

2016 POINT IN TIME HOMELESS COUNT

Heading Home: The Right Thing To Do
10 Year Plan to End Homelessness 2010 - 2020





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Choices
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- Marshall House (Wood Buffalo Housing and Development Corporation)
- MAT program (The Salvation Army)
- Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre
- NorthLife Fellowship Baptist Church Soup Kitchen
- Pastew Place Detox Centre
- Stepping Stones (Wood's Homes)
- Unity House (Fort McMurray Family Crisis Society)
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INTRODUCTION

With more than 235,000 Canadians experiencing it each year, homelessness is a complex and important social issue¹ and ending it has become a nationwide priority. Indeed, many Canadian cities are making determined efforts to bring the challenge of homelessness in their communities to the forefront.

In March 2009, the Province released “A Plan for Alberta - Ending Homelessness in 10 Years,” which emphasizes a housing first model and a client-centered approach that removes pre-conditions to being housed. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo created its own community-level initiative - “Heading Home: The Right Thing to Do - 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness 2010-2020” - as its framework for ending homelessness in the region.

“Heading Home: The Right Thing to Do” focuses on five goals to improve community support and transition to a housing first model that focuses on housing as a right for every person: Education, change management, prevention, re-housing and providing supports.

The approach combines housing relocation and other support services to enable individuals and families to break the cycle of homelessness and create long-term housing stability. Helping those experiencing homelessness access permanent and stable housing provides further opportunity for them to seek necessary resources and engage and participate in society.

WOOD BUFFALO HOMELESS COUNTS

In order to track the progress of housing programs and services, the Municipality began survey counts in 2003. They have been conducted biannually since 2006, serving to:

- Measure changes in the demographics of the homeless population.
- Track progress and successes made towards ending homelessness by 2020.
- Allow for more accurate planning and evaluation of programming to best meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness.
- Educate and increase awareness about homelessness in the community.
- Advocate for increased community involvement in implementing effective solutions.

2016 WOOD BUFFALO POINT IN TIME COUNT

This report presents 2016 data about homelessness in the Municipality, such as information about and analysis of demographics, length of residency, youth, veterans and general trends. The research methodology, a Point in Time (PIT) Count, is discussed - including the details and limitations of the approach - and terms used are defined in a glossary. When possible, comparisons are made with previous PIT Counts, and using the 2012 and 2014 Municipal Censuses. The conclusion reflects on challenges and recommendations for future community counts. Homelessness as a local, provincial and national issue is also explored.

HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE (HISC)

The Homelessness Initiative Strategic Committee (HISC) is comprised of community leaders and stakeholders who advocate for ending homelessness in the Municipality, as well as representatives from both levels of government. It stewards the Community Plan on Homelessness, including strategic planning, funding, communication, research and best practices. As part of the strategic planning, HISC also reviews project proposals submitted for funding under the Community Plan to ensure that identified priorities are addressed.

Initially, HISC was formed in 2000 to facilitate achievement of the Community Plan’s priorities in relation to identified gaps in services and supports for homeless and near homeless individuals and families. It then evolved into two separate entities - the HISC Executive and HISC Interagency, which subsequently changed their names to better reflect their individual purposes. With input and direction from members, the HISC Executive retains the acronym HISC but it will now mean Homelessness Initiatives Strategic Committee, while HISC Interagency is known as CHAT - Community Housing Agency Team.

¹ Homeless Hub, *Research Matters, Finding Solutions to Homelessness. The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014*. Stephen Gaetz; Tanya Gulliver; Tim Richter

GLOSSARY

CHRONIC HOMELESS:

Those who have been homeless for a year or more or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

COUCH SURFERS:

Often transient homeless who rely on temporary, overnight accommodation with friends, family etc. This does not usually involve having their own space or paying for accommodation.

EMERGENCY SHELTER:

A facility intended to provide overnight accommodation for homeless individuals - usually only available for overnight use and may include access to food and clothing.

EPISODICALLY HOMELESS:

Individuals who move into and out of homelessness several times over a three-year period (some of the moves may be into correction facilities or hospital). This population is younger but has more complex health issues than the transitionally homeless. ²

HIDDEN HOMELESS:

Individuals who may be transient homeless but have temporary accommodation for periods of time and thus are not living on the street or accessing facilities or services. Consequently, this population is not always visible in the community.

HISC:

Homeless Initiative Strategic Committee, a group of community leaders and funders who meet monthly to advocate for ending homelessness in the Municipality.

HOMELESS:

An individual without a permanent residence and is either sleeping on the street, staying in places not meant for human habitation, moving continuously between temporary housing arrangements, couch surfing, and/or staying overnight in emergency shelters.

HOUSING FIRST:

A housing model that promotes housing rapidly as the first step in moving people out of homelessness. This approach shifts from the commonly-used housing readiness approach because there are no pre-conditions to being housed. Housing first involves intensive case management and wraparound support services to help the homeless population achieve sustainable self-sufficiency. Housing first has become a best practice and is used in homelessness programming alongside support services.

PERMANENT HOUSING:

A safe housing option meant for human habitation; accommodation is being paid for.

POINT IN TIME (PIT) HOMELESS COUNT:

A survey conducted in one day or at a particular point in time. A snapshot of those who are homeless, it captures population size and basic demographics of those surveyed, but does not provide a complete representation of all those experiencing homelessness.

SHADOW POPULATION:

Refers to "temporary residents of a municipality who are employed by an industrial or commercial establishment in the municipality for a minimum of 30 days within a municipal census year" (Municipal Government Act, Determination of Population Regulation). Within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, the shadow population has three

components: Those who live in typical residential accommodations; those in non-residential accommodations such as hotels, campgrounds, shelters, public facilities, or are homeless, and those who live in project accommodations/work camps. ³

SHORT-TERM HOUSING FACILITY/TRANSITION HOUSING:

A secure living environment often supported by organizations that also provide emergency services. Short-term housing allows individuals to receive support and assistance in acquiring the skills and means to move toward independent living.

SLEEPING ROUGH:

When individuals spend their nights on the streets or in places not meant for human habitation such as parks, forests and vacant buildings.

SURVEYED:

Individuals who qualified to participate in the 2016 PIT Count because they did not have a permanent residence. They gave consent and responded to at least one survey question.

TRANSIENT HOMELESS:

An individual who is in and out of homelessness for periods of less than a year.

TREATMENT CENTRE:

A shelter that provides temporary accommodation and is available specifically to those who require support and treatment for mental health services and/or addictions counselling.

² Stephen Gaetz, Jesse Donaldson, Tim Richter, & Tanya Gulliver (2013): *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013*. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

³ http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/documents/msb/Determination_of_Population_Regulation.pdf

KEY FINDINGS

62% identified as male

23% identified as female

MAJORITY between the ages of 30 - 60 years

43% self-identified as Indigenous

3% self-identified as part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer community

5% came to Canada as an immigrant or refugee in the past five years

1% had previously been employed by the RCMP

1% had previously been employed by the military

49% were staying the night in an emergency or domestic violence shelter

91% had stayed in an emergency shelter in the past 12 months

The 2016 PIT Count is based on the responses of 114 people, including those experiencing episodic homelessness and couch surfing.





METHODOLOGY

The 2016 PIT Count is intended to provide a snapshot of the number of individuals without permanent housing on a particular date. They will be referred to in this report as homeless individuals, the homeless population or individuals experiencing homelessness.

Methodology is defined in collaboration with the 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness Provincial Team. The 7 Cities group (Calgary, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo) is made up of the lead organizations responsible for the implementation of local plans to end homelessness – coordinating at a systems level and aligning funding resources for greater impact and progress towards ending homelessness.

The 7 Cities meet throughout the year to determine survey questions. In 2016, they all completed the second provincially-coordinated PIT Count at the same time, using surveys with the same set of core questions, with the option to add locally-relevant queries. The information collected will then be part of the development of a provincial baseline count of homelessness across Alberta communities.

There are decreases over time and it is important to note that the provincial PIT Count is research in process; as such, there have been some changes in methodology that could increase or decrease numbers slightly, but the dominant trend is downward. The goal is to complete a picture of homelessness in Alberta, and make the count more precise. There is a provincial report completed after every PIT Count, which can be found on the 7 Cities website (www.7Cities.ca).

The findings that follow are from the Wood Buffalo 2016 PIT Count, which was conducted in Fort McMurray (the Municipality's urban centre). There were three components – a Facilities Night Count, Street Night Count and Facilities Day Count.

METHODOLOGY (CONT'D)

COMPONENTS

Surveys (see Appendix A) for the **Facilities Night Count** were carried out on October 19, 2016, from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at eight facilities, including local emergency shelters, short-term housing and treatment centres:

- MAT program (The Salvation Army)
- Emergency Men's Shelter (The Salvation Army)
- Stepping Stones (Wood's Homes)
- Unity House (Fort McMurray Family Crisis Society)
- Second Stage Housing (Fort McMurray Family Crisis Society)
- Marshall House (Wood Buffalo Housing and Development Corporation)
- Pastew Place Detox Centre
- Mark Amy Treatment Centre (Wood Buffalo Wellness Society)

The data used is based solely on the responses of individuals who consented and participated in the surveys. Those staying in the facilities but did not give consent or who had another form of permanent housing did not qualify and were not surveyed or included in 2016 PIT Count. Questions in the Facilities Night Count and Street Night Count were the same. Also, as individuals were not required to answer all of the questions, the data for missing values was recorded as missing, decline to answer or doesn't know.

The **Street Night Count** was conducted between 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. on October 19, 2016, in 14 geographical zones (see Appendix B) in Fort McMurray. Everyone encountered on the street was approached by a volunteer surveyor and asked if they had already participated in the survey. This was done before proceeding with questions in order to prevent duplicate counts. Individuals were then asked if they had a permanent residence to return to that night. If they stated that they did not, then the surveyor continued. Consent to participate was given by all respondents. The weather, as documented by the Weather Network on the night of the Facilities Count and Street Count, ranged from a low of minus four degrees Celsius and a high of four degrees Celsius, with a mean temperature of 0 degrees Celsius, clear skies and no precipitation.

METHODOLOGY (CONT'D)

The **Facilities Day Count** was undertaken between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on October 20, 2016, using the same questions as the other two counts. The weather ranged from a low of minus two degrees Celsius and a maximum of six degrees Celsius, with a mean temperature of 1.7 degrees Celsius and no precipitation. Six agencies in the region were involved:

- NorthLife Fellowship Baptist Church Soup Kitchen
- Nistawoyou Friendship Centre
- Alberta Works
- Salvation Army
- Choices
- Centre of Hope

AGENCIES AND VOLUNTEERS INVOLVED

Timing and the participation of a variety of community and agency volunteers who served as surveyors⁴ were very important in planning and implementing the 2016 PIT Count. Volunteers attended a mandatory training session that included an overview of the importance of the PIT count - covering consistency of methodology, a walkthrough of the survey and safety training.

LIMITATIONS

- A PIT Count provides a brief overview or snapshot of a population at a specific point in time. It captures data about demographics, length of residency, etc. However, as the information is only collected at a single point in time, it does not reflect variations and changes from day to day and within a given season or year.
- It can be challenging to access those who are not living on public streets or in public facilities or emergency shelters. They are referred to as “hidden homeless” - individuals who are transient, couch surfing, or in and out of homelessness. Similarly, some may be concealed or in areas outside of the survey zones. The Municipality has many heavily wooded areas, which make it difficult to locate homeless living there.
- The Municipality is extremely large and many areas were not included because they are outside the designated survey zones.
- Available resources, such as the number of volunteers and the ability to access multiple locations within the region, may also be a factor.

Therefore, although the 2016 PIT Count was executed with care and accuracy and is carefully tabulated, it is important to note that the total number surveyed who identified as homeless (114) should be considered the minimum in the region.

⁴ The participating and supporting organizations are listed in the acknowledgment page.



REPORTING

Please note that there will be two reports created from the 2016 PIT Count data, which will vary slightly due to different methodology.

1. This local version of the report, which features a Facilities Day Count, Facilities Night Count and Street Count. It includes couch surfers in the definition of homeless, has an additional question about the 2016 wildfire, and provides crucial information for local service providers.
2. A 7 Cities provincial report with data from all participating municipalities (including the Facilities Night and Street Counts), which allows for cross-Alberta comparisons.

SHIFTING FROM 2014 TO 2016

From 2014 to 2016, the intent of the 7 Cities was for all the municipalities involved to align their methodology – using the same approach to calculate the PIT Count. This resulted in changes in the 2016 survey and limitations in comparing data for some questions, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. It also affected the total number counted in the various cities so each one also creates a local report. The Municipality's method alignment shifted the way the couch surfers were counted as the provincial report it did not include them.

So, there are variations in the 7 Cities provincial report and the Municipality's local report. The key differences are that the local report includes everyone who identified as homeless, even if staying with a friend (couch surfer) or who potentially could have been excluded due to screening questions. Each survey was reviewed and if respondents were found to be homeless they were included in the count. For the 7 Cities provincial count, only those who passed all the screening questions and indicated homelessness (that were not couch surfing) were included.

2016 WILDFIRE

In early May 2016, the entire city of Fort McMurray was evacuated due to an out-of-control wildfire. Many homeless were supported by agencies serving the homeless, as well as being transported by Municipal buses. The only noted fatalities during the event occurred during a vehicle collision on Highway 881, which resulted in two deaths.

