UNDERSTANDING NATIVE AMERICAN HOMELESSNESS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE

COMMUNITY FORUM ON
NATIVE AMERICAN HOMELESSNESS

MARCH 2019

PREPARED BY
LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is an issue that touches our Los Angeles Native American community, but not much is formally known about the particular issues our relatives face, nor do we know their true count and other characteristics. On September 25, 2019 the Community Forum on Native American Homelessness was held at The California Endowment. This is a progress report detailing what we learned, and recommendations for next steps in the long journey ahead. We invite you to learn, share, and get involved!

The Issue: Although Los Angeles County (LAC) is home to the largest population of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) in the United States (roughly 157,517 according to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates), we believe that homeless Native Americans are both severely undercounted and not connected to appropriate resources. This report is an attempt to identify the gaps in knowledge and practice, uplift the unique experiences of our population, and highlight the innovative proposals identified by our passionate community members.

Undercounted: The 2018 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count reported 565 homeless AIAN in LAC, which is 1% of the LAC homeless population, or 0.3% of the total AIAN population in LAC. We believe this is incorrect. We know that poverty, chronic disease, mental health diagnoses, and substance abuse are predictors of homelessness. Unfortunately, these risk factors are disproportionately high in our community. For instance, AIAN in LAC are 3.4 times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites (NHW) to live in households with an income below the federal poverty level.1 The diabetes mortality rate for AIAN is more than 3 times the NHW rate.2 Whites (NHW) are 3.4 times more likely than non-Hispanic AIAN to be diabetes mortality rate for AIAN is more than Whites (NHW) are 3.4 times more likely than non-Hispanic AIAN to live in households with an income below the federal poverty level.2 The diabetes mortality rate for AIAN is more than 3 times the NHW rate.2

Based on results from the Healthy LA Natives study, 14% of AIAN survey respondents were homeless, and 20% of AIAN survey respondents were temporarily homeless.4 While there are also limitations in the definitions and sampling methodology for the Healthy LA Natives study, this is quite different than the 0.3%–1% range captured by the 2018 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Equally important, we know the current definition of AIAN in the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count is consistent with the definition widely accepted and endorsed by entities such as the Urban Indian Health Institute, and significantly reduces the number of AIAN.

Unconnected: Not only is Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) concerned about the number of homeless individuals, but direct service providers of Native Americans in Los Angeles are also concerned about the specific considerations for this population. Patricia Lopez (Tewa Pueblo), Supervisor Hahn appointed Commissioner and Nurse Practitioner at UCLA Health, reflected, “As a Native American clinician treating many homeless at UCLA, I see people that view us as their cultural, spiritual, medical and community home. Living on the streets, in their cars, couch surfing, they can’t practice their healing ways. Isolation, fear of the urban environment, and racial discrimination take their toll on them… Frequently my patients are victims of theft of their medications and belongings, including sacred objects used in prayer… There are basic, cultural issues that the agencies who help the homeless are not knowledgeable of when dealing with Native people. This is what is at the heart of the problem of homelessness for our community.”5

We know that poverty, chronic disease, mental health diagnoses, and substance abuse are predictors of homelessness. Unfortunately, these risk factors are disproportionately high in our community. For instance, AIAN in LAC are 3.4 times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites (NHW) to live in households with an income below the federal poverty level.1 The diabetes mortality rate for AIAN is more than 3 times the NHW rate.2 Whites (NHW) are 3.4 times more likely than non-Hispanic AIAN to live in households with an income below the federal poverty level.2 The diabetes mortality rate for AIAN is more than 3 times the NHW rate.2

There is an inedible connection between settler colonialism, subsequent policies of removal, assimilation, relocation, and modern Indigenous homelessness. While the dominant narrative focuses on individual deficits as reasons for homelessness (e.g. alcoholism, mental illness, a ‘cultural preference’ for being homeless), we challenge these notions by outlining the ways in which modern Indigenous homelessness is a direct extension of colonialism and structural racism.

