

I am 43 years old. I live on a disability pension of \$543 a month. I lost part of my foot when a train ran over it in 1999 on Tunnel Island. I was drunk and passed out on the tracks. I don't remember anything until I woke up in the hospital in Winnipeg hooked up to machines with all kinds of wires. I need a cane to walk now and I wear work boots to support my leg without the foot. Sometimes I trip on the boot with no foot in it, because I have no feeling and it gets caught on the edge of the sidewalk. I've had hip and knee surgery on the same leg as well because of a serious fall. I was supposed to get an artificial leg 4 years ago.

I used to have lots of work before the accident. I was a guide at several tourist lodges. I operated a lunch program at the school in my home community and also ran the recreation centre. I cut wood for the community and sold it to people for whatever they could pay me.

Both of my parents died of cancer in the last two years. I was going back and forth to town trying to take care of my mother while she was sick. I have one daughter who is in Toronto, but I've lost contact with her. I think she does crack cocaine. She has serious charges of armed robbery against her. I might go to Toronto to look for her. I have two grandchildren. I want to quit drinking and get straightened out for them.

*The tourism industry has been impacted since September 11, 2001, as many more American residents stay home. As a major industry, a decline in tourism has a significant impact on the local economy.*

# Carl



I've tried AA a couple of times, but when people talk about what they drank, it makes me curious and I have to go out and try it. I've drunk hair spray and Lysol.

I attended residential school up to grade 6 when my mother took me out. I have wounds from then and nothing repairs them. Memories of residential school still haunt me.

I slept under a tree near the court house last night. I eat at the soup line or from the garbage. I'm not ashamed of that. It's survival. When it gets cold, I sleep anywhere there's a vent. I've slept under the Lakeside Inn and I use cardboard boxes for a mattress. I stay by myself most of the time.

I've been to Winnipeg and volunteered at the soup line there. They have clean warm beds at their shelters. I'd like to live there but it's too dangerous. I read about the street workers being killed.

I know I can get money as a residential school survivor, but I don't want it. If I got it I'd put it into a savings account for my grandchildren.

I'd rather live on the street than in a home.

*Those individuals formerly employed through the tourism industry in guiding, cooking, maintenance and housekeeping often have difficulty finding alternate employment which affects their ability to pay for their housing.*

We've been homeless for a month and a half. I got too drunk one night and got kicked out. My wife's welfare paid for the rent before, but she doesn't get it any more. I was on EI, but I don't get that anymore. We can't get jobs. Nobody wants to hire us.



I worked as a janitor before but had to resign because of my drinking. They wouldn't let me work until I got treatment, but I couldn't get into treatment. I graduated from high school. My wife finished Grade 11.

When I was younger, I played hockey in Kenora. It's a racist town, but people treated me well when I was a hockey player here. I went on to play for the London Knights and then the Brandon Wheat Kings, but I got lonely for home, so I quit. Now people treat us like crap when they pass us on the street.

I got jumped last night and she got jumped before that. It was our own people. They pretended to be our friends and gave me shots of Listerine, but when I was shwanked, they beat me up. They stomped on my head. I called the cops, but I was the one who ended up in the drunk tank.

We're sick of drinking, but there's nothing to do when you're homeless except drink. We were sleeping in cars and passing out. We're tired of this. We went to AA, but mostly because it was a warm place to be. I told my story though.

We panhandle to get our money. One day I made \$35 panhandling. I make up stories, like pretending my wife is pregnant so people will give money.

I really need a house so that I can take care of my wife.

The number of individuals who have less than grade 12 is 31.3% higher than the rest of the province. Those with less than a grade 9 education is 31% higher than the provincial average.

The portion of under-educated individuals is even higher for the aboriginal communities. Forty-eight percent (48%) did not complete high school. Of those aged 25-44, 29% quit school because of family responsibilities.

I was homeless for 2 months after the Adam's Block fire. We stayed at the Fellowship Centre for a while and panhandled for food. Now I have a place to live with friends. We don't have a fridge, but our neighbours let us use theirs. When my husband gets his residential school survivor money, we'll buy a fridge and a stove.

I have sclerosis of the liver. The doctor tells me to stop drinking, but I still drink. I can't take any medication, not even Tylenol. When my stomach hurts, I have a beer to make it feel better, but that doesn't work.

When you're on the street, people chip in for alcohol together. **When you live on the street, you don't care about yourself** and there's nothing to do. The only places to go to sleep are the Detox or the Fellowship Centre. Some people sneak into Lila's at night to sleep in the hallways to keep warm.

Val

Within the First Nations population, the health issues spiral. 45% report chronic health problems. Aboriginals are four times more likely to have diabetes, 70% more likely to have arthritis/rheumatism, and 25% more likely to have high blood pressure than a comparable non-aboriginal population.

## Yvonne and Allan

WE CURRENTLY HAVE AN APARTMENT, BUT THE RENT IS \$500 A MONTH WHICH IS TOO HIGH FOR THE SMALL SIZE OF THE APARTMENT. I CLEAN THE HALLWAYS AND KEEP THE PLACE NEAT, BUT THE LANDLORD WON'T PAY ME FOR THAT. WE'D LIKE TO MOVE TO SIOUX LOOKOUT.

