



Centre for
Community-Based Research
93 Bobcaygeon Road
Box 655 Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0
Phone: (705) 286-2411
Fax: (705) 286-3511
E-mail ulinks@on.aibn.com
Website www.ulinks.ca

Community-Based Education Program



292 London Street, Traill College
c/o Trent University
1600 West Bank Drive
Peterborough, ON K9J 7B8
Phone (705)743-0523 Fax (705)743-7170
E-mail info@trentcentre.ca
Website www.trentcentre.ca

Promotional Copy

4217 Housing in Haliburton County: The Narrative Stories

Organization Information

Places for People (P4P) is a charitable organization mandated to create affordable rental housing in Haliburton County. It was incorporated in 2007, and in 2009 purchased a property – an old Orange Lodge that had been used as a Dance Studio - in the village of Haliburton and renovated it, using extensive volunteer input and donation of goods and services from the community, into two large 3-bedroom apartments within walking distance of downtown.

Two families took residence in February 2010, paying affordable rent (shelter allowance if on social assistance, 1/3 of gross income prior tax year), and supported throughout the process by a member of the P4P Tenant Selection & Support Committee in a tenant-directed relationship. P4P puts a small portion of the rent in a trust fund which a tenant may access, on negotiation with the S&S Committee.

The renovation loan for that property has been paid off, the rent and a DOOR grant are financially sustaining the mortgage and property-related expenses, and the tenants have settled well. P4P is therefore looking to purchase and renovate again as soon as it finds a suitable property in the County.

P4P has a secondary goal of raising public awareness about housing issues in the community, and keeping abreast of policy and funding decisions at all levels of government that impact on housing. We know that our efforts are a very small part of what needs to happen in order for the citizens of Haliburton County to be affordably and appropriately housed. We also acknowledge the primacy of affordable housing as a determinant of health.

Project Information

The project is to gather personal narratives from a broad spectrum of people about the impact of housing on their lives. The base question is: How does the housing you have (or have had, or need) impact on the quality of your life? We would assist with identifying participants who, among them, cover a variety of life circumstances or points in the life cycle in which housing plays a particularly pivotal role.

The underlying belief is that one's housing – which in a rural setting gives location special importance – plays a primary role in supporting or constricting quality of life. It can create, exacerbate, or ameliorate life cycle challenges. A better understanding of what the crucial elements of these events are perceived to be, and how they interact, will help develop housing, social and health policy that meets the needs of our citizens.

There is considerable exploration of this question in urban environments. The rural reality is importantly different, but the differences are not well explored or articulated in either popular or academic literature. Until the crucial differences are better understood and communicated, policy will continue to create urban solutions that are a poor fit with rural reality, leaving it to rural citizens to manage, individually or collectively, the necessary amendments. We anticipate that the narratives we propose to collect will explicate the differences by describing the accommodations that people make.

Benefit to the Community

This project builds on a broad-stroke exploration of the Determinants of Health undertaken by U-Links two years ago, which identified housing as a problematic area. Housing was also a pervasive theme in qualitative research undertaken by the Aging Well in Haliburton County Committee, with U-Links support.

A year-long honours Geography thesis explored Rural Housing further last year, with a particular focus on positioning it within academic study. The participants in this study were housing providers and supporters. The student recommended that the next study focus on users of housing, by which he understood people who were insecurely housed.

In Haliburton County, however, the group of insecurely housed is (we believe) unusually broad. Haliburton County is the poorest jurisdiction in Ontario, so we have our share of those whose housing insecurity arises from poverty. We are also the oldest jurisdiction in the province, so we have our share and more of those whose housing insecurity arises from the diminishment of aging. Thirdly, we have a very small (16,000 permanent residents) and geographically dispersed population, which increases the risk of insecurity arising from unavailability of essential support services. Fourthly, we are 'remote' by virtue of having no settlements larger than 2-3000 in our County and no public transportation, which increases risk of insecurity on the basis of access to transportation.

Potential Learning for the Student

- an increased understanding of how housing impacts life
- an increased appreciation of the particular challenges of rural housing
- skill in eliciting and capturing narrative data
- experience in analysing narrative data
- experience in presenting narrative data

Resources Required for Project Provided by Host

Host:

- We will orient the student to the state of housing in Haliburton County – geography, demography, existing resources, identified challenges – to augment that in the literature to date
- We will identify a list of potential respondents that represents a broad spectrum of life cycle points at which housing may have particular salience (e.g., leaving parental home, initial employment (in the area), becoming a couple, becoming a family, family with children active in community, empty nesting, loss of partner, loss of physical / mental capacity)
- We will arrange for local coverage of the project so that potential respondents have a context within which to receive requests, as well as documentation for the student/s that confirms their legitimacy
- We will apply for funding to offset travel expenses in the community
- We can billet students to allow them more flexibility, efficiency in conducting interviews.

U-Links: The cost of a rental vehicle **OR** reimbursement for fuel (student owned vehicle) to travel to and from Haliburton County for up to **four (4)** visits.

All costs for transportation beyond the four visits, including rental and fuel costs, as well as fuel costs for project related travel within the county are the responsibility of the host organization.

Screening or Training Requirements

- Must have interpersonal and interviewing skills appropriate to in-depth exploration of personal and potentially emotional material
- Must have an appreciation of confidentiality, especially in a small community (e.g., people are identifiable by other than name)
- Some respondents might be considered vulnerable and therefore a police check should be completed.
- The student/s will need to make considerable time available for data collection and considerable travel may be involved (if interviews take place in respondents' homes)

Skills that Would Be an Asset to the Student(s)

- A good understanding of housing as a determinant of health
- An orientation to life cycle as a narrative stance
- Keyboarding speed would allow optimal capture of data