



## The "Take Steps" Lunch & Learn

Education | Empathy | Action

### Did You Know....

**FACT** Average life span of a homeless person in BC is 49. Homeless people are at a higher risk of multiple health problems such as malnutrition, physical and sexual trauma and lack of medical attention while living without shelter.

**FACT** Walking is a homeless person's primary means of transportation - walking on average 5 hours a day. 2/3 of homeless people have serious foot problems such as frostbite, ingrown toenails and infections affecting their ability to walk.

**FACT** BC Housing states no more than 30% of income should be spent on housing

Single person on Income Assistance receives:  
\$335/month living expenses  
\$375/month for shelter  
\$710/month total

Average rent in Kelowna for studio **\$900**

Single parent with 2 kids on Income Assistance:  
\$500/month living expenses  
\$660/month for shelter  
\$1060/month total

Average rent in Kelowna for 2 bdr **\$1400**

**FACT** It is estimated that 90% of all homeless women are there as a result of domestic violence. To think that homelessness may be the only alternative when escaping from physical and sexual abuse....

**FACT** 40% of homeless youth were younger than 16 when they first experienced homelessness.

**FACT** Many homeless people have mental health disorders which contribute to the use of drugs and alcohol to self-medicate. Bipolar and schizophrenia being the most common.

**FACT** Most homeless people are the victims of violent crime not the perpetrator.





## The "Take Steps" Lunch & Learn

Education | Empathy | Action

### *What can I do to help?*

**Show Respect:** One of the best ways to help a homeless person is to show respect. Make eye contact at least, try to talk to them and recognize their value as an individual.

**Give:** Shelters are always in need of basic hygiene items such as shampoo and toothpaste as well as socks, shoes and food. Contact a shelter and find out what they need. Answer phones, serve food, take care of children. Don't be afraid to go in the door and see what they need done to help. It is someone's temporary home.

**Consider:** How would it be to have to store everything you own in a bag or a shopping cart. What simple items would you be missing - reading glasses, chapstick, a band aid, clean underwear?

**Be Ready:** Carry small gift cards from grocery stores or food chains to distribute, or granola bars and wet wipes. In the hot months give water bottles to prevent dehydration.

**Understand:** There are myriad of reasons why a person becomes homeless — lack of affordable housing, loss of a job, divorce, chronic illness, substance abuse, domestic abuse. One of the first steps you can take toward helping the homeless is trying to understand how they got there in the first place.

**Learn:** Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, the definition of Indigenous homelessness has 12 dimensions. Look it up!

<https://homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness>

**Advocate:** Once you know, you can't 'un-know'. Share your knowledge with others and reduce the stigma of homelessness.

**Get Involved:** Join a Board of a homeless serving charity, contribute your ideas, brainstorm possible solutions, attend City Council meetings on supportive housing options, read the Journey Home strategy and see where you could have impact

**Smile:** One of the easiest things you can do is just smile at someone who is homeless & make eye contact. Make them feel less invisible. We all know how it feels to have someone smile at us, and a simple smile can turn a decision or their whole day around.