The impact of the fire on the homeless population of Fort McMurray has yet to be determined. There is the possibility that some have not returned and chosen to stay elsewhere. As well, the Red Cross has provided support to residents, which has resulted in some individuals and families being placed in hotels. This may have resulted in a lower count.

HOMELESSNESS AS A LOCAL, PROVINCIAL & NATIONAL ISSUE

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, established in 1995, is one of the largest municipalities in North America. Situated 435 kilometres northeast of Edmonton, Fort McMurray is its urban service area and largest community. There are also several rural hamlets - Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan; Fort Fitzgerald, Fort McKay, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier and Saprae Creek Estates – as well as reserves and traditional lands of five First Nations and seven Métis populations. The 2015 Municipal Census reported a population of 125,032: 81,948 permanent residents and a shadow population of 43,084. At that time, 55.4 percent of the population identified as male and 44.6 percent as female.

Due to ongoing oil sands projects, people from all over the province, country and world come to the Municipality seeking stable, well-paid employment. Unfortunately, challenges arise for many, including acquiring necessary skills and education, acknowledging foreign credentials and establishing financial security with higher-than-anticipated costs of living. This has been compounded by the fact that many people face a shortfall between income and affordable housing.⁵

As the designated Community-Based Organization /Community Entity, the Municipality receives funding from both the Provincial and Federal governments to address homelessness in the region. It is allocated to local non-profit agencies that offer supports

and services to the homeless population according to the priorities and criteria outlined in the provincial agreement and Council-approved report, “Heading Home: The Right Thing to Do - 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness 2010 – 2020.”

The 2016 Wood Buffalo PIT Count is a way of acquiring a snapshot of the local homeless population. It also helps determine whether there has been any significant change in the number or demographics of homeless individuals in the region since the implementation of “Heading Home: The Right Thing to Do.”

Like many other communities, the Municipality has shifted its approach from managing homelessness to ending it by using a housing first model, which emphasizes immediate housing with no pre-conditions. Services are then based on harm reduction and client-specific needs and strengths. The Municipality has been carrying out PIT Counts biannually since 2006, which has fed into local and provincial reports and recommendations.

In 2014, a new goal was set by the 7 Cities to develop a national baseline count of homeless people in Canada. To ensure success, every community carrying out a homeless count will aim to align survey methods and definitions nationally to allow for aggregate data and comparison. The purpose is to develop a harmonized approach to homeless counts nationally. In 2016, this goal was achieved with

the first virtually identical PIT Count across all seven participating municipalities in Alberta.

Alberta is the first jurisdiction to implement this methodology, leading the way in Canada. The Provincial PIT Counts are part of a broader initiative led by the 7 Cities in collaboration with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (a non-profit, non-partisan research institute). Although methodologies varied slightly in each municipality (see Appendix B), the 2014 Provincial PIT Counts made significant strides towards a common approach and a provincial report that will be comparable. There may be some variations but there is underlying common core methodology and consistent core questions.

The 2016 PIT Count focused on implementing a consistent strategy throughout the province. The 7 Cities team worked for months leading up to the PIT Count to ensure methodology, processes, surveys, date and time of the provincial count were all aligned. Due to this streamlining process, the method used during the Wood Buffalo 2016 PIT Count was different than in 2014. Therefore, comparisons between the 2014 and 2016 PIT Counts will be limited. However, comparisons between the Wood Buffalo 2016 PIT Count and the counts done in the other Alberta cities are possible.

⁵ <http://www.rmwb.ca/Assets/Corporate/Census+Reports/Municipal+Census+2015+Report.pdf>

SURVEY RESULTS

The following overview of the PIT Count findings includes the Facilities Night Count, the Street Night Count, and the Facilities Day Count. Unless otherwise stated, the data represents the total count from all three. However, the Facilities Day Count is not part of the provincial streamlined methodology and thus will not be considered in provincial and federal reporting. Also, as respondents were not required to answer to all of the questions, the information for these missing values is recorded as missing or decline to answer and may result in some incomplete data.

OVERVIEW



261

people were approached and asked to participate in the survey



228

people were willing to participate in the survey



104

people identified as homeless

The survey had an 87-percent response rate with 228 individuals consenting to participate out of 261 approached. Out of the 228 participants, 104 responded that they did not have a permanent residence that they could return to that night. This 104 is different from the 7 Cities count of 91 because it includes two categories not included in the provincial report:

1. Those who would have been excluded due to screening questions but were included because their surveys indicated homelessness.
2. The PIT Count does not include those who couch surf or stay with a friend or family member. However, for the purposes of this report, the Municipality does include those who are couch surfing as homeless. Therefore, including couch surfers and provincially-excluded (but still demonstrating homelessness), the total number of individuals identified locally as homeless is 114. The decision was made to include everyone who identified as homeless locally to increase the regions ability to respond to homelessness. At the same time, the integrity of the 7 cities methodological alignment was kept intact and offers valuable information about the state of homelessness in Alberta at the provincial and federal levels.

SURVEY RESULTS (CONT'D)

FIGURE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS BY YEAR

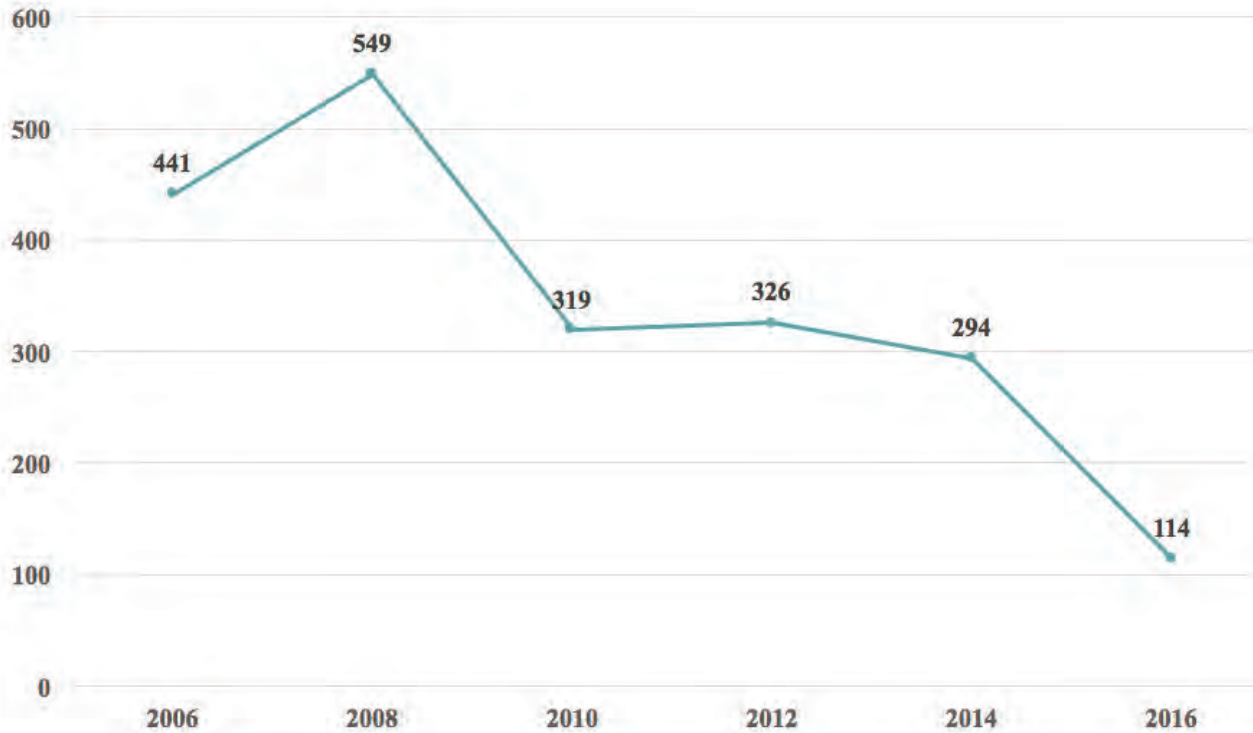
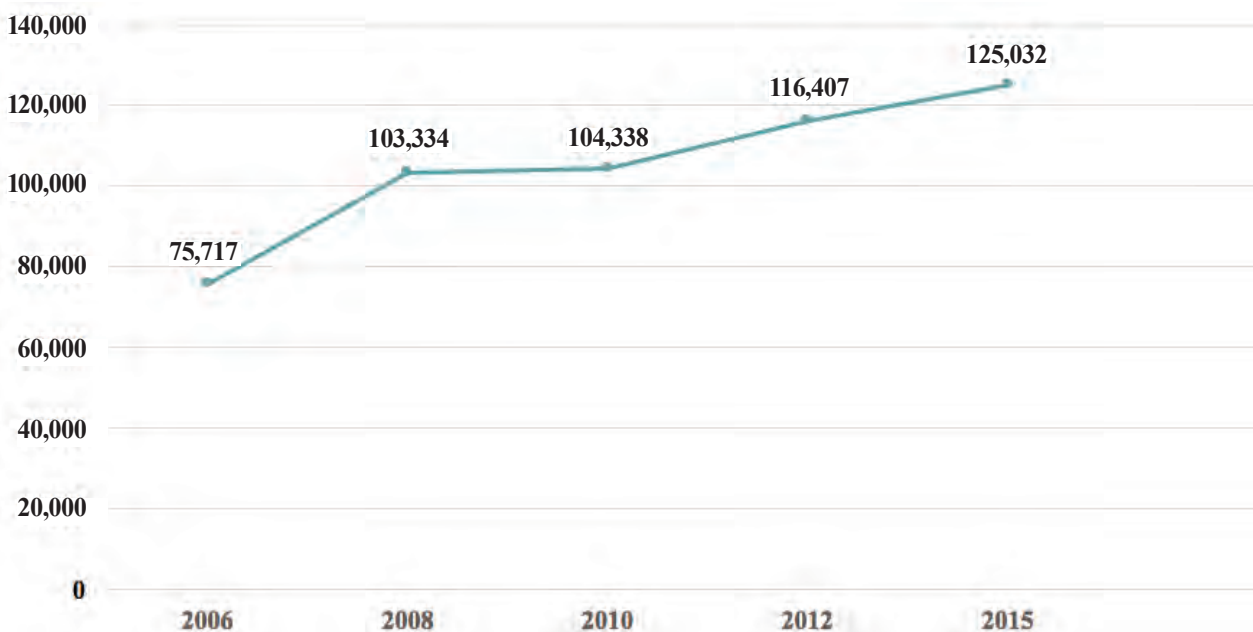


FIGURE 2: WOOD BUFFALO POPULATION



SCREENING QUESTIONS

FIGURE 3: HAVE YOU ANSWERED THIS SURVEY WITH A PERSON WEARING THIS IDENTIFICATION?