While Indigenous communities are quite diverse, there are a couple commonalities. One, along with our colonized histories, we share similar impacts of disproportionate disease burden, trauma, loss of culture, socio-economic, and socio-political inequities. Yet, we also share profound strength in how we view our place in the world through our relational worldview. That is, not only do we share relationships through our complex kinship systems, but we view ourselves as in relationship with the Land. Many of our basic, cultural, and spiritual practices are deeply rooted in our homelands, as are generations of our families’ histories.

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The arrival of colonizers in the United States meant that Native Americans not only suffered from catastrophic population losses due to genocide and disease, but were also forcibly relocated from our traditional homelands. Forced removal was codified and government-enforced under President Andrew Jackson, with the order of the Army to forcibly remove the Cherokee tribe as one example. Meanwhile, the Allotment era intended to diminish the possibility of AIAN land ownership by taking millions of acres out of Native American hands, and selling it to non-Native owners. This act resulted in half of reservation lands being held by Native Americans, and set the stage for economic hardship.

Assimilation-era policies meant to “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” marked the beginning of the boarding school era whereby children forcibly removed from their homes were physically, sexually, culturally, and spiritually abused and neglected. This resulted in a tremendous loss of traditional family structures, language, culture, and spirituality, and began the cycle of intergenerational trauma where these learned behaviors would be transmitted through generations.

The termination era of policymaking would deem more than 100 tribes “civilized” and nullify their recognition by the government. This effectively opened up tribal lands to economic exploitation. For instance, the greater Los Angeles County being on traditional Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash territories, policies such as termination would make it so that there are no reservation lands designated for these tribes, and they are not afforded the same tribal sovereignty rights as other Federally recognized tribal nations.

Lastly, the Relocation Era intended to encourage Native Americans to leave reservations, acquire vocational skills, and assimilate into the general population away from their homelands. While this policy was largely responsible for the more than 21% of AIAN who live in urban areas in the present day, it did not necessarily live up to its economic promises. Indeed, 1 in 5 AIAN families, and more than 1 in 3 AIAN families lived below the federal poverty level between 2010-2014 in Los Angeles. Given this legacy of policies that resulted in dehumanization and dispossession of land and resources, it is no surprise that AIAN people lack the economic power to keep them out of homelessness, and oftentimes feel homeless in the spiritual and cultural sense.

“PRIOR TO 1492, NATIVE COMMUNITIES HAD A 100% SUCCESS RATE IN HOUSING AND DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS IN CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE.”

-Colleen Echohawk, Executive Director, Chief Seattle Club

1 out of 5 people were homeless (living in a hotel, shelter, or vehicle)

1 out of 5 people were homeless (living temporarily with friends/relatives)
THE INAUGURAL COMMUNITY FORUM ON NATIVE AMERICAN HOMELESSNESS IN LOS ANGELES

Approximately 100 individuals attended the forum on September 25, 2018. Participants ranged from community members, community members with lived experience, AIAN service providers, a range of non-profits, faith based organizations, county representatives, and academic institutions. Nearly 75% of participants that signed in indicated that would like to be contacted for future activities.

WHO ATTENDED?

- University of Southern California
- University of California, Los Angeles
- California State University, Dominguez Hills
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
- Los Angeles County, 3rd District, Housing and Homelessness Deputy
- Riverwatch
- California Pacific United Methodist Church
- Native American Episcopal Church
- Church of the City
- United American Indian Involvement
- Torres Martinez Tribal TANF
- Red Circle Project
- American Indian Counseling Center
- California Native Vote Project
- LAUSD Title IX
- Pakou Cultural Community Services
- American Indian Changing Spirits
- Native Americans in Philadelphia
- Tribal Law and Policy Institute
- Los Angeles Family Housing
- Enviroscape
- United Way
- Los Angeles LGBTQ Center
- Learning Disabilities Association of America
- The People of Concern

HOW WAS IT ORGANIZED?

