



Report on the National Meeting of Canada's Community Advisory Boards and Community Entities

Thursday, May 3 (6:30 pm) to Saturday, May 5 (1pm)
St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

OVERVIEW

Over 80 people representing Community Advisory Boards (CAB) and Community Entities from across Canada gathered in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador May 4th and 5th, 2012 to share knowledge, learn from one another and find a way to keep the learning going. This gathering has been in preparation for several years and is underpinned by an extensive consultation process CHRA commissioned from Goss Gilroy Inc. whose report laid out the large issues and opportunities regarding the creation of a network. This work is now coming to fruition. CHRA sought the necessary funding from a variety of partners to proceed with the initiative and, under the guidance of a small working group of CAB representatives, organized the one and a half day meeting.

In simple terms, there were three overarching goals for the meeting: networking, information sharing and sustaining the network. Successful results for any of these goals would contribute to local communities' ability to prevent, reduce and end homelessness; successful results in all of them let us transform this from a one-off learning opportunity to a vehicle for sustainable collective learning and thought on systemic policies and practices.

NETWORKING

The National Meeting of Canada's Community Advisory Board and Community Entities took place in St John's from May 3 to 5, 2012. With representation from every province and one territory, the meeting brought together 81 delegates in total. Participation can be broken down as follows:

33	HPS Designated Communities					
4	British Columbia	12	Ontario	0	Prince Edward Island	
6	Alberta	0	Quebec	1	Newfoundland & Labrador	
1	Saskatchewan	3	New Brunswick	1	Northwest Territories	
3	Manitoba	2	Nova Scotia	0	Yukon & Nunavut	
4	Aboriginal CABs Representatives (including cross-appointed reps)					
7	Rural CABs from Newfoundland and Labrador					
9	Partners, national organizations and affiliated groups					



The participation rate was high with the exception of Quebec representatives and aboriginal CABs. Due to the absence of centralized contact information, it was not possible to reach representatives of these groups. Additional lead up time would have allowed better outreach and likely higher participation. The lack of current contact information appeared to be a greater factor for CABs' absence than prohibitive costs. Thanks to the travel subsidy, the vast majority of CABs who corresponded with us attended the meeting; less than a half dozen wrote back to decline because of the lack of funding at the local level, the remainder were simply not heard from.

INFORMATION SHARING

The meeting featured both formal and social opportunities to learn and network. The formal meeting featured four panel presentations involving 13 presenters (all but one are CAB representatives) and three information sessions featuring national initiatives of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Canadian Homelessness Research Network and the Mental Health Commission of Canada/At Home, Chez soi Project.

1. PANEL PRESENTATIONS

The themes and presenters for the panels were determined by the CABs Working Group and focused on areas that surfaced in the GGI and recent HPS consultations. The four themes, Client Services, Data Collection and Usage, Social and Labour Market Integration and Transformational Governance - touch every CAB across Canada and directly affect program delivery and quality in the community. The presenters represent a mix of city size and geography. The titles and presenters of each panel are listed below. If there was an accompanying powerpoint presentation, it can be [downloaded from our website](#).

Promising Practices Panel I: Client Services

- Housing with supports for vulnerable people - looking for transformative services: Jocelyn Greene, Stella Burry Community Services
- Serving a high needs population in a harm reduction model: Jennifer Hanrahan, Directions Youth Services, Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- The Supportive Housing Network: Tim Ross, Fredericton CAB Coordinator
- Aboriginal homelessness outreach, Patrick Stewart, Chair, Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee For Metro Vancouver & Linda Lavallee, Lu'ma Native Housing Society

Promising Practices Panel II: Data Collection and Usage

- Building a community of practice for homelessness data in NL: Gwen Drover, NL Statistics Agency & Bruce Pearce, St John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness
- Using data to develop strategies: Tim Richter, Calgary Homeless Foundation
- Evaluation Framework: Steve Gaetz, Canadian Homelessness Research Network

Promising Practices Panel III: Social and Labour Market Integration

- BUILDing Prosperity: Converting utility bills to jobs, Shaun Loney, BUILD Winnipeg
- Skills training for youth, Sheldon Pollett, Choices for Youth, St John's



- Homelessness and employability, Julie Western Set, City of Toronto

Promised Practices Panel IV: Transformational Governance

- CE – Foundation Model: Susan McGee, Homeward Trust Edmonton
- CE – Municipality: Diane Randell, Municipality of Lethbridge
- CE – Non-Profit: Jaime Rogers, Medicine Hat Community Housing Society

2. NATIONAL INFORMATION SESSIONS

The national information sessions focussed on major initiatives taking place across the country and provided an excellent opportunity for future two-way communication. [Presentations are accessible on our website.](#)

a. Canadian Homelessness Research Network, Prof. Stephen Gaetz

b. At Home/Chez Soi: Cameron Keller, Vice-President, Mental Health and Homelessness, Mental Health Commission of Canada & Dr Paula Goering, CADRE Research Chair (2001-2011) & Research Lead, At Home/Chez Soi, MHCC

c. Homelessness Partnering Secretariat, Tim Foran, Director, Program Policy and Design

S U S T A I N E D A C T I O N

The third goal of the meeting was to transform this from a one-off learning opportunity to a vehicle for sustainable collective learning and thought on systemic policies and practices. From the initial Goss Gilroy Inc Report, interest among CABs has been extremely high for a way to network and share information, but definitive steps were required to explore the feasibility of keeping the network going.