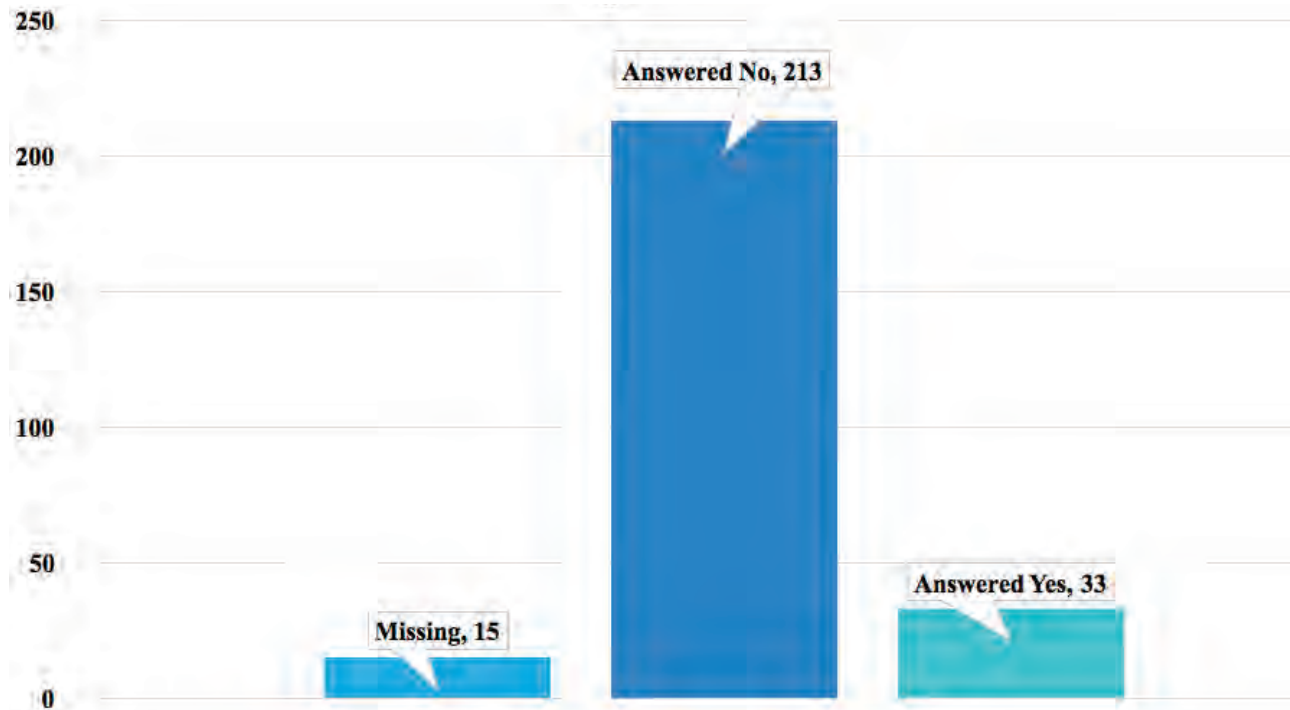
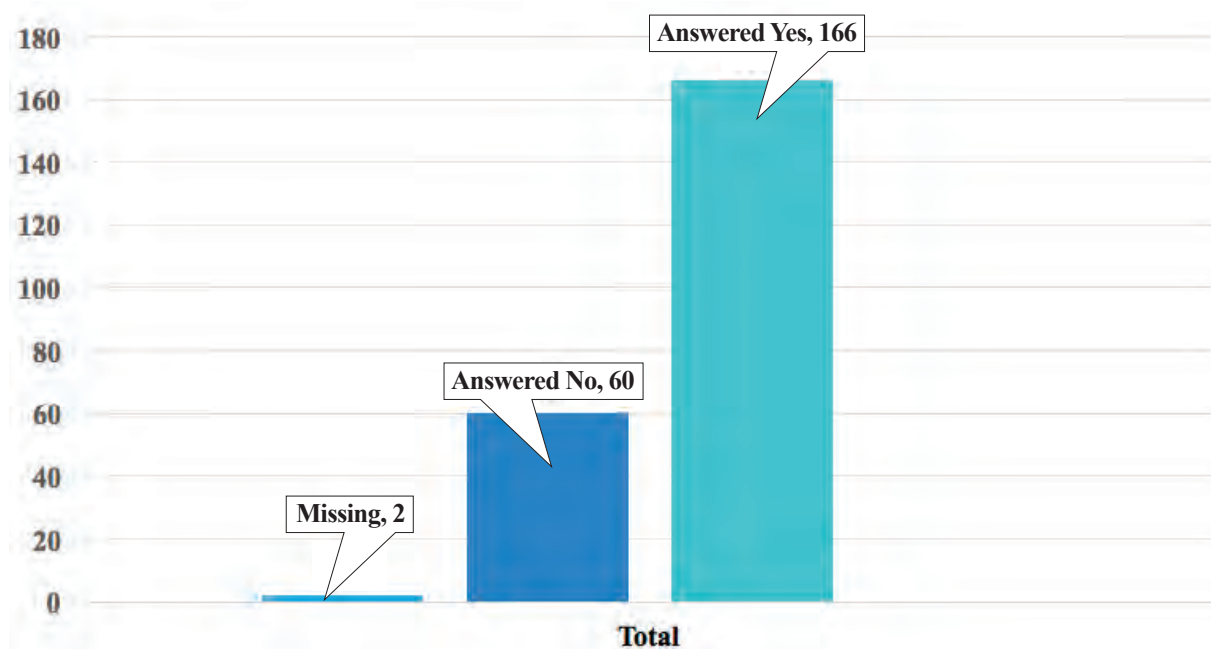


FIGURE 4: ARE YOU WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SURVEY?



SCREENING QUESTIONS (CONT'D)

FIGURE 5: DO YOU HAVE A PERMANENT RESIDENCE THAT YOU CAN RETURN TO TONIGHT?

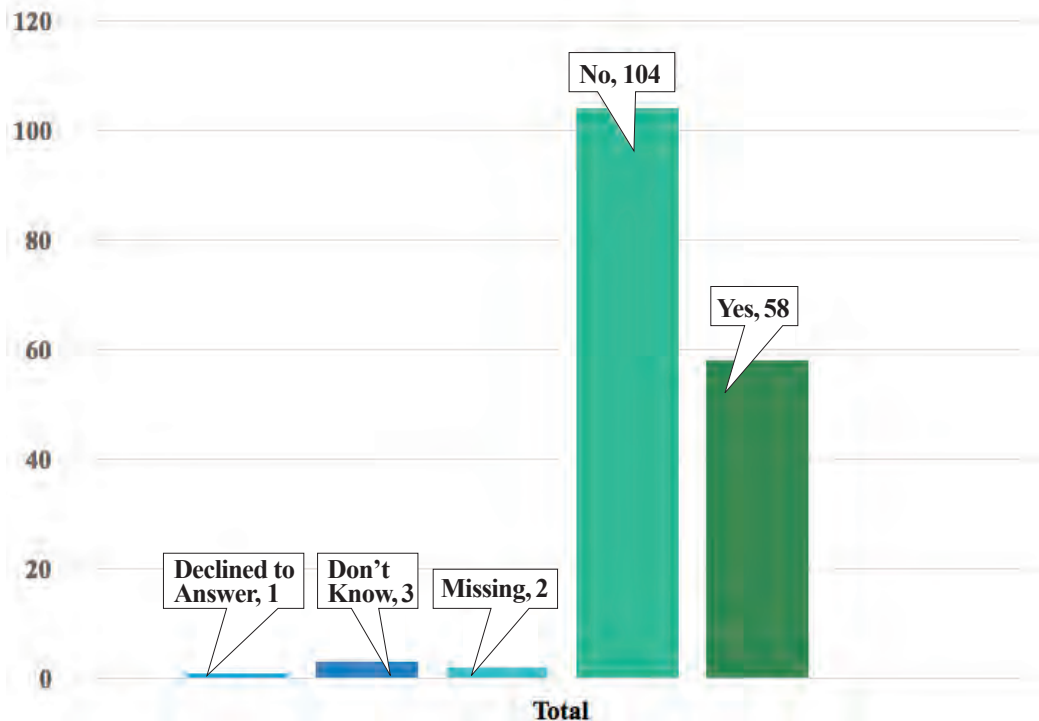
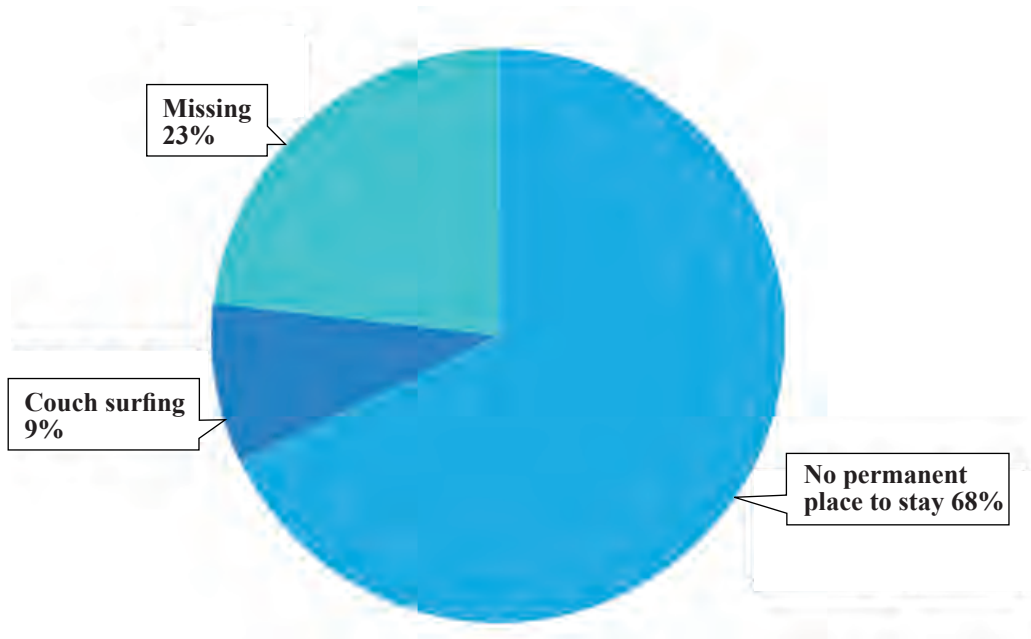
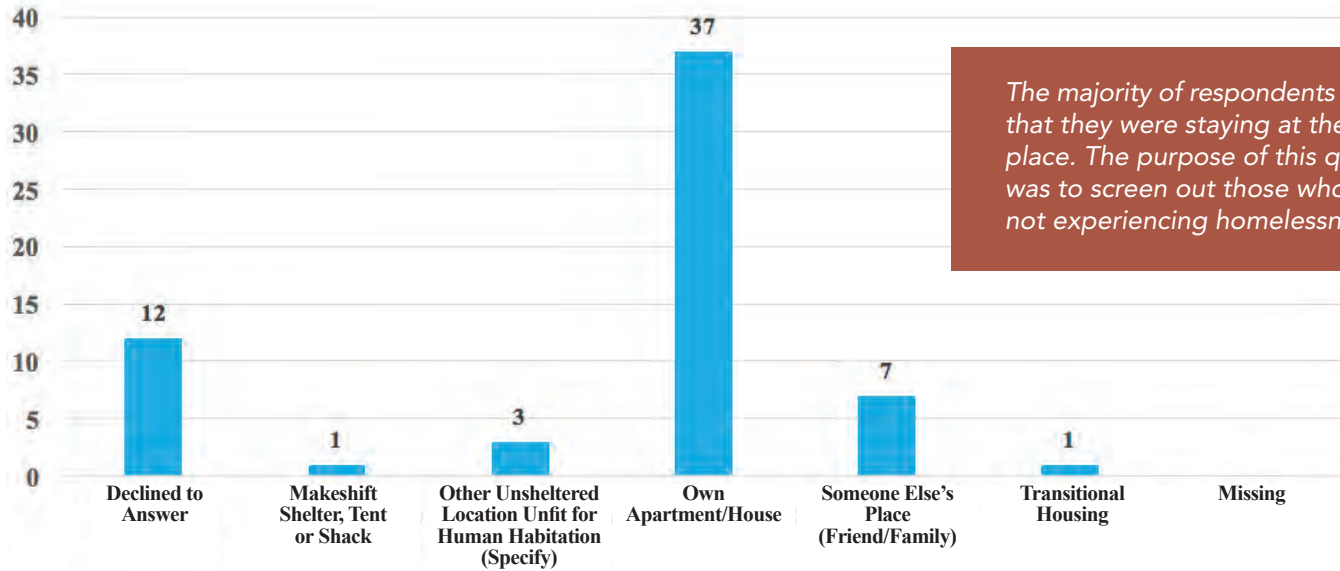


FIGURE 6: PERMANENT RESIDENCE TO RETURN TO TONIGHT



SCREENING QUESTIONS (CONT'D)

FIGURE 7: WHAT TYPE OF RESIDENCE IS YOUR PERMANENT RESIDENCE?



The majority of respondents indicated that they were staying at their "own" place. The purpose of this question was to screen out those who were not experiencing homelessness.

FIGURE 8: WHERE ARE YOU STAYING TONIGHT?

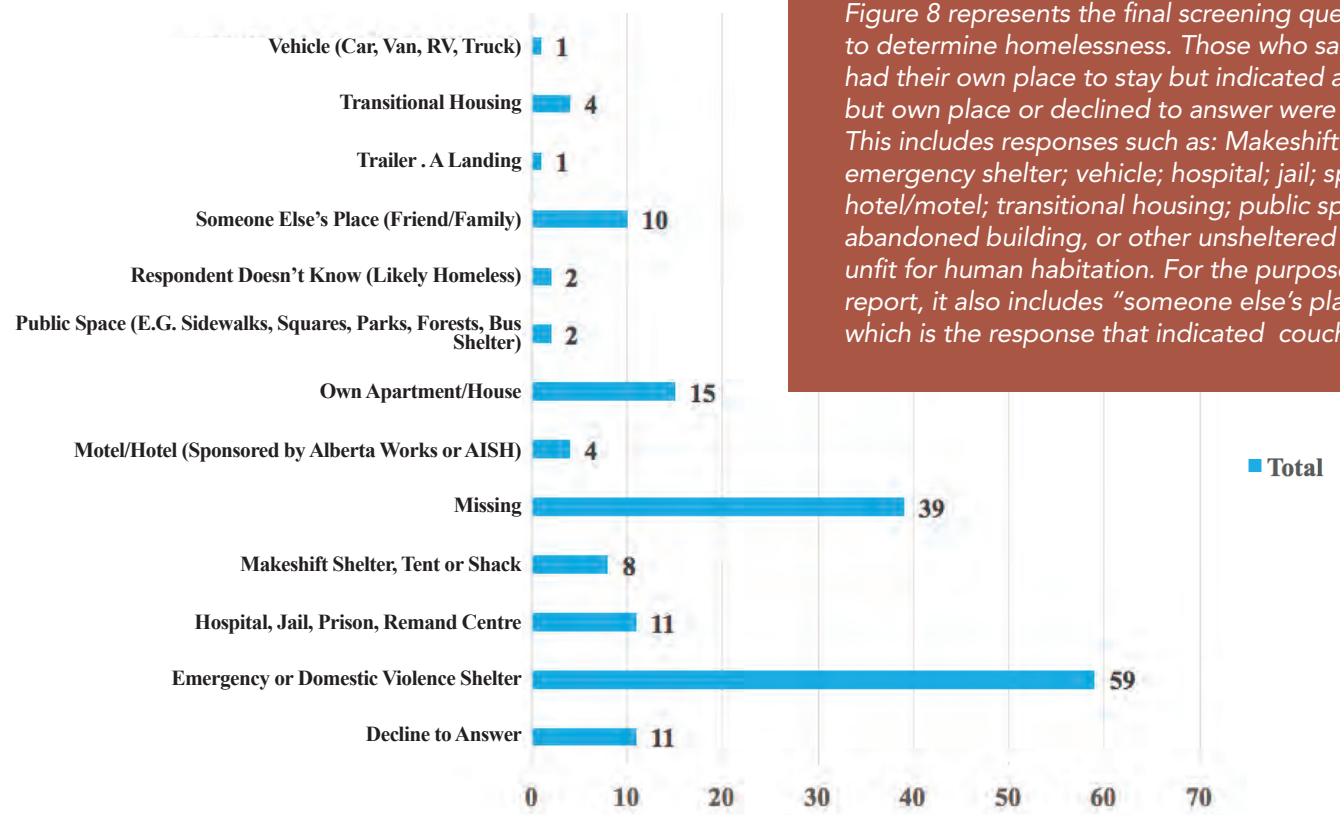
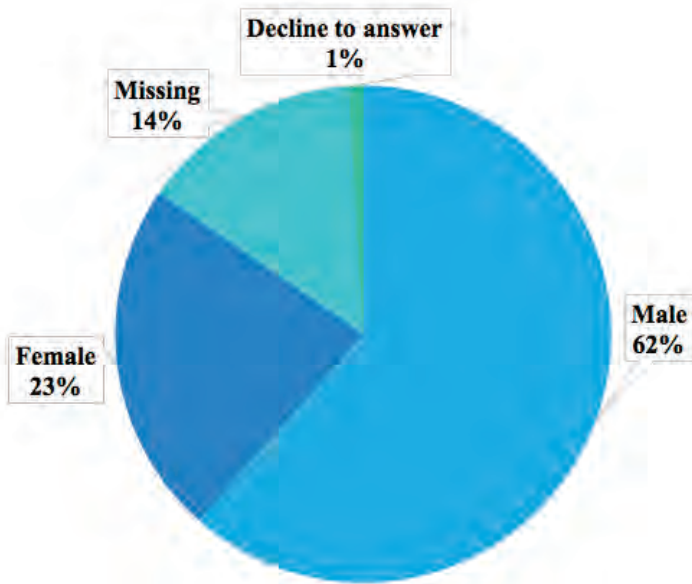