First Half

- Getting Everyone on the Same Page (Oral Presentations)
- A Personal Journey In and Out of Homelessness
- Robin Thundershield, Standing Rock Sioux, California Native Vote Project
- American Indians/Alaska Natives and Homelessness in Los Angeles County
- Farrah Ferris, Hupa/Yurok/Karuk/Redwood Creek, MSW, United American Indian Involvement
- LA County’s Homeless Initiative and Measure H
- Molly Ryman, Housing and Homelessness Deputy for 3rd District
- Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count: 2018 Results
- Lorin Kinney, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Second Half

- Listening to Our Community (Break-Out Sessions)
- How do we properly count Native Americans?
- Tell us your stories. What are your experiences as a Native person who is homeless [or is providing services to homeless clients]?
- How are we currently serving homeless Native Americans?
- Brief report back from 3 groups, and wrap-up

METHODS

This process was embarked upon synthesizing lessons from Indigenous research methods and drawing on cultural values used by Indigenous leaders such as LaDonna Harris. Briefly, those values include relationships, relational accountability, reciprocity, and redistribution.

Relationships

As outlined above, Indigenous people believe that we are all related in the most profound sense. Not only are we related as humans, but we are related to all things, including the Land. From a practical point of view, in being true relatives to one another, we thought it was important to normalize positions of dominance (e.g., share power). We found it especially important to understand that there is no one ‘expert’ in homelessness. Hence, our four speakers represented different points of view and expertise in addressing homelessness: from an Indigenous person with lived experience, to an Indigenous service provider, to two county representatives who shared about county initiatives in homelessness. Further, we found it extremely important to honor the community’s expertise and therefore captured their feedback in breakout sessions.

Relational accountability

As relatives we have a responsibility to care for one another. We do this by lifting up the voices of relatives who may not normally be heard, and we do this by showing up for one another. This report, and the video highlight reel, is part of that relational accountability. We want to be accountable to the community in sharing what we learned, by representing the community in the best way possible, and in working together to plan next steps.

Reciprocity

If we look at reciprocity as the practice of sharing or exchanging for mutual benefit, we find that this practice runs deep in our communities. For instance, if we use medicines from the land, we give back with a prayer and an offering; if we or our families are somehow honored by the community, we often have a practice of giving back by way of gifts, food, etc. For this project, we found it important to give back in a couple tangible ways. We wanted to ensure that we thanked attendees for their voices and time with food, with raffle items, and with customized tote bags that contained information and resources.

Redistribution

“Our reciprocal relationships and responsibilities guides us to share our resources and help us to maintain balance” (Americans for Indian Opportunity, www.aiow.org). For this project we found it important to share our resources and include the community in a few ways. We hired Native American college and graduate students to take notes during the forum, and participate in subsequent research activities as desired. We procured raffle items, graphic design services, and video production services from Native American owned businesses.

We also recognize that this effort is aimed at redistribution of resources at the highest levels. We aim to call attention to the needs of our community with the understanding that we wish to have more dedicated resources for counting our community, housing our community, and having culturally centered processes and people serving our community. We wish to call attention to resources at the community, county, federal, and levels beyond to more equally serve our homeless relatives.

Follow-up steps have included one-on-one interviews with AIAN experiencing homelessness, and a focus group that brought together our AIAN serving agencies. Transcription and analyses are underway, and will help inform future activities.

The UCLA Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this project as expedited.
WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Community feedback was sorted into three major themes: individual needs, community needs, and systems-based suggestions. Native American identity was the common tie between each category. In turn, Native American identity directly impacted the discussion about the homeless count. We'll take a deeper dive into major themes below.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Individual needs were grouped into categories that mirrored Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. What is that? According to Maslow’s Hierarchy, healthy individuals have certain needs, and these needs are arranged in a hierarchy. More basic needs (such as food, shelter, etc.) are at the bottom of the pyramid.

Fulfilling the more basic needs of the lower levels then allows individuals to focus on the higher levels of the pyramid. For our relatives experiencing homelessness, it was no surprise that physiological needs (such as food and shelter) were mentioned frequently, followed by safety needs, in which one participant noted, “You can go into a shelter or stay on the streets, and the streets might be safer.” Though contrary to Maslow’s hierarchy, our participants seemed to focus more on love and belonging, and esteem needs. Love and belonging was expressed by belonging to the AIAN community as an individual, and the seeming need for the community to belong to the rest of humanity via raising visibility and changing the narrative. “[What makes me hopeful] is sessions like this. That we are not fading away. That we are finding our way back. Connecting with other individuals. Meeting the needs and changing the stereotype.”

