant must be able to or willing to learn how to obtain consent as they will be accompanying me to interviews to assist with setup and to gather consent forms. The research assistant must be aware of confidentiality as they will be pertinent to sensitive information.

**Budget description:**

This researcher is requesting a total of $44,878.03. For my first year, I am requesting a total of $19,439.29. This budget will allow me to hire one research assistant that I plan on paying $24.00 an hour for his/her/other services. The pay for my assistant will allow me to have them for ten hours a week for fifty-two weeks for a total of 520 hours. The rate of $24.00 an hour for 520 hours brings the total wage for the year to $12,480.00. I will be allotting expenses for fringe benefits at 14% the total yearly wage. That means 14% of $12,480.00 will end up being $1,747.20. Total yearly costs for one assistant for the first year will be $14,227.20.

There will be money set aside for supplies and expenses. For the first year they will total $966.44. To break it down, I will be spending $164.00 on printer ink and paper. There will be no need to purchase a printer, just the supplies to run it. The next cost under supplies is for gift cards. I will be purchasing twenty gift cards for $20.00, totaling $400.00. The reason for this purchase is that I will be conducting twenty interviews with subjects for my research, and the incentive for each participant is a $20.00 gift card that will be given following the interview. The final cost under this section is for a voice recorder at $402.44. which will be purchased from iFlyTek as I am conducting interviews.

The final section is Travel and Knowledge Mobilization. The first year will total $2,648.09. The first expenditure is the cost of gas from Kamloops to Vancouver. I have allotted a total of $125.00 for a round trip between cities. The reason for this trip is to conduct interviews with twenty homeless individuals in the Vancouver area. The next cost is for the cost of six nights in a hotel room in Vancouver. I will be conducting the interviews over a period of five days. I have allotted an extra night to allow for travel the day before the first set of interviews. The total cost for a hotel for six nights is $2,523.09.

The second year I am requesting a total of $27,036.30. The first expense will be for a research assistant. This budget will allow me to hire one research assistant that I plan on paying $24.00 an hour for his/her/other services. The pay for my assistant will allow me to have them for ten hours a week for fifty-two weeks for a total of 520 hours. The rate of $24.00 an hour for 520 hours brings the total wage for the year to $12,480.00. I will be allotting expenses for fringe benefits at 14% the total yearly wage. That means 14% of $12,480.00 will end up being $1,747.20. Total yearly costs for one assistant for the first year will be $14,227.20.

The next section of expenses is for Supplies and Expenses. Under this section the only cost listed is for printing supplies. I have allotted $164.00 for printer ink and printer paper to print out any necessary documents to complete the research project.

The final section is Travel and Knowledge Mobilization. Under this section, the total cost requested is $12,645.10. The first cost set aside will be for gas to attend the Vancouver conference where I will be sharing my research. This cost is $125.00. The next cost set aside is for the hotel in Vancouver for the conference. The hotel is for two nights and will cost $525.10. The next part of this cost will be that of attending the Vancouver Human Rights and Accommodation Conference. This conference costs $1995.00 and will take place in May of 2026. The reason for this conference is for knowledge dissemination of my final research findings. I will be presenting at this conference.

The final cost is for Journal open access to three journal articles. The cost set aside is $10,000. The three journal articles that I will be posting my research findings in are the Canadian Journal of Public Health, BMJ Open access and International Journal on homelessness.

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| **Category** | **Year 1** | **Year 2** | **Total** |
| **Personnel:**  1. Principal investigator (name)\*  2. Co-investigator #1 (name)[[1]](#footnote-1)  3. Co-investigator #2 (name)  4. Technician/Team member  Salary (X%)  Fringe benefits (Y%)  5. Student Assistant(s)  Salary (X%)  Fringe benefits (Y%)  Total Salaries & Wages: | $0  $0  $0  $0  $0  $0  1  $12, 480  $1,747.20  $14,227.20 | $0  $0  $0  $0  $0  $0  1  $12,480  $1,747.20  $14,227.20 | $0  $0  $0  $0  $0  $0 |
| **Supplies & Expenses:**  1.Printer paper and ink  2.Gift Cards  3.Recording device  Provide justification in the designated section.  Total Supplies & Expenses: | $164  $400  $402.44  $966.44 | $164  $164 |  |
| **Travel & Knowledge Mobilization:**  1.Gas to Vancouver from Kamloops  2.Hotel in Vancouver for interview(6nights)  3.Hotel in Vancouver for Conference (2 nights)  4. Conference cost in Vancouver  5. Journal open access  Provide justification in the designated section.  Total Supplies & Expenses: | $125  $2,523.09  $2,648.09 | $125  $525.10  $1995  $10,000  $12,645.10 |  |
| **Subtotal of All Categories:** | $17,841.73 | $27,036.30 |  |
| **Grand Total Requested from MBSJF:** | $44,878.03 |  |  |

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1. NOTE: *Co*-*Investigator*: An individual working in partnership with the *Principal Investigator* in the management, development and/or execution of the project. Proposals do not require co-investigators. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)