Figure 8 represents the final screening question used to determine homelessness. Those who said they had their own place to stay but indicated anything but own place or declined to answer were included. This includes responses such as: Makeshift shelter, emergency shelter; vehicle; hospital; jail; sponsored hotel/motel; transitional housing; public space; abandoned building, or other unsheltered location unfit for human habitation. For the purpose of this report, it also includes "someone else's place," which is the response that indicated couch surfer.

DEMOGRAPHICS

This section provides an overview of the survey findings regarding identity questions. Please note that respondents were not required to provide an answer to all of the questions. Those that were not answered are shown as missing, or decline to answer. Demographic data includes gender, age, ethnicity, identification with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited or queer community, Indigenous identification, and immigrant and refugee identification.

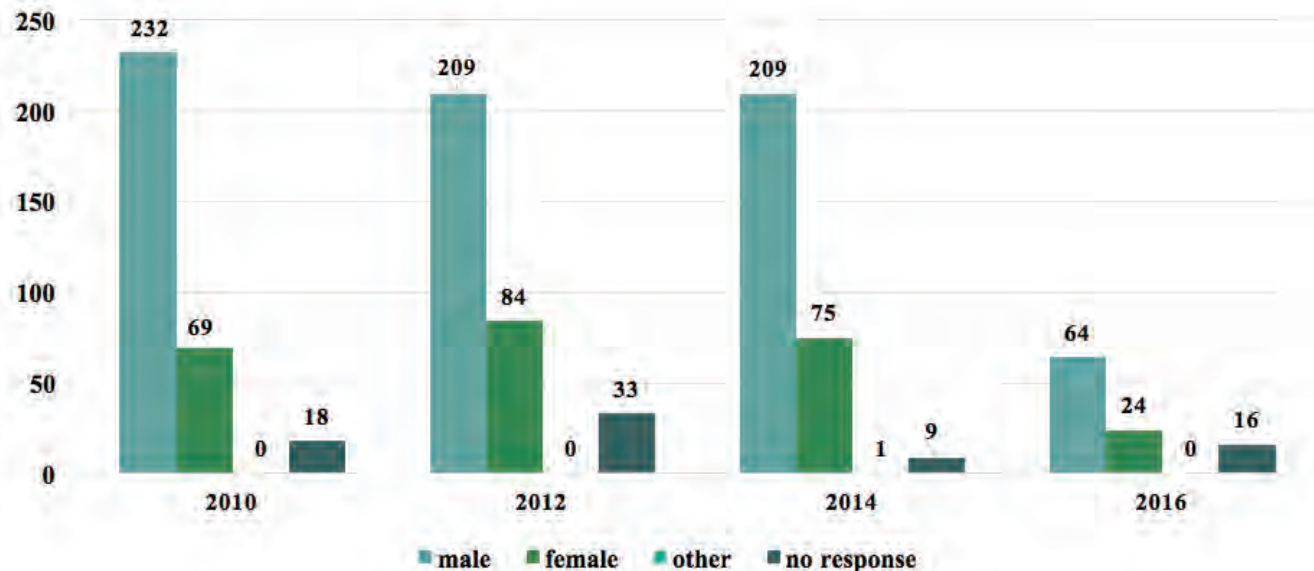
FIGURE 9: GENDER



In the 2016 PIT Count, 64 males (62%) were counted compared with 209 (71%) in 2014. In the 2016 PIT Count, there were 24 females (23%) counted compared with 75 (26%) in 2014.



FIGURE 10: COMPARISON OF GENDER OVER YEARS



DEMOGRAPHICS (CONT'D)

FIGURE 11: AGE

Breakdown uses the same age ranges as the Municipal Census.

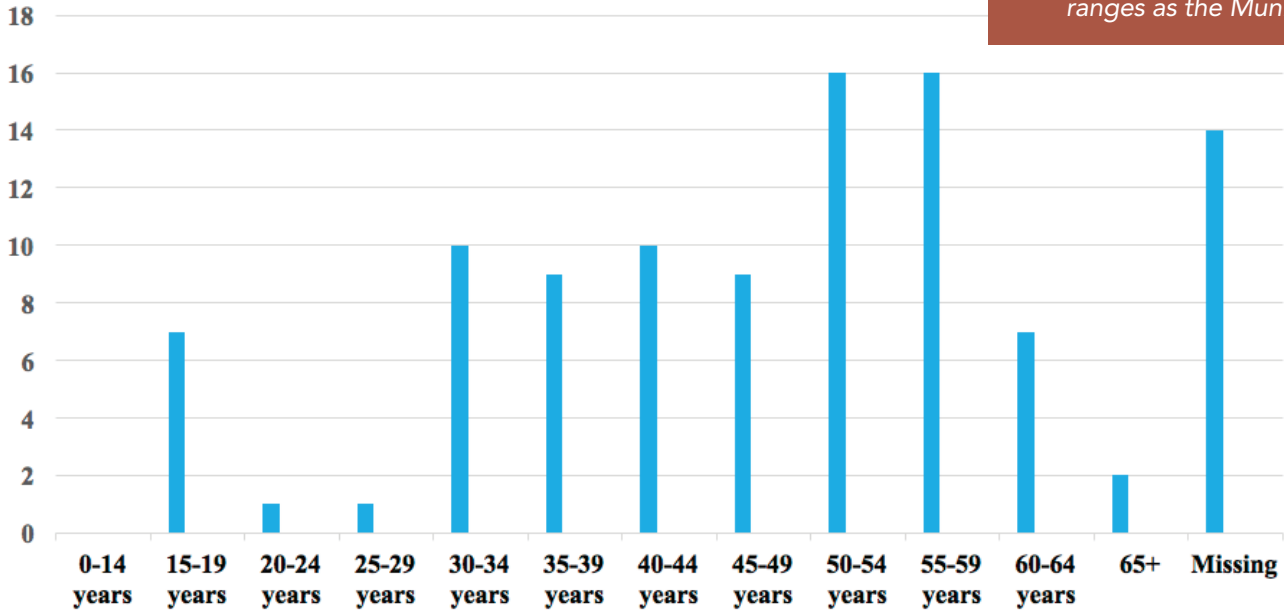
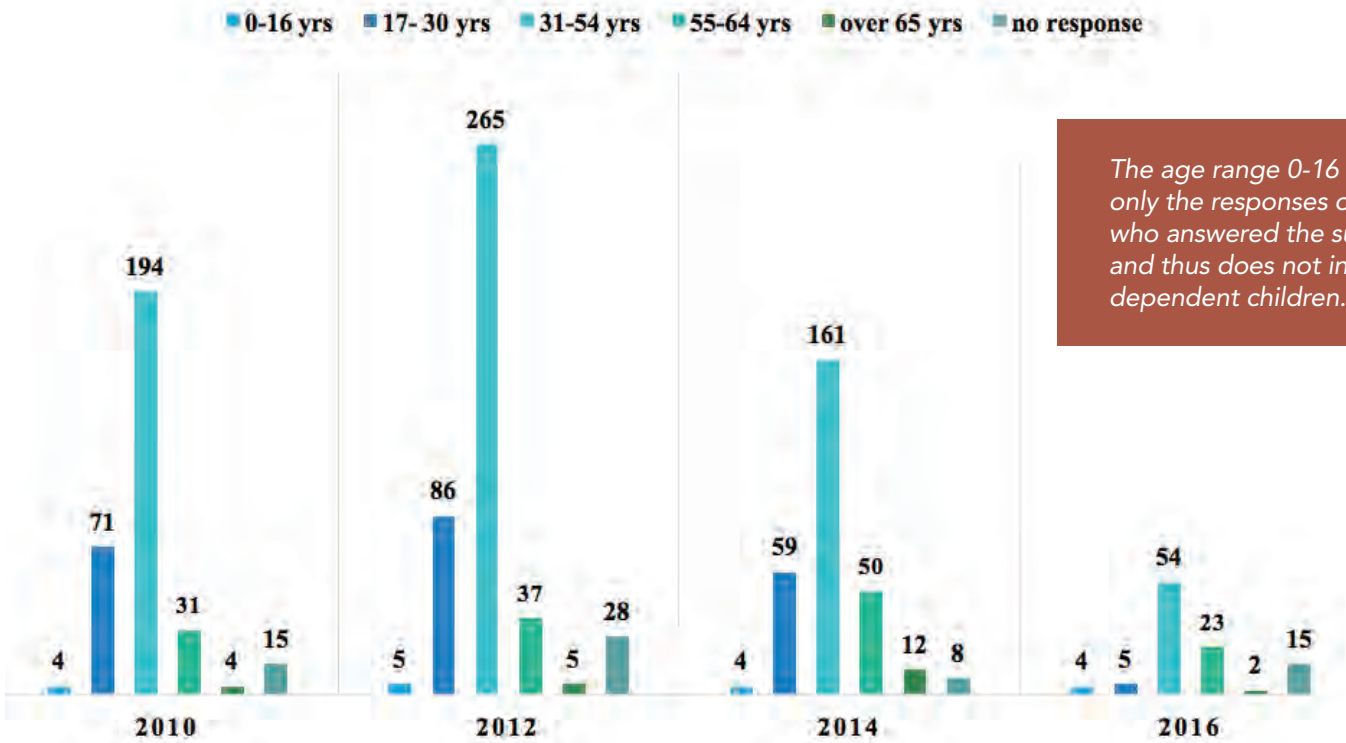


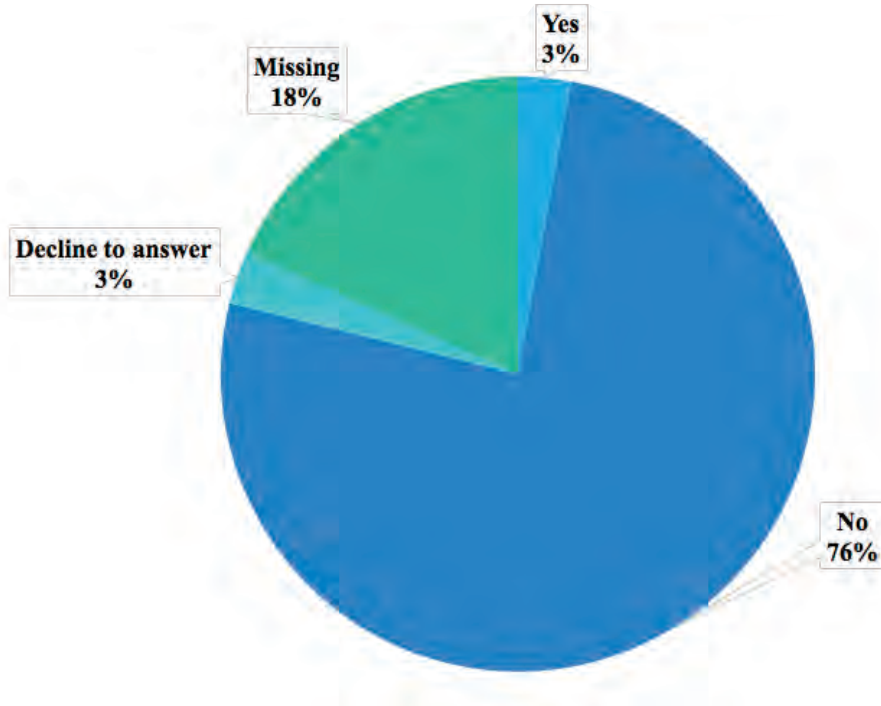
FIGURE 12: COMPARISON OF AGE OVER YEARS



The age range 0-16 counts only the responses of those who answered the survey and thus does not include dependent children.