Esteem needs were mentioned most frequently. In this case, we defined esteem as encompassing respect, self-esteem, recognition, strength, and freedom. A powerful example of esteem needs was expressed in the following, “Our people out there need our help so treat them like human beings and nothing less.” Lastly, self-actualization was defined as a desire to become the most that one can be. One participant expressed feeling most fulfilled when he helped his people, “I don’t want to do nothing else with my life but help my native people.”

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Community needs were centered around the importance of community relationships and collaboration, and the need for physical spaces that are uniquely “native.” This was no surprise given our discussion about the importance of relationships in Indigenous worldview. Under community relationships, having a shared history of trauma was mentioned as important to acknowledge. The ability to do targeted outreach to community members was also important. One person commented, “The first step is connecting them to a native community…” Another participant remarked, “How do we bring our culture and people promoting our culture together? Are there groups that can bring them together with people who are falling through the cracks?” Under collaboration, someone noted, “Most of the organizations are overwhelmed. Collaboration is key;” while another participant suggested, “The County in collaboration with American Indian groups could have a native coalition addressing homelessness.” In summary, there was a need to collaborate both within the AIAN community, and with partners outside the AIAN community.

There was particularly much conversation surrounding the idea of having physical spaces that are uniquely “native.” These physical spaces ranged from smaller spaces such as community houses in actual neighborhoods, deemed “micro community organizations,” to as large as a “native community enclave to call their own—a geographic area they can identify with.” Other ideas included a “Native based shelter,” a “Native based housing organization,” to “talk[ing] a whole military housing complex and convert[ing] it to a Native community.” The ability to create these spaces by leveraging policy was also mentioned. Some participants commented that existing organizations might leverage Measure H funds, while another participant commented that there should be legislation drafted to help keep people in their neighborhoods.

SYSTEMS BASED NEEDS

There were four subthemes under systems based needs: the need to focus more on prevention, more sustainable interventions, a holistic approach, and the need to get Native agencies on the same page. Prevention services might include services such as eviction prevention, emergency services such as rental assistance and other financial assistance, credit repair, case management, and legal services. Under prevention services, a participant mentioned, “You have to be homeless, not couch surfing in order to qualify for a voucher. There’s no middle ground, and the prevention services are not enough.” Under sustainable interventions, a participant said, “All we are doing is swapping resources unless we are providing tools for sustainability...we need long term tools.” Under a holistic approach, the ability to house the diverse and multiple identities of the AIAN community was mentioned. Specifically, the following AIAN subpopulations were
Self Governance Board administers sub-AIAN in Los Angeles County per year in direct since 1993. The CSAIGB serves over 10,000 has administered the Community Services future work group efforts. For now, a very soon be released to outline existing services, homelessness. A detailed infographic will their respective services related to AIAN on December 18, 2018, to better understand was held with our Native serving agencies specific services.

Lastly, there was much discussion about our local Native agencies providing different services, and the desire to better coordinate with one another. A subsequent focus group was held with our Native serving agencies on December 18, 2018, to better understand their respective services related to AIAN homelessness. A detailed infographic will soon be released to outline existing services, and information learned will also inform future work group efforts. For now, a very high level discussion is outlined here. From the ‘emergency services’ perspective, the LANAIC has administered the Community Services American Indian Block Grant (CSAIBG) program since 1993. The CSAIBG serves over 10,000 AIAN in Los Angeles County per year in direct services as well as intake and referral. The Self Governance Board administers sub-contracts with three American Indian groups, United American Indian Involvement (UAI), Gabrielson/Tongva Native American Services, and Pukuis Cultural Community Services. The types of services included intake and referral, emergency food, emergency shelter housing, employment assistance, education, youth services, and many other areas of services. Other Native serving organizations who do not receive CSAIBG funds, still offer some degree of preventive or emergency services including but not limited to the American Indian Counseling Center (AICC), Torres Martinez Tribal TANF (TMTANF), Southern California Indian Center (SCIC), and the Red Circle Project (RCP).

