Homelessness among Native Americans in Minnesota:
Understanding experiences and needs in order to design solutions

November 19, 2020 – MCH Conference
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Ancestral lands

- Mni Sota Makoce (Land Where the Water Reflects the Clouds) is the Dakota place name for what is now known as Minnesota
- In Minnesota there are 60,000 American Indian people and 11 federally recognized tribes
Recognizing where we are and what we bring today
Things we’ll cover

- Overview of American Indian homelessness in Minnesota
- What the data tell us – Statewide Homeless Survey + Reservation Study
- What our work and experiences tell us
- Question/Answer
American Indian Homelessness in Minnesota

• Historical context
• Contemporary causes
What the data tells us

2018 Statewide and Reservation Homeless Studies
2018 Reservation Study

- Interviews conducted on the reservations of 6 participating tribes
- Represent > 90% of American Indians living on MN reservations
- Study of both homelessness AND near-homelessness

2018 Statewide Study

- Interviews in 300 shelters and programs and 400 locations across the state
- Study of homelessness ONLY
Homeless vs. near-homeless

- **Homelessness** includes: staying in a shelter, transitional housing, or a place not intended for housing, or those who face eviction and have no other place to go, as well as some people who are temporarily staying with others (doubled up) if their situation is precarious.

- **Near-homelessness** includes: those who are temporarily staying with others (doubled up) in relatively more stable conditions.
2018 Statewide Homeless Study

Homelessness in Minnesota
Detailed Findings from the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study

Authors: Brian Pittman, Sheryl Nacion-Jews, Michelle G.), Gerrard, and Ellen Mushroo

American Indians are overrepresented among Minnesota’s statewide homeless population

While American Indians make up 1% of the Minnesota adult population…

…12% of the Statewide Homeless Study adults were American Indian

Wilder Research, 2018 Statewide Homeless Study count
American Indians are overrepresented in the unsheltered homeless population in the metro area. American Indians make up 10% of the metro area homeless population... and 26% of unsheltered interviewees in the metro area.

*Note: N=4,225 for all individuals interviewed in the Twin Cities metro area for the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study*
American Indians are overrepresented in the unsheltered homeless population in Greater MN

American Indians make up 16% of the Greater MN homeless population...

...and 24% of unsheltered interviewees in Greater MN

*Note: N=2,072 for all individuals interviewed in Greater MN for the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study
American Indian families are overrepresented among unsheltered homeless families in the metro area.

American Indian families make up 10% of families experiencing homeless in the metro area...

...and 34% of unsheltered families in the metro area.

*Note: N=875 for all individuals interviewed in the Twin Cities metro area with at least one child with them on the night of the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study
American Indian *families* are overrepresented among unsheltered homeless families in **Greater MN**

American Indian families make up 12% of families experiencing homeless in Greater MN…

…and 24% of unsheltered families in Greater MN

*Note: N=556 for all individuals interviewed in Greater MN with at least one child with them on the night of the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study*
American Indians are overrepresented in the unsheltered, unaccompanied youth homeless population in the metro area.

American Indians make up 11% of unaccompanied youth in the metro area homeless population...

...and 31% of unaccompanied youth that are unsheltered in the metro area.

*Note: N=449 for all unaccompanied youth interviewed in the Twin Cities metro area for the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study. Unaccompanied youth are individuals age 24 years and younger who were unaccompanied by their parents on the night of the study.
American Indians are overrepresented in the unsheltered, unaccompanied youth homeless population in **Greater MN**

American Indians make up 16% of unaccompanied youth in the Greater MN homeless population…

…and 27% of unaccompanied youth that are unsheltered in Greater MN

*Note: N=310 for all unaccompanied youth interviewed in Greater MN for the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study. Unaccompanied youth are individuals age 24 years and younger who were unaccompanied by their parents on the night of the study.*
Reflections & Questions
2018 Reservation Homeless Study

The number of people experiencing homeless or near-homeless on reservations is growing

1,138 people experiencing homelessness
+ 1,177 people experiencing near-homelessness

2,315 people total on reservations in 2018

Wilder Research, 2018 Reservation Homeless Study
POLLING QUESTION

True or False: Most reservation respondents were living on a reservation before becoming homeless or near-homeless.

**ANSWER:** True. 2 of 3 respondents (64%) were living on a reservation before becoming homeless or near-homeless; 86% were enrolled tribal members.
Who are the people experiencing homelessness and near-homelessness on reservations?

- Over one-quarter (28%) of reservation respondents were parents accompanied by their children.