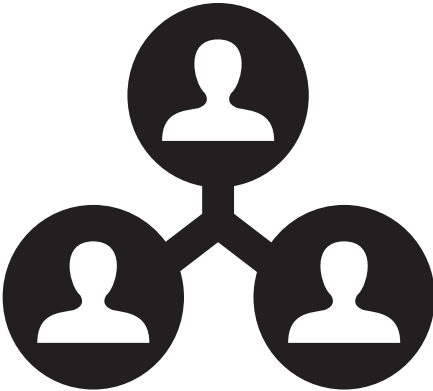
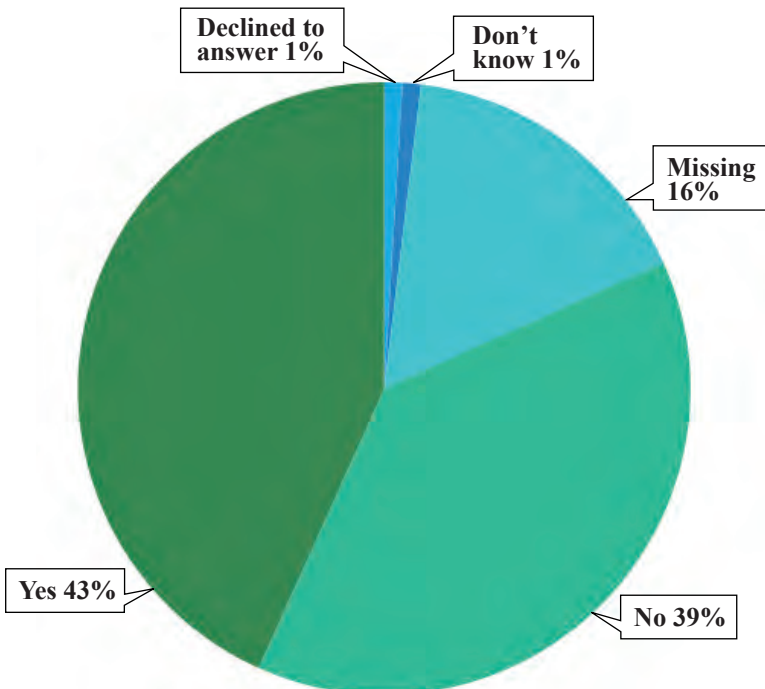
DEMOGRAPHICS (CONT'D)

FIGURE 13: LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TWO-SPIRITED OR QUEER COMMUNITY



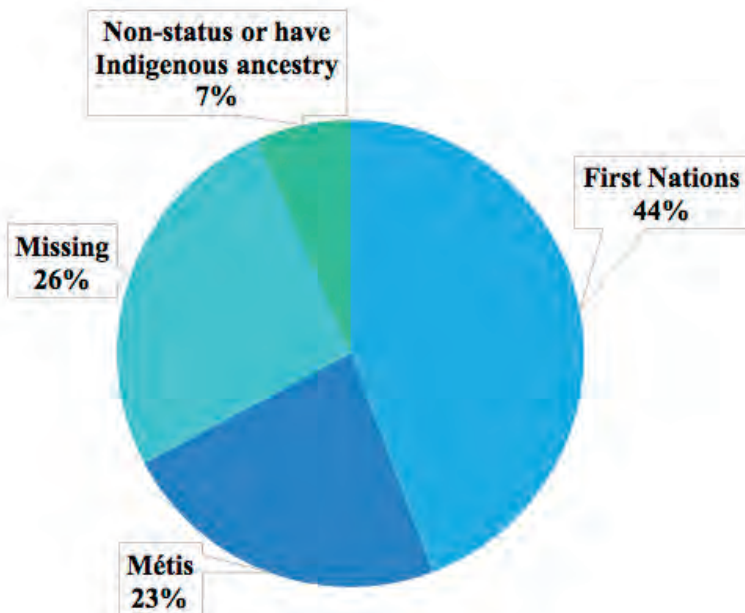
This question is included because it is recognized that individuals who identify as such can be at an increased risk for social issues due to prejudice.

FIGURE 14: INDIGENOUS SELF-IDENTIFICATION



DEMOGRAPHICS (CONT'D)

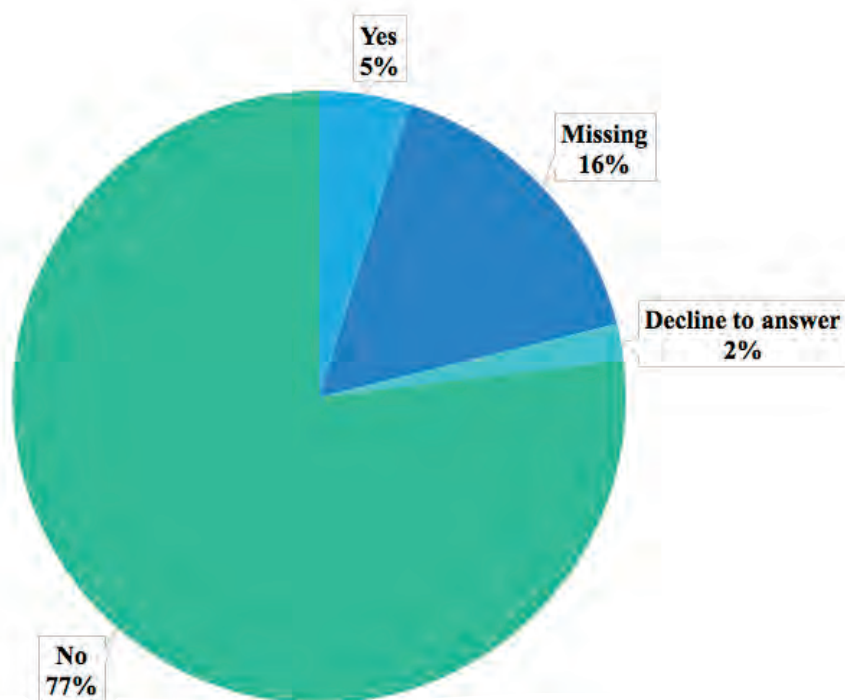
FIGURE 15: TYPE OF INDIGENOUS IDENTIFICATION



Although it was an available choice, no respondents identified as Inuit. Comparisons with 2014 data are not possible because the methodology for capturing ethnicity changed completely.

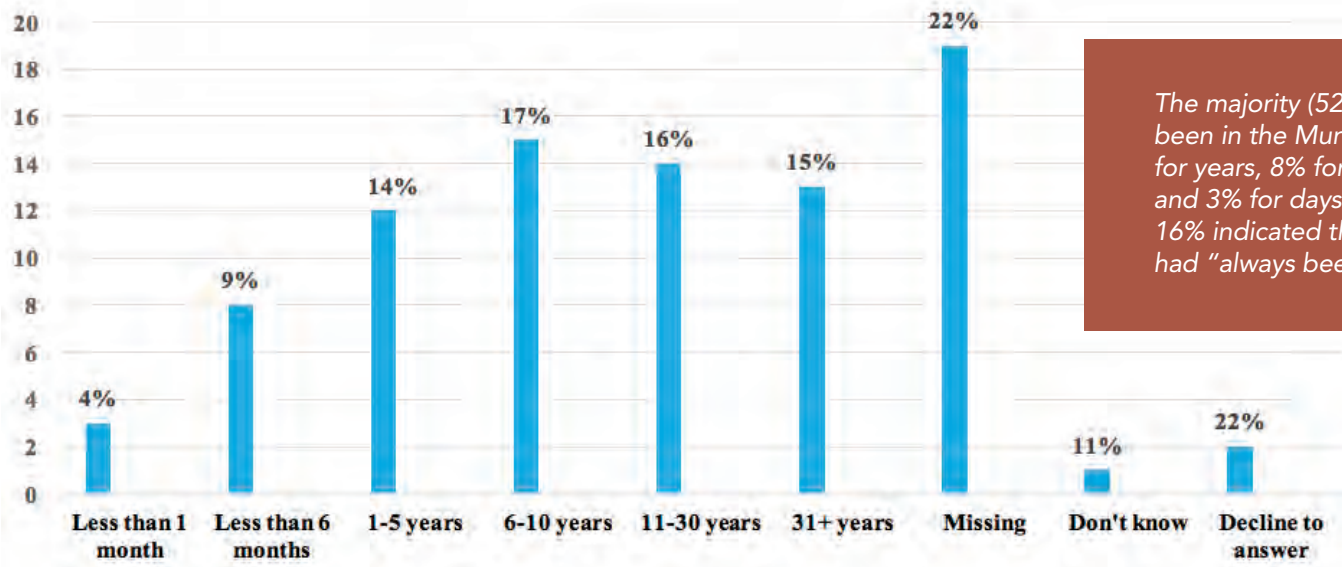
IMMIGRANT OR REFUGEE STATUS

FIGURE 16: DID YOU COME TO CANADA AS AN IMMIGRANT OR REFUGEE WITHIN THE PAST FIVE YEARS?



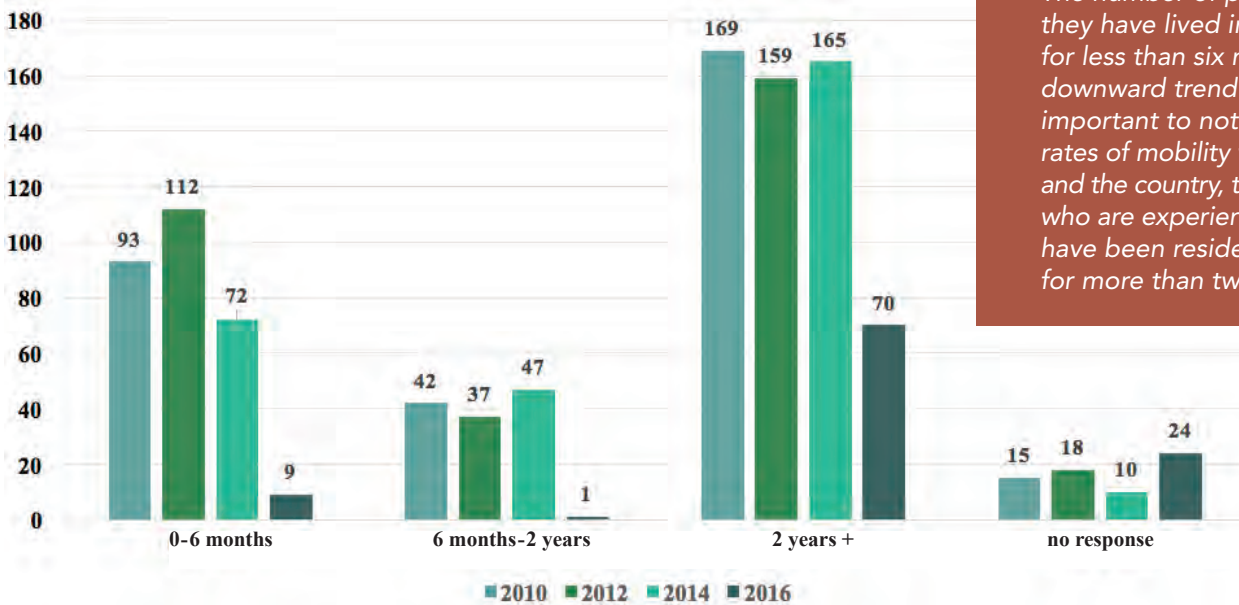
LENGTH OF RESIDENCY IN THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO

FIGURE 17: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE MUNICIPALITY?



The majority (52%) had been in the Municipality for years, 8% for months, and 3% for days. A further 16% indicated that they had "always been here."

FIGURE 18: HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN FORT MCMURRAY COMPARISON BY YEARS



The number of people who say that they have lived in Fort McMurray for less than six months is a downward trend in the region. It is important to note that despite high rates of mobility within the province and the country, the majority of those who are experiencing homelessness have been residents of the region for more than two years.

LENGTH OF TIME IN HOMELESSNESS

FIGURE 19: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HOMELESS MOST RECENTLY?