Insofar as housing, AICC is a County-run mental health facility and can thus access the Coordinated Entry System, which is a countywide system that brings together new and existing programs and resources in order to connect people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate housing and services. Whereas, UAI, RCP, and TMTANF currently connect homeless clients to housing resources by making referrals to outside agencies who can access the Coordinated Entry System. This approach is by no means an exhaustive list of current services, but a preview of future resources to come. In the interim, we suggest accessing the Red Pages for other services related to AIAN in Los Angeles, as well as the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s (LAHSA)”Get Help” webpage (both links found on our website under “Resources.”

THE INTERSECTION OF IDENTITY, CULTURAL VALUES, AND THE GREATER LOS ANGELES HOMELESS COUNT

First, it’s important to understand a couple things about the Greater Los Angeles Homelessness Count. The Homelessness Count consists of a few components: the street count (unsheltered), the shelter count, the youth count, and demographic surveys. People who are considered ‘homeless’ can be either ‘unsheltered’ or ‘sheltered’. Unsheltered is defined as “An individual/family whose primary nighttime residence is public/private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.” For instance, this can refer to those sleeping in vehicles, tents, or elsewhere on the streets. Sheltered (and homeless) is defined as “An individual/family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangement.” Shelters can include emergency shelters, transitional housing, safe havens, and emergency hotels/motels provided with a voucher. Probably most important to know is that the demographic survey is where things like race and ethnicity are collected—but not necessarily at the same time as the street or shelter count.

It’s also important to know that in conversations with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), their definition of “American Indian and Alaska Native” is those who only report being American Indian and Alaska Native. Thus, if a person reports AIAN and White, for instance, that person is not classified as AIAN. If a person reports AIAN and Hispanic, that person is not classified as AIAN. This is important because of the 5.2 million people who identified as AIAN in the 2010 Census, 34%, or 1.8 million, reported multiple races, and 23%, or 1.2 million, reported Hispanic ethnicity. Particularly in a diverse and urban area such as Los Angeles where AIAN families relocated in the early 1950s, interracial families are common. Indeed, when LAHSA added Hispanic to ‘AIAN alone’ this doubled the amount of AIAN who were homeless. Unfortunately, they were unable to pull ‘AIAN in combination with other races’—data which we will continue to request in future counts.

Aside from the more inclusive definition of AIAN mentioned above, participants viewed homeless AIAN identity as an overlap of multiple other identities: Individuals vs. families; veterans; those with mental illness; transitional age youth; Two-Spirit/LGBTQ; and women, especially women with children.

Our community also challenged the very concept of ‘homeless.’ Some commented that there is a general stigma associated with being homeless, and that being homeless might be seen as bringing shame on one’s family. Some questioned, “When did homeless become a label? Before it was ‘transient.’” Others simply never saw themselves as homeless, “I never identified as homeless because I was living in a car.” Others mentioned frustration with the fact that ‘couch surfing’ wasn’t considered homeless, and noted that this was both a liability that exacerbates poor economic conditions, as well as a strength showing our community’s ability to take care of one another. In specific regard to the count, an element of mistrust was noted, “some people do not want to be found,” while others asserted that it was a matter of education, “we don’t explain to our communities why we do the homeless count.”

Lastly, the actual process of the homeless count was challenged with the following suggestions/assertions:

• We know where to find our community
• Have indigenous people collecting the data
• We know there are enclaves. They aren’t hidden.
• One day isn’t enough. Change the season in which the count is done—referring to the fact that our community often travels between Los Angeles and ‘home’ (e.g. reservations or areas near their reservations).

