

**For Immediate Release**

## **A Regional Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count in the Cowichan Valley**

**Duncan, BC** – We will soon have a “snapshot” of homelessness in the Cowichan Valley which will give insight into who is homeless and why. On Wednesday August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 a regional Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count and Housing Needs Survey in the Cowichan Valley was conducted at various sites. The information will be used in local plans to help the homeless and the neighborhoods that are impacted by this growing issue.

A Point-in-Time Count takes place over the course of a 24-hour period. Trained volunteers and staff from local service providers have counted and surveyed individuals who are staying in shelters, short-term housing and who are without shelter. The regional PiT Count has been coordinated by Joy Emmanuel of Turning Times Consulting, hired by the Tze Tza Watul Community Advisory Board (CAB).

The regional count, different than the Duncan PiT Count in February, means that surveys have been conducted more broadly to include all Cowichan Valley electoral areas and municipalities, including: Duncan, Mill Bay, Chemainus, Ladysmith, Cowichan Lake, an outdoor mobile team led by the RCMP, and two magnet events at Centennial Park and at McAdam Park in Duncan.

Many committed local agencies have come together to plan and participate in the Point-in-Time Count. Representatives from the RCMP, local municipalities, service providers such as Warmland House, Hiiye’yu Lelum (House of Friendship), Cowichan Valley Basket Society, Salvation Army, Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, school district 79, United Way, and more have participated in the 2017 summer count.

In February 2017, a winter PiT Count was organized in Duncan. Out of the 181 people surveyed, 73 people are currently experiencing absolute homelessness, 71 people are considered to be a part of the hidden homeless, and 37 people are at risk of becoming homeless. Out of the 73 people who were counted as experiencing absolute homelessness, 75% were male and 25% were female. Results from the summer surveys are currently being gathered and further details will be provided once the data has been thoroughly analyzed. The strategy behind the summer count is to get a sense of the difference between the winter and summer homeless populations and trends.

The PiT Count will indicate the *minimum* number of people experiencing absolute homelessness in our community. Other forms of homelessness include, people staying temporarily with family or friends, trading sex for shelter, people who are in long-term transitional housing but whose housing and health are still not stable, and others who may be inadequately housed such as people living without heat because they cannot pay for hydro or living in buildings that were not intended as residential units. People experiencing these housing challenges are not typically included in a PiT count but will be included as part of the Housing Needs survey conducted the same day.

The PiT Count and Housing Needs survey will improve the community's understanding of the needs and circumstances of the people who are affected by homelessness in our community. The count and survey will provide us with the key data on gender, age, ethnicity, and patterns and experiences of homelessness.

The regional Cowichan Valley Summer Count has been funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy Program. Additional funding support has been provided by community agencies and individual donors. To encourage the homeless to participate in the survey, meals were provided on Tuesday August 15<sup>th</sup> at Centennial Park from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm and on August 16<sup>th</sup> at an outdoor breakfast at McAdam Park from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.

"The Government of Canada is pleased to support noteworthy projects conducted by organizations like United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island," said the Honorable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. "Every segment of our society must be treated with dignity and respect and be given the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution. The face of homelessness is changing and the government recognizes the need to provide adequate support to communities to build capacity to help homeless population's lead valuable lives."

A special thanks to donors that made this regional PiT Count possible including: CVRD, Our Cowichan, Ladysmith Resources Centre Association, Cowichan Housing Association, Pascale Dupont, Farm Credit Canada, BC Ferries & Marine Workers' Union, and the Duncan United Church for their generous contributions to the 2017 summer regional PiT Count.

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