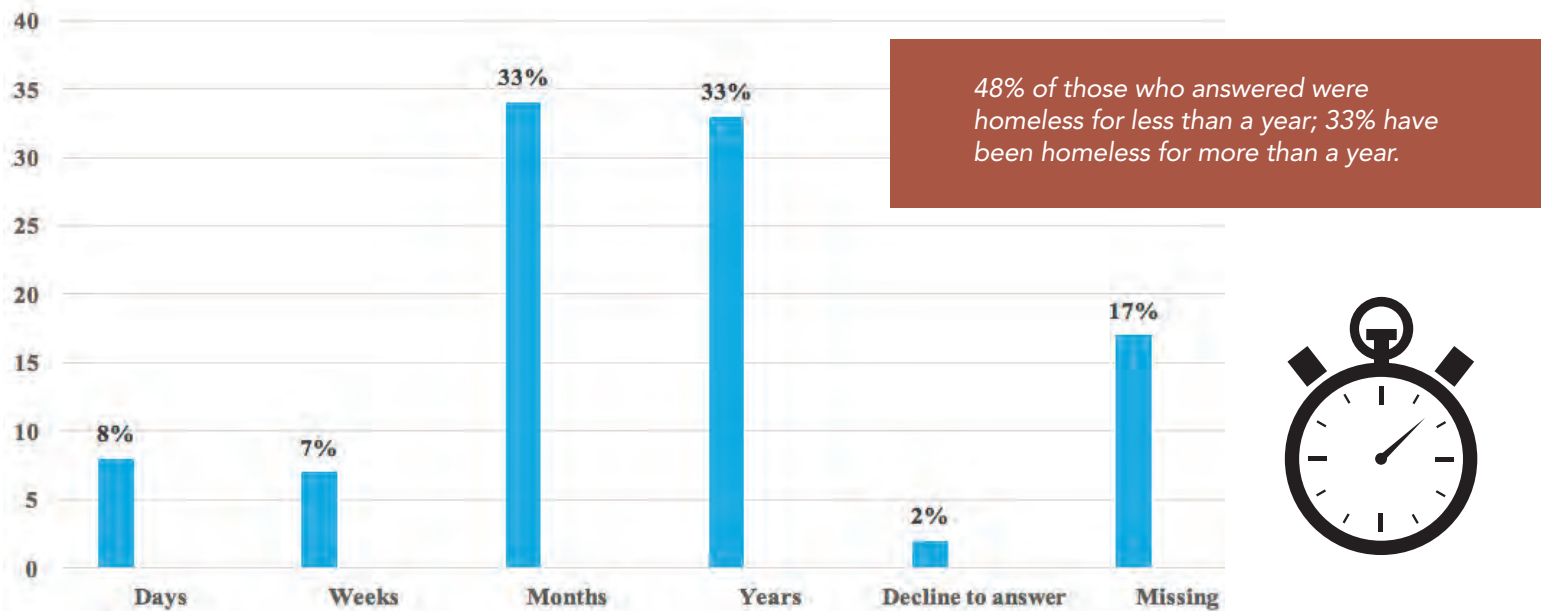


FIGURE 20: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HOMELESS MOST RECENTLY? 2014 & 2016 COMPARISON.

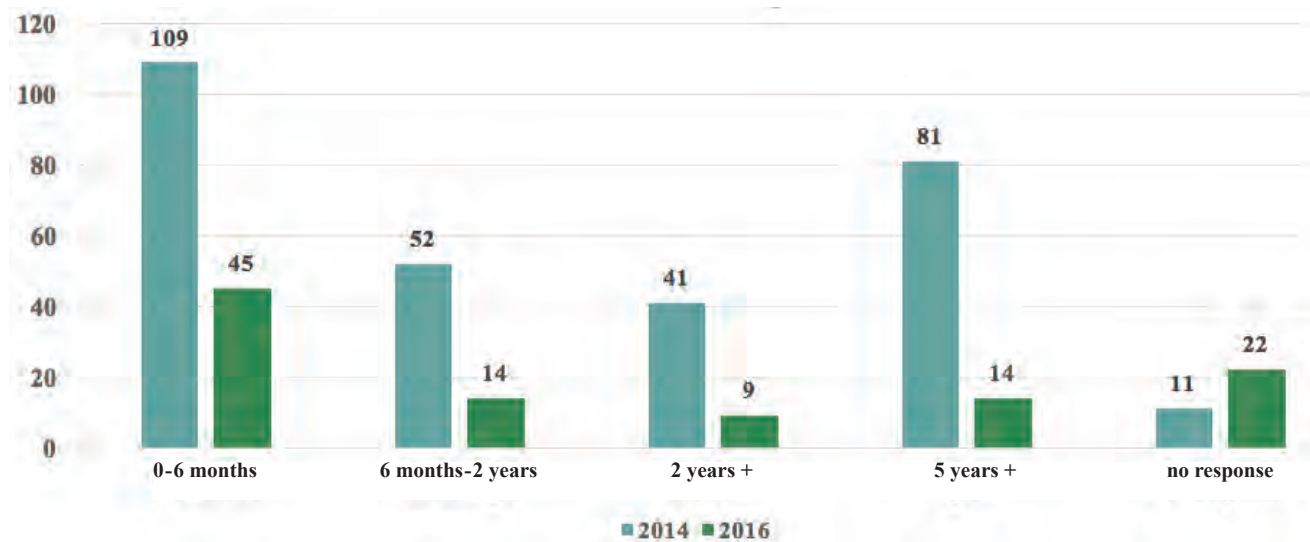
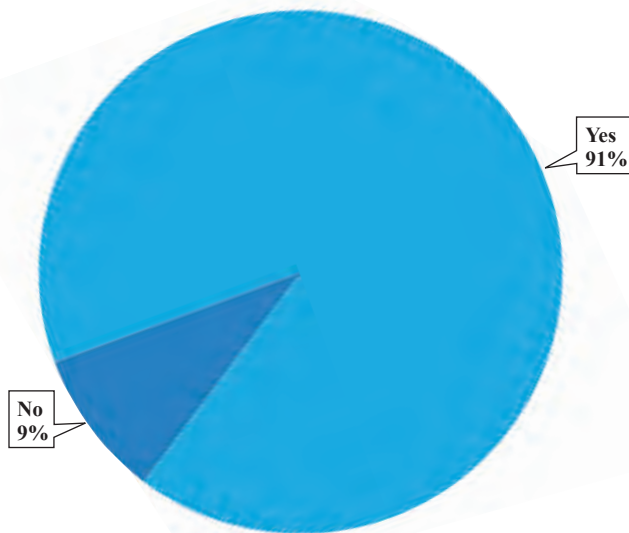


Figure 20 is a comparison between 2014 and 2016 PIT Count data, showing that 43% have been homeless for six months or less, indicating episodically homeless; 22% identified themselves as homeless for more than two years, indicating that they are living in chronic homelessness. This is a shift from 2014 that indicates a decline in chronic homeless in the Municipality from 41% in 2014 to 22% in 2016. This comparison should be qualified by stating that there was a shift in methodology from the 2014 to 2016 PIT Count as well as economic and environmental factors that affected population.

EMERGENCY SHELTER USAGE

FIGURE 21: HAVE YOU STAYED IN AN EMERGENCY SHELTER IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

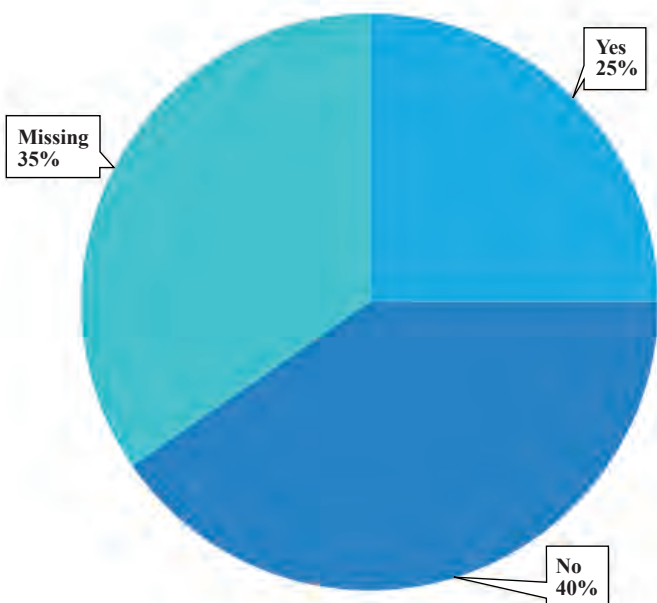


With 91% of those surveyed having stayed in an emergency shelter in the last 12 months, emergency shelters in the Municipality are well-used and essential to the support of this population.

HOMELESSNESS DUE TO THE WILDFIRE



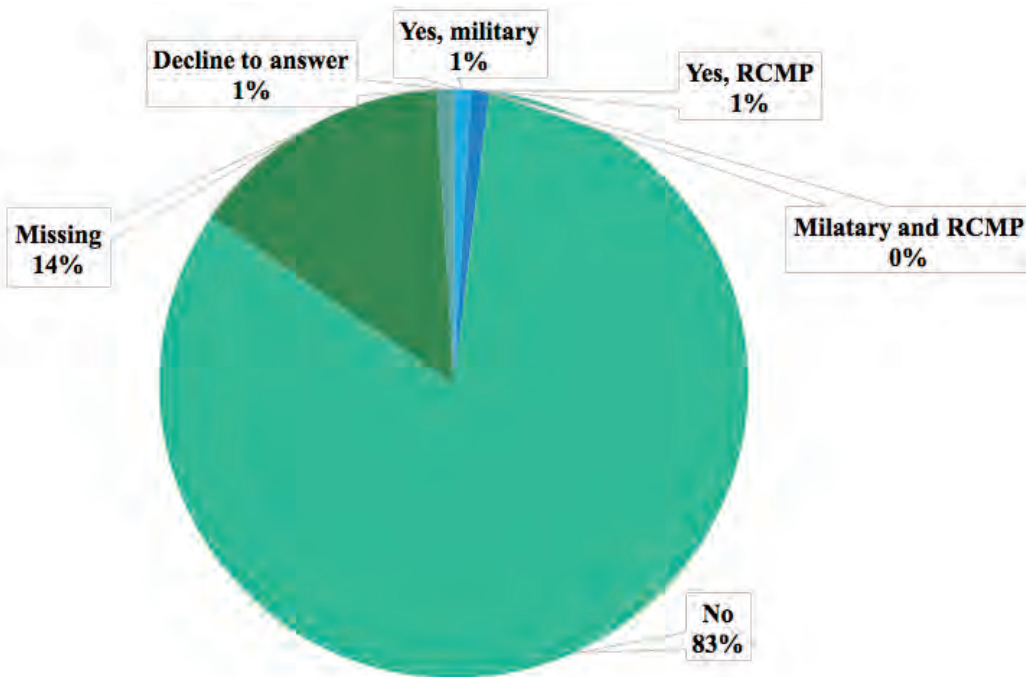
FIGURE 22: HOMELESS FOR 5 MONTHS OR LESS: WAS THIS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE FIRE?



During early May 2016, a wildfire spread through Fort McMurray. On May 3, more than 88,000 residents were evacuated and displaced across Alberta, Canada and the world. More than 2,400 structures were destroyed; some residential areas of town lost the majority of housing. The effects of the wildfire pose some challenges for data collection, including calculating population. Due to the disaster and loss of housing it was decided during planning for the PIT Count that the Municipality should add questions to gather information about the effect of the wildfire.

SERVICE IN THE CANADIAN MILITARY OR RCMP

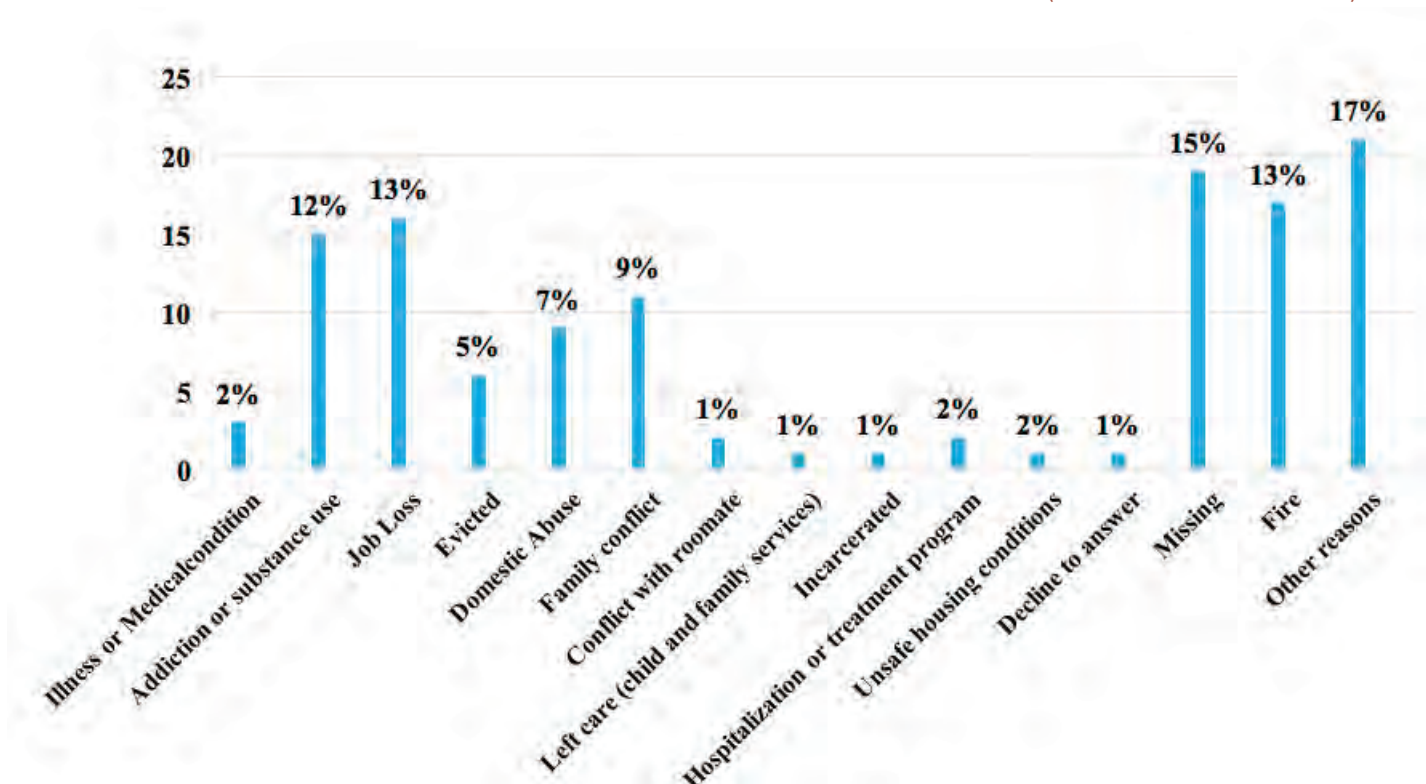
FIGURE 23: SERVICE IN THE CANADIAN MILITARY OR THE RCMP



In the 2016 PIT Count, 1% of respondents indicated service in the RCMP; 1%, service in the military. This is comparable to the question asked in 2014's PIT Count "Have you served in the Canadian Forces," with 4% indicating yes.