There seemed to be a basic consensus that without addressing issues of identity, the miscategorization of AIAN in the homeless count, the stigma associated with being categorized as homeless, and without incorporating community input and guidance in the actual process, there would continue to be an undercount of AIAN. It was also understood that this represents communities into fewer resources and less power for this community.
EVALUATIONS

WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE EVENT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presenters were very informative</th>
<th>Amazing input from community members &amp; homeless individuals</th>
<th>Diverse speakers from organization deeply involved in what efforts are being explored</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wealth of experience &amp; knowledge</td>
<td>The amount of space that was created for community voice &amp; visibility</td>
<td>Was conducted in a respected, gentle, yet highly informed and committed manner: I’m a big fan of brainstorming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community networking</td>
<td>It was good to network with other non-profit organizations, etc.</td>
<td>Discussion of history of homelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community groups break out what services where available</td>
<td>Great speakers, data &amp; outcomes</td>
<td>The honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of issues-homeless</td>
<td>Everyone coming together</td>
<td>The refreshments</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Help &amp; Hope</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing agencies together</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The issue to resolve homelessness in the native american community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community organized</td>
<td>Great collection of advocates and community experts. I made wonderful connections here and learned a lot!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great environmental, food, speakers</td>
<td>Relevant info - good food - made new contacts</td>
<td>People / topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop interaction</td>
<td>The information given and the space provided to share experiences</td>
<td>Hosting a forum to begin the much needed discussion of native homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good community event and space for sharing. Thanks for the event</td>
<td>Very informative, great information</td>
<td>Provided a great start. Future suggestion would be hold during day when homeless community members can attend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED FOR FUTURE EVENTS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earlier in the day… personalize technical aspects of presentation</th>
<th>More people commit to communication and follow up by challenging each in their own way to perform on ask or follow-up</th>
<th>Continue the conversations and create sub-committees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longer event, larger event</td>
<td>Longer time for discussion on ideas</td>
<td>Hold an event at a time where homeless community members would be more available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued discussion to explore issues</td>
<td>Creating a native community-driven task force on homelessness</td>
<td>More frequent reminders leading up to the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish it would not run so late</td>
<td>I think a conversation about power creations and implementation is necessary</td>
<td>Each event I have attended was well organized &amp; accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To walk away with one major action plan that all in attendance can work</td>
<td>Better evaluation</td>
<td>Inclusion of indigenous communities from South and Central America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More national education workshops as a collective effort data</td>
<td>More time</td>
<td>None – it was great!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite natives who live the life</td>
<td>Day long conference</td>
<td>Consider working across county lines</td>
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PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

1. Work closely with LAHSA to
   a. Foremost, develop and use the correct definition of American Indians and Alaska Natives in subsequent reports
   b. Generate an accurate and detailed count of homeless Native Americans
      i. By inclusion of AIAN service organizations in the count
      ii. By inclusion of AIAN stakeholder input
   c. Consider adding an AIAN specific question(s) to the VISPIOT (see glossary)
   d. Consider developing positions for “housing navigators” and “Coordinated Entry System matchers” that are specifically meant to service the AIAN community, and are not limited by Service Planning Areas
   e. Identify proper subcommittees or commissions to ensure proper AIAN representation and lift up our unique issues

2. Align our local Native American community based organizations to create a transparent and cohesive system of care for our homeless relatives. Process steps:
   a. Analyze data from focus group and 1:1 interviews to help guide future efforts
   b. Convene a regular working group to facilitate more community conversation, and elicit specific needs
   c. Develop a community-oriented housing resource guide
      i. Work closely with the LAHSA Undereserved Cultural Competency Committee (AIAN group) as they develop a centralized community website
      d. Continue to educate the community at large with continued forums, outside speakers, etc.
      e. Identify gaps in knowledge and data to drive a continued research agenda

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

• Analysis of data from follow-up focus group with AIAN service providers, and interviews with community members experiencing homelessness
• Continue to invite or visit other urban Native community organizations who are providing housing for their communities
• We will commence an ongoing Task Force in March 2019 on Native American homelessness
• The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, along with partner agencies such as the Los Angeles Homelessness Services Authority, UAII, and AICC sent a letter of interest for the “Coordinated Entry System matchers” that are specifically meant to service the AIAN community, and are not limited by Service Planning Areas