To that end, CHRA engaged James Hughes to facilitate the discussion of next steps, effectively seeking input from the CABs themselves and the other partners present on the network's purpose, priorities, membership, leadership and financing. To advance the discussion, the facilitator had prepared and distributed in advance a document called "Terms of Reference: Menu of Options," which laid out a variety of options for each of these issues.

Delegates were divided into five discussion groups with mixed geographic representation and, at their recommendation, the aboriginal CAB representatives formed a sixth table. The groups worked independently on the five questions presented on the "menu" and then came together to come to consensus. The outcome of the deliberations follows:

I. What's it all about? (Purpose)

"An inclusive network that shares experience, evidence and practices in the homelessness field in order to facilitate collective action that, prevents, reduces and ends homelessness in Canada."



II. What do we do first? (Priorities)

1. ***“Create practical platforms, including an aboriginal platform, to actively share and discuss best practices with particular attention on the following topics: preventing, reducing and ending homelessness, community planning, development and data collection, management and usage and mentorship.”***
2. ***“Be a conduit for community input into the policies and program development at all levels to prevent, reduce and end homelessness in Canada.”***

III. Who’s In? (Membership)

Delegates debated whether the network should include only CABs/CEs; anyone with an interest in the issue of homelessness; or a hybrid structure where CABs would be the primary members, with all other groups as associate members. Many expressed the need for the focus to remain on issues shared by CABs, while others noted that many partners and stakeholders present at the meeting would be excluded if a CABs only approach were taken. It was agreed that:

“All CABs as members and others as associate members.”

IV. Who leads? (Leadership)

Delegates endorsed the concept that given its nature and potential resources available, the network should be governed in a light, nimble and modest way within an existing national organization so as not to create an additional layer of administration or a new institution. There was consent that CHRA should host the network and provide “back office” type support to it. No other options came forward to provide such functions.

There was consensus that similar to the working group currently overseeing the development of the CAB meeting, a body should be struck made up of representative leadership from the sector to provide leadership, oversight and guidance to network activities. Delegates stayed away from any notions of formal or elected governance structures.

“CHRA to create a steering committee with wide, diverse representation.”

V. Who pays? (Financing)

This is the question of how the network will be funded. Ideas for funding included: grants from governments; obligatory CAB membership fees (based on size and budget); voluntary CAB contributions; and grants from interested foundations, institutions and business. The Menu of Options posited that funding would be necessary to support at least one additional full time person to implement on a day-to-day basis the network’s priority actions. There was no disagreement on that assumption, but delegates suggested more detailed cost projections were needed before looking into funding mechanisms.



The delegates deferred the question to the existing CABs Working Group to determine financial requirements for the continuation of the network and potential sources of funding.

NEXT STEPS

Delegates requested that an aboriginal representative join the existing CABs Working Group; Jennifer Dockstader volunteered. The members are now:

- Phil Brown, CHRA President & General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division, City of Toronto
- Jo-Ann Coleman Pidskalny, Executive Director- Saskatoon Housing Coalition
- Jennifer Dockstader, Executive Director, Abbey House, St. Catherines-Niagara
- Dayle Hernblad, HIFIS Community Coordinator and Homelessness Coordinator for the City of Yellowknife
- Claudia Jahn, Program Director- Community Action on Homelessness Halifax
- Susan McGee, Executive Director-Homeward Trust Edmonton
- Bruce Pearce, Past President, CHRA & Community Development, St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness
- Matthew Pearce, Executive Director - Old Brewery Mission
- Diane Randell, Manager, Community & Social Development Group, City of Lethbridge
- Tim Ross, Fredericton CAB Coordinator
- Sheldon Pollett, Board Member, CHRA & Executive Director, Choices for Youth, St. John's
- Alice Sundberg, Co-chair, Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (Metro Vancouver)

The working group will hold a conference call before the end of June and will undertake a financial needs analysis for the network and some possible options for funding.

More broadly speaking, many delegates raised the issue of getting together again in 2013, possibly in conjunction with CHRA's Congress in Ottawa which takes place from April 30 to May 3. The overriding wish, however, is to stay in touch and to that end, the contact information from all delegates is included as Appendix A. We are also looking at creating a mailing list/forum for delegates and other CABs who weren't able to attend, but wish to become connected with the learning network.

CHRA thanks the supporting organizations for making the meeting possible - Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Canadian Homelessness Research Network, the CADRE Research Chair on behalf of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's At Home/Chez Soi Project and the City of St. John's.

We sincerely thank all the delegates - our CABs representatives and partner organizations - for their own significant investment of time and money to participate in this landmark first-meeting. The momentum is high and we'll take full advantage of the energy generated in St. John's to forge a stronger bond among us all.



Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
May 22, 2012



Canada



Canadian Homelessness
Research Network

CADRE Research Chair on behalf of
Mental Health Commission of Canada's At
Home/Chez

ST. JOHN'S
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, CANADA