REASON FOR MOST RECENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

FIGURE 24: WHAT CAUSED YOU TO LOSE YOUR HOUSING MOST RECENTLY? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



The reasons why people become homeless are complex and layered. For this reason, this question was added to the 2016 PIT Count and cannot be compared with past counts. When asked what caused them to lose their housing most recently, respondents were allowed to pick all that applied.

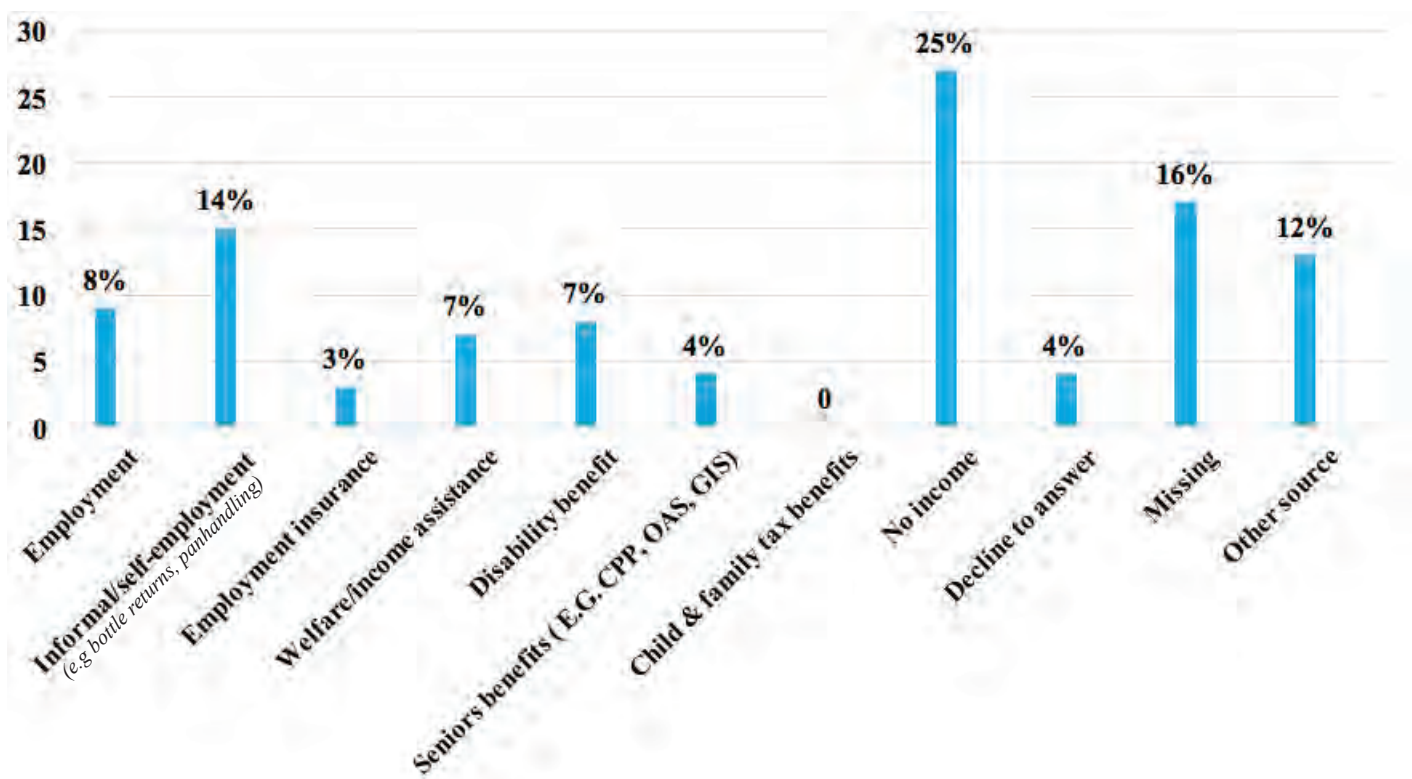
The category of other was the highest at 17%. However, within other, 13% indicated fire. This response was pulled out of the answers to other. Without this data separation, other would have been 30%.

If combined, family conflict and domestic abuse equal 16%, representing a significant proportion of those experiencing homelessness.



INCOME WHILE HOMELESS

FIGURE 25: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR MONEY FROM? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



CONCLUSION

The PIT snapshot on homelessness allows the province to advocate on a larger, national scale. It is essential that Alberta is able to provide a provincial view on the experience of homelessness because it will allow for appropriate supports to be developed and for a continued focus on reducing homelessness.

There are some limitations to the PIT Count format for the Municipality. It is impossible for a provincial data count to be all things to every region involved. Therefore, it is recommended that every year the Municipality also investigate local contextual data.

As the Municipality moves forward with supports, services and data collection, it will hopefully become apparent how the landscape of homelessness evolves locally. Future PIT Counts will be a valuable tool to show a historical representation of the region. Since the housing first strategy and 10 Year Plan were introduced, the numbers of homeless have dropped significantly. A large part of this is due to the hard work of frontline service providers, Municipal staff and HISC, and should be celebrated as such. Choosing housing first as an initiative that honours people and allows for integrity has reshaped how the region looks at homelessness, and it engages people of all circumstances as equals deserving of respect.

Further, 2016 has been a unique year for the Municipality. It is a testament to the community that it was able to fully complete the 2016 PIT Count a mere five months after the wildfire swept through the region. However, it is important to note that a reduction in the number of homeless in the 2016 PIT Count may, in part, be due to people who are homeless after migrating to other areas of the province during evacuation. Red Cross support in the region has also had an effect. The future months will be busy with information gathering that will add to the 2016 PIT Count picture of homelessness .

Interestingly, despite the wildfire and the current economic situation, people are still moving to the Municipality, as evidenced by the 9% of respondents who indicated that they had been here less than five months at time of the PIT Count (Figure 17). The Municipality has and will continue to be a region full of opportunity.

The 2016 wildfire has added a layer of complexity and the region is working through the recovery process on all levels. The Municipality looks forward to taking part in the 2018 PIT Count and refining its process to contribute to the provincial 7 Cities data. Participating in this provincial initiative strengthens local data collection as well as allowing for Alberta to contribute to a national discussion on homelessness. Refining the process with six other cities is valuable to all who undertake the process, and supports the important work of the housing first philosophy.

APPENDIX A - 2016 SURVEY TEMPLATE

Survey # _____ Zone _____

2016 Alberta Homeless Count
Please conform to this sequence of questions.



Core Screening Questions			
Screening 1	Have you answered this survey with a person wearing a safety vest or in a shelter?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES (Thank and end survey) <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Screening 2	Are you willing to participate in this survey?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (Thank and end survey)	
Screening 3	Do you have a permanent residence that you can return to tonight?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER	
Screening 4	[If answered YES to Screening 3] What type of residence is your permanent residence?	If one of the following, thank and end survey	If one of the following, continue survey
		<input type="checkbox"/> OWN APARTMENT/HOUSE <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE (FRIEND/FAMILY) <input type="checkbox"/> HOSPITAL, JAIL, PRISON, REMAND CENTRE <input type="checkbox"/> MOTEL/HOTEL (sponsored by Alberta Works, Red Cross or AISH) <input type="checkbox"/> MOTEL/HOTEL (not sponsored by Alberta Works, Red Cross or AISH) <input type="checkbox"/> EMERGENCY OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSITIONAL HOUSING <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC SPACE (E.G. SIDEWALKS, SQUARES, PARKS, FORESTS, BUS SHELTER) <input type="checkbox"/> VEHICLE (CAR, VAN, RV, TRUCK) <input type="checkbox"/> MAKESHIFT SHELTER, TENT OR SHACK <input type="checkbox"/> ABANDONED/VACANT BUILDING <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER UNSHELTERED LOCATION UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION (SPECIFY: _____) <input type="checkbox"/> RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW [LIKELY HOMELESS]
Screening 5	Where are you staying tonight?	If one of the following, thank and end survey	If one of the following, continue survey
		<input type="checkbox"/> OWN APARTMENT/HOUSE <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE (FRIEND/FAMILY) <input type="checkbox"/> HOSPITAL, JAIL, PRISON, REMAND CENTRE <input type="checkbox"/> MOTEL/HOTEL (sponsored by Alberta Works, Red Cross or AISH) <input type="checkbox"/> MOTEL/HOTEL (not sponsored by Alberta Works, Red Cross or AISH) <input type="checkbox"/> EMERGENCY OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSITIONAL HOUSING <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC SPACE (E.G. SIDEWALKS, SQUARES, PARKS, FORESTS, BUS SHELTER) <input type="checkbox"/> VEHICLE (CAR, VAN, RV, TRUCK) <input type="checkbox"/> MAKESHIFT SHELTER, TENT OR SHACK <input type="checkbox"/> ABANDONED/VACANT BUILDING <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER UNSHELTERED LOCATION UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION (SPECIFY: _____) <input type="checkbox"/> RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW [LIKELY HOMELESS]

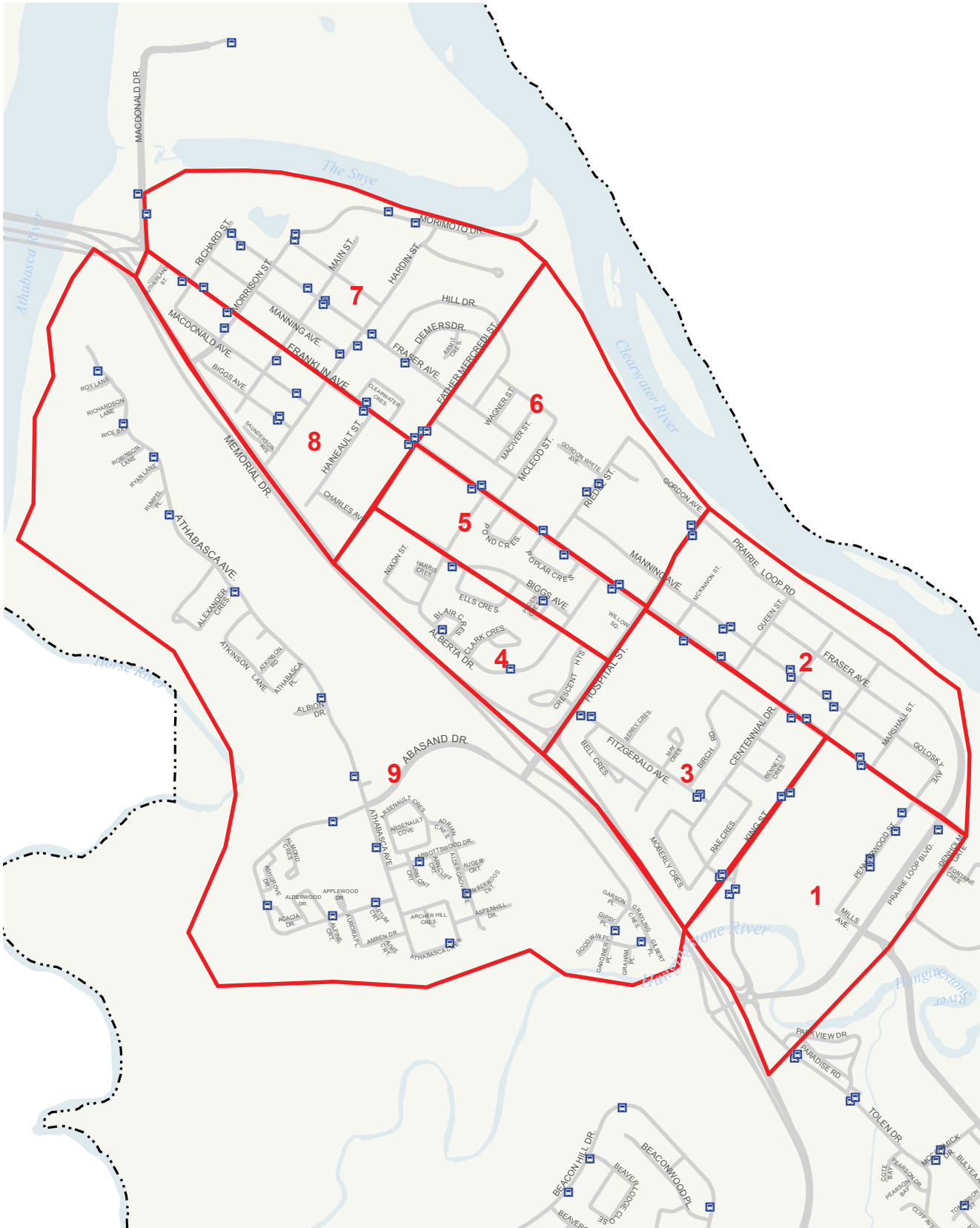
APPENDIX A - 2016 SURVEY TEMPLATE (CONT'D)