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

• Share your stories and concerns at various city/county commission meetings on homelessness. Follow our website (www.lanaic.org/homelessness) and social media sites for updates on this issue, and other projects of the Commission
• Apply to be part of our ongoing Task Force beginning March 2019.
• Tell us your stories: Whether in a letter, a video message, a piece of art, or beyond, we want to know how homelessness is affecting our community. Please contact the Commission to share your thoughts at homelessness@lanaic.org.
• Come to our Commission meetings which take place on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, Room 376, at 7:00pm
American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages. Of these terms that denote AIAN are more than just a racial/ethnic group, but have a unique political status with the United States government, distinct cultural traditions, and a long history of self-governance in their own communities that goes back to the time of Spanish contact. All of these facts support the conclusion that AIAN are a sovereign nation and have certain inherent rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty), and are entitled to self-governance and self-determination due to the unique character of their relationship with the United States.

Homeless: Category 1, Literally Homeless: Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) is living in a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (iii) has made a good faith effort to obtain permanent housing and has been refused that housing; (iv) has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (v) has been continuously living in a public or private place not meant for human habitation for more than 24 hours or more during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; (vi) has experienced persistent instability as measured by two or more moves or during in the preceding 60 days; and (vii) Can be displaced by a natural disaster, civil unrest, or other emergency conditions.

Category 2, Imminent Risk of Homelessness: Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been obtained; (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

Category 3, Homeless Under Federal Statutes: Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with Category 3 children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal definitions; (ii) Have a history of self-sufficiency that is interrupted or impaired by one or more of the following factors; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two or more moves or during in the preceding 60 days; and (iv) Can be displaced by a natural disaster, civil unrest, or other emergency conditions.

Categorization of Homelessness: Category 4, Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence: Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; and (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS): HMIS is a computerized data collection system designed to capture client information over time on the characteristics, service needs and accomplishments of homeless persons.

Housing First: An approach to homelessness assistance centered on reconnecting persons in need of housing who lack a permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry. Housing First programs do not require persons experiencing homelessness to prove “housing readiness,” demonstrate sobriety, engage in treatment, have employment, or have income to obtain program entry or for continued assistance.

Indigenous: According to the United Nations, “Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and way of relating to people and the environment. They have retained their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world have composed and protected their rights as distinct peoples.” This is in contrast to AIAN, who are Indigenous people, but have a distinct political relationship with the United States, and whose tribes have political recognition by the United States government.

Interim Housing: Interim Housing is an intervention that provides people experiencing homelessness with temporary housing intended to provide immediate access to unsheltered homeless, to connect participants to permanent housing opportunities in their communities, and to provide participants with time to transition to permanent housing. As defined by Los Angeles County, includes Crisis Housing, Winter/Seasonal Shelter, Bridge Housing, Recovery Bridge, Recuperative Care, Stabilization Housing, Safe Haven programs.

Permanent Housing: Community-based housing without a designated length-of-stay in which formerly homeless persons live as independently as possible. Permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing are two primary types of permanent housing assistance provided by the LA County CES.

Permanent Supportive Housing: Permanent housing with long-term leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services for formerly homeless persons who have experienced long-term homelessness and who are not otherwise eligible for categorical housing. Permanent supportive housing is a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

1. Is provided by a provider of permanent housing.
2. Is designed to meet the needs of tenants.
3. Is not part of an institutional or congregate setting.
4. Provides support services.

Transitional Housing: Transitional Housing is conceptualized as an intermediate intervention between emergency shelter/crisis housing and permanent housing. It is intended to be longer term, service-intensive and private than emergency shelters, yet remains time-limited to stays of three months to three years. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that led to homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support networks.

TRAPEZ: An organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma informed care (TIC) is a psychological, emotional safety for both participant and providers, and helps participants rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. Trauma informed care (TIC) is a psychological, emotional safety for both participant and providers, and helps participants rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

REFERENCES


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Views expressed in this report are those of the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission, and not necessarily that of our community partners including the American Indian Counseling Center, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, or the United American Indian Involvement.