WE WERE HOMELESS FOR TWO MONTHS AFTER THE **ADAMS BLOCK FIRE**. IT WAS DEPRESSING AND ROUGH. WE STAYED AT THE FELLOWSHIP CENTRE. I GOT SICK FROM THE COLD WHEN WE HAD TO GO OUTSIDE FROM 7 UNTIL 8 O'CLOCK EACH MORNING.

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A survey done in the fall of 2006 by the Kenora Community Legal Clinic indicated that rent for low-end units had already increased by 40% within nine months of the Adams Block fire.

DAVE 

I lived in the Adams Block for 8 years until the fire. I lived at the Fellowship Centre after that for a month until I got another place. Now I pay \$450 a month in rent which only leaves \$550 for my other expenses.

I got married when I was 16 and my wife was 14. We stayed together for 13 years and had a son and a daughter. I was a heavy equipment operator, but drinking led to a disability pension and eviction from my low rental home. I only had to pay \$150 a month there.

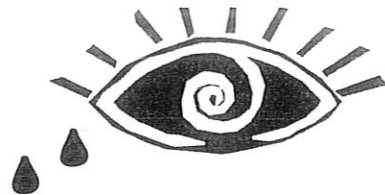
*I'm as far as I can go*

*I drink hair spray and Lysol, not just whiskey and beer.*

Many of the homeless population struggle with addiction problems as well as mental health issues. Although public drunkenness is not unique to street people, those who are homeless are more likely to be incarcerated. The Kenora Police Service reports an average of 2,000 requests annually for service for incidents of public drunkenness.

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## TWO STORIES



## FROM SAAKAATTE HOUSE WOMEN'S SHELTER

I came to the Women's Shelter in Kenora from a nearby community in December 2006. I had been physically abused by my partner; it got worse for me when I had to leave the place where I was staying with my child. I had nowhere to go, so I packed up my belongings and left.

I started looking for an apartment; I immediately accepted. I'm excited to have my own apartment for my child and myself. I no longer have to worry about not having a place to live and getting abused.

I'll be able to raise my child in a safe and happy family environment without violence. I am glad I came to the Shelter because the staff is very concerned for every woman's well-being. They gave me the courage I needed to not go back into the violent relationship that I just got out of. They also made it clear that no woman should be abused; it is not a way of life.

I have been given a second chance to start my life over. I know I'll make the right decisions and choices.

**My child and I deserve a better life.**

## Bill

*I am being evicted from my apartment at the end of the month. The people who were visiting me were bothering the neighbours, so I have to leave. I was paying \$158 a month for rent. I want to get into the Kenricia Hotel when it reopens, but my rent will be \$450 a month and my pension is only \$688. I'll be 65 in a few months, so I'll have a bigger pension. I use the soup lines to eat. I get one meal a day there.*

*I don't know how I'll move my stuff, because I don't have a vehicle. I don't have a place to move anyway. If I don't get into the Kenricia, I may pack my clothes and go west or to Toronto or Thunder Bay.*

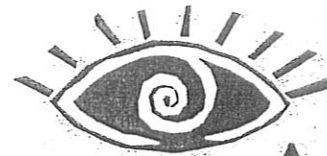
The average rent in Kenora for a two bedroom unit is \$862 per month. The maximum shelter benefit allowed under Ontario Works is \$538 for a single parent and child. This discrepancy illustrates the reality of affordable housing in the community.



I moved to Kenora with my mother when I was 13. I'm 29 now. My mother passed away two years ago and my sister died 11 months after that.

I've been living on the street for a month now and I've had to do that before too, even in the winter. I go from bank to bank to keep warm, but you have to move when people come in. You need a card to get inside. A Health Card works. I get my food from the soup kitchen.

The cost of the local nutritious food basket as determined by the Ministry of Health is more than double the provincial average.



I recently left my spouse, he was very mentally abusive and he hurt me in many other ways. I have been here for over 42 days and I am having difficulty finding my own place for my child and I. My time is running out. I call three to four places a day, but with the budget I get for my child and I, it's impossible to find affordable housing in this area.

This is not something that I ever thought I would have to go through. And it is very embarrassing not knowing day to day where I am going to live with my child, provide a safe environment and food on the table. It hurts very much as a mother to go through this kind of situation. It's something that I never expected to happen to me.

If I don't find a place soon, I really have no where to go, and that scares me.....

Among the contributing factors, studies have shown that higher substance abuse rates are co-related to higher rates of domestic violence. Locally this is reflected in above capacity occupancy rates at the local women's shelter. In 2006 there were over 200 admissions to the women's shelter.



# Homeless in Kenora

For more information on Making Kenora HOME,  
please visit our website.

[www.makingkenorahome.ca](http://www.makingkenorahome.ca)



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## A COLLECTION OF STORIES



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