Survey Questions																																			
Survey Question 1	What family members are staying with you tonight?	<input type="checkbox"/> NONE <input type="checkbox"/> PARTNER <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER ADULT [SPECIFY: _____] <input type="checkbox"/> CHILD(REN)/DEPENDENT(S) UNDER AGE 18 <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gender</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Gender											Age										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10																									
Gender																																			
Age																																			
Survey Question 2	How old are you [OR] what year were you born? (if unsure, ask for best estimate)	<input type="checkbox"/> AGE (IN YEARS): _____ OR YEAR BORN: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER																																	
Survey Question 3	Do you identify as Aboriginal or do you have Aboriginal ancestry? This includes First Nations, Métis, Inuit, with or without Status [if yes, please follow-up to specify].	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> FIRST NATIONS</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> INUIT</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> MÉTIS</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> NON-STATUS OR HAVE ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY</td> </tr> </table> <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER	<input type="checkbox"/> FIRST NATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INUIT	<input type="checkbox"/> MÉTIS	<input type="checkbox"/> NON-STATUS OR HAVE ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY																													
<input type="checkbox"/> FIRST NATIONS																																			
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<input type="checkbox"/> NON-STATUS OR HAVE ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY																																			
Survey Question 4	Did you come to Canada as an immigrant or refugee within the past 5 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER																																	
Survey Question 5	How long have you been in Fort McMurray? <i>if length answered:</i> Where did you come from before you came here?	<input type="checkbox"/> LENGTH: _____ DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS/YEARS (Circle one) <input type="checkbox"/> ALWAYS BEEN HERE <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> PROVINCE (in Canada): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> COUNTRY (not in Canada): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER																																	
Survey Question 6	Have you ever had any service in the Canadian military or the RCMP?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> YES, RCMP <input type="checkbox"/> YES, MILITARY AND RCMP <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER																																	
Survey Question 7	What gender do you identify with? [Do not read list]	<input type="checkbox"/> MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSGENDER <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER RESPONSE: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER																																	

APPENDIX A - 2016 SURVEY TEMPLATE (CONT'D)

Survey Question 8	Do you identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirited or Queer community?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
Survey Question 9	9.1 How long have you been homeless most recently?	<input type="checkbox"/> # OF YEARS / # OF MONTHS / # OF WEEKS / # OF DAYS <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
	9.2 How many different times have you been homeless in the past 3 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> # <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
	9.3 <i>Homeless for 5 months or less:</i> Was this directly related to the fire?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Survey Question 10	Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the last 12 months? [Prompt: give local examples].	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
Survey Question 11	What happened that caused you to lose your housing most recently? [Do not read all the options. Select all that apply. "Housing" does not include temporary arrangements (e.g. couch surfing) or shelter stays.]	<input type="checkbox"/> ILLNESS OR MEDICAL CONDITION <input type="checkbox"/> ADDICTION OR SUBSTANCE USE <input type="checkbox"/> JOB LOSS <input type="checkbox"/> EVICTED <input type="checkbox"/> DOMESTIC ABUSE <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY CONFLICT <input type="checkbox"/> CONFLICT WITH ROOMMATE <input type="checkbox"/> LEFT CARE (CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES) <input type="checkbox"/> INCARCERATED (JAIL/PRISON) <input type="checkbox"/> HOSPITALIZATION OR TREATMENT PROGRAM <input type="checkbox"/> UNSAFE HOUSING CONDITIONS <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER REASON: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER
Survey Question 12	Where do you get your money from? [May give examples from list. Select all that apply].	<input type="checkbox"/> EMPLOYMENT <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMAL/SELF-EMPLOYMENT (E.G. BOTTLE RETURNS, PANHANDLING) <input type="checkbox"/> EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE <input type="checkbox"/> WELFARE/INCOME ASSISTANCE <input type="checkbox"/> DISABILITY BENEFIT <input type="checkbox"/> SENIORS BENEFITS (E.G. CPP, OAS, GIS) <input type="checkbox"/> CHILD AND FAMILY TAX BENEFITS <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER SOURCE: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO INCOME <input type="checkbox"/> DECLINE TO ANSWER

APPENDIX C - ZONE MAPS



**Homelessness Community Plan
Zones for Point in Time Count**

— Point in Time Zones
■ Transit Stop
— Road

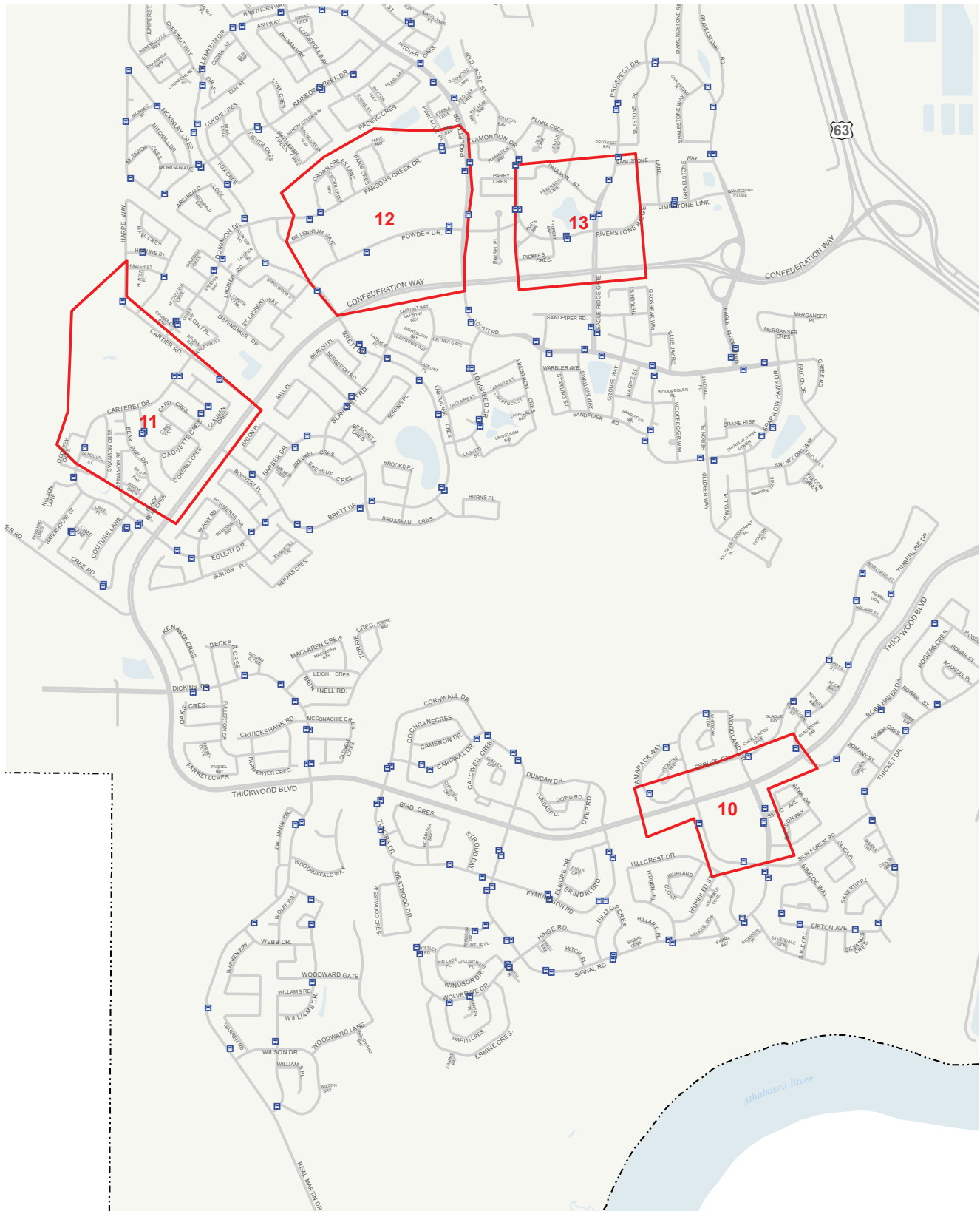
0 250 500
Meters



 REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
of Wood Buffalo
CD1973_Point_in_Time_Count

Map created by the Geographic Information Systems Branch on September 14, 20

APPENDIX C - ZONE MAPS (CONT'D)



Homelessness Community Plan
Zones for Point in Time Count

- Point in Time Zones
- Transit Stop
- Road

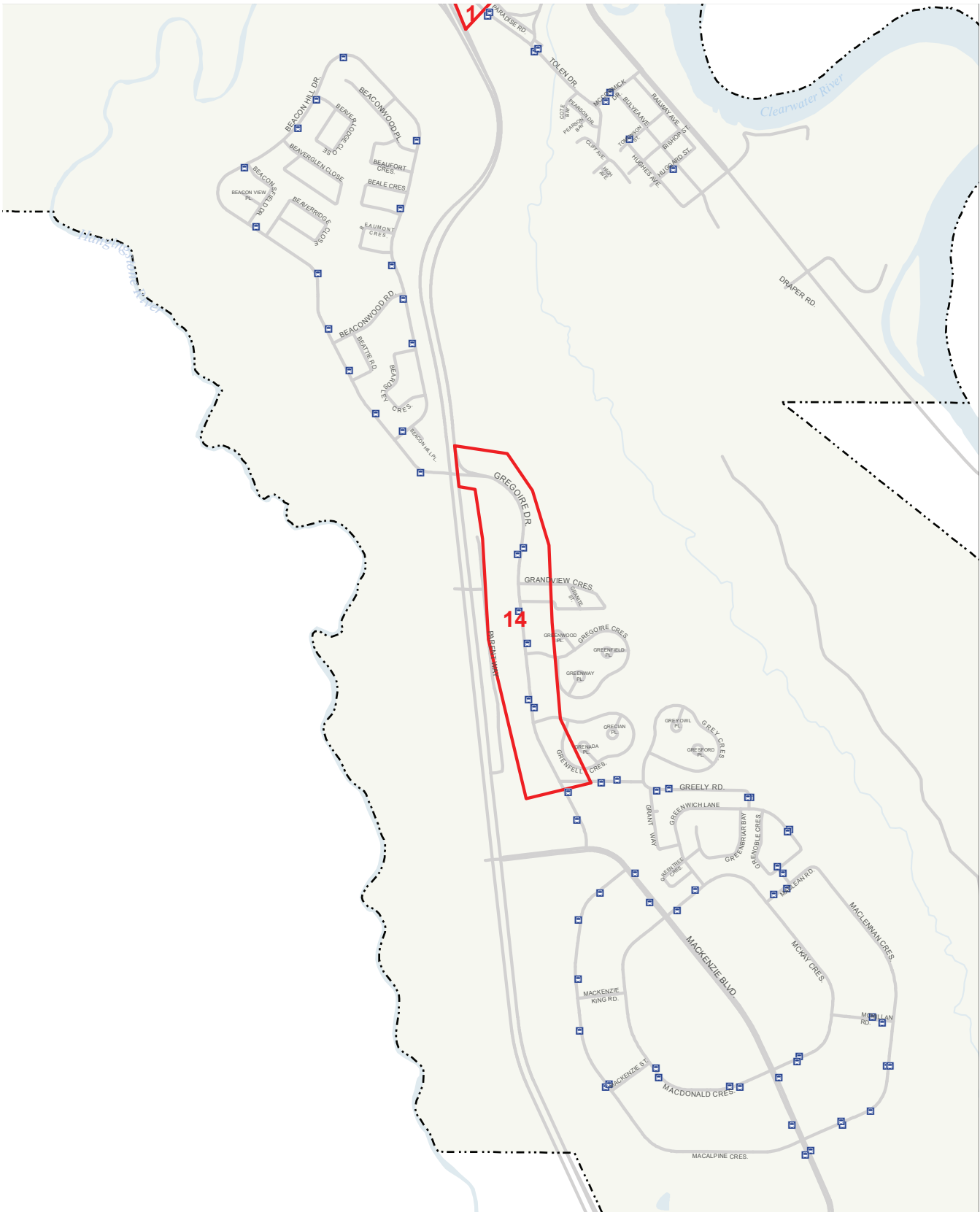
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Map created by the Geographic Information Systems Branch on October 13, 2016

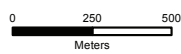
CD1973_Point_in_Time_Count_1

APPENDIX C - ZONE MAPS (CONT'D)



**Homelessness Community Plan
Zones for Point in Time Count**

- ▭ Point in Time Zones
- ▭ Transit Stop
- ▭ Road



Map created by the Geographic Information Systems Branch on September 14, 2016