Wilder Research, 2018 Reservation Homeless Study
Most reservation respondents are experiencing chronic, long-term homelessness and have significant barriers to getting housing

- 77% of people interviewed on reservations met the Minnesota definition of long-term homelessness: those who have been without a permanent residence for at least one year, or four or more times during the last three years.

- 1 in 4 reservation respondents (28%) face physical, mental, or other health challenges that limit their ability to work or perform daily activities.
True or False: Most reservation respondents that were doubled-up at the time of the study prefer to live doubled-up (i.e., this is a “cultural preference” to live with extended family).

NOTE: Doubling up = staying with a family member or someone they know rather than living in a shelter or in places not intended for human habitation

ANSWER: False. Nearly all respondents (99%) would live in their own housing – not doubled up with family or friends – if they could find or afford it.
Doubling up is a concern

- 70% of reservation respondents were doubled up
- Doubling up is not a common preference
  - 74% of doubled-up respondents were in overcrowded spaces
  - 51% of doubled-up respondents were in severely overcrowded spaces
  - 22% living in substandard conditions

Time spent doubled up, 2018
Reflections & Questions
Economic opportunities on reservations are limited

- 24% of respondents were employed
  - 81% were earning wages of less than $15.00 an hour

Employment rate of reservation and greater Minnesota respondents, 2009-2018

- People experiencing homelessness or near-homelessness on reservations
  - 2009: 33%, 2018: 24%
- People experiencing homelessness in greater Minnesota, not on reservations
  - 2009: 31%, 2018: 31%
QUESTION: What is the most commonly reported reason for becoming homeless or near-homeless on reservations?

a) Substance use
b) Not getting along with family / domestic abuse

**c) Financial reasons**

d) Challenges with mental health
Reasons for becoming homeless

- Most respondents became homeless because of financial reasons
  - 36% couldn’t afford rent or house payments
  - 35% had been evicted
  - 32% lost job/had hours cut

- Lack of affordable housing was also the most common barrier to obtaining housing (50%) – substance use was the 8th most common barrier identified by respondents (15%).
Homelessness is often preceded by childhood trauma and abuse (ACEs)

- ACEs are prevalent among reservation respondents
  - 71% had experienced at least 1 ACE (73% statewide)
  - 42% had experience 3 or more ACEs (59% statewide)

*ACEs were less common compared to Statewide Homeless Study*

- The most commonly reported ACEs:
  - Lived with someone who abused substances (56%)
  - Witnessed abuse (52%)
  - Lived in an out of home placement (44%)

Involvement in the criminal justice system

- Compared to statewide respondents, a higher percentage of reservation respondents spent time in a correctional facility
  - 74% were homeless upon entry
  - 34% did not have a stable place to live upon exit
Health and well-being

- Serious mental illness: 44%
- Chronic physical health conditions: 47%
- Substance use disorder: 24%

- 31% report no conditions
- 38% report multiple conditions
- 11% report all 3 conditions
Reflections & Questions
Affordable housing is greatest need

- Average median income from all sources was $300 / month
  - 27% reported no income
- 2018 fair market rent of $576 for a one-bedroom apartment in greater Minnesota
- Housing waiting lists are very long on reservations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing size needs</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency / 1 bedroom</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedrooms</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ bedrooms</td>
<td>29%</td>
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Substance use

In the past 30 days…

- 85% smoked cigarettes
- 41% used marijuana
- 32% drank alcohol
- 14% used methamphetamine
- 11% used heroin or any other type of opioid

- Over time, methamphetamine and marijuana use has increased among reservation respondents

Substance use during the past 30 days: 2012-2018 Reservation Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codeine, morphine, fentanyl, or another opioid*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In 2018, codeine, morphine, fentanyl, or other opioids and other non-alcohol or non-tobacco substances were added to the list of possible substances.
Youth who are homeless on their own

- 17% of all reservation respondents
- Most youth left home due to problems with others living there
- 66% had lived in a foster home, a treatment facility, or juvenile detention at some point
- 63% of young adults were without a high school diploma or GED

Selected adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), youth and adult respondents

- Had a parent with mental health issues: 45% (youth), 28% (25+ years)
- Had a parent with alcohol or drug use problems: 65% (youth), 54% (25+ years)
- Had a parent in prison as a child: 43% (youth), 15% (25+ years)
Reflections & Questions
Miigwech / Pidamayaye / Thank you!

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For more info on the homeless studies, visit: mnhomeless.org
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