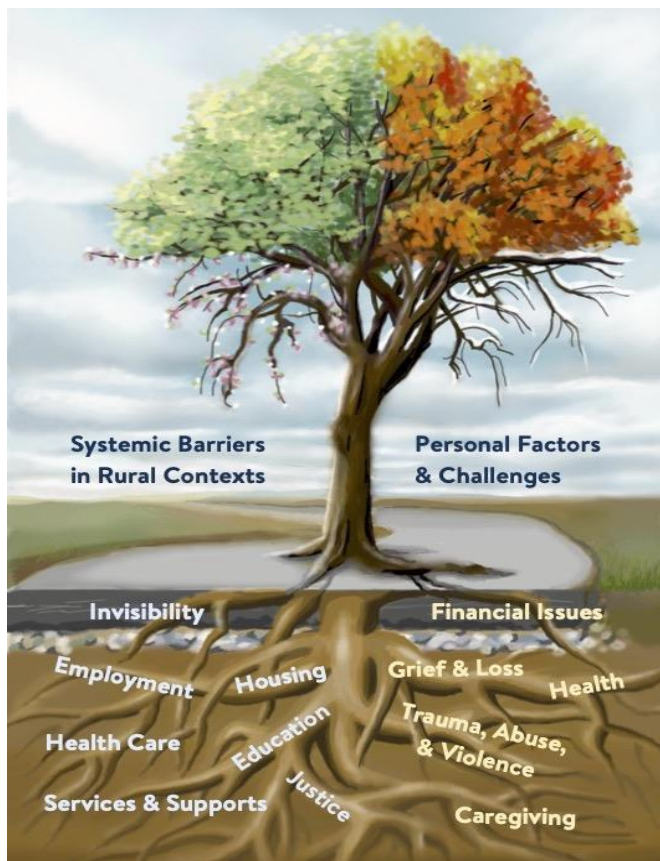


# RESEARCH CONNECTION

## Rural homelessness: Roots and routes in Manitoba

By Grace Stone, BA, Candy Skyhar, PhD, Jan Marie Graham, RN, MN, & Michelle Lam, PhD



### Why this research is important

Literature on homelessness tends to be much more focused on urban contexts than on rural contexts. This research sought to raise awareness of rural homelessness and understand its causes and challenges (roots), resulting

### What you need to know

To address the limited awareness and understanding of rural homelessness, this research examined its root causes, routes that individuals experiencing homelessness in rural Manitoba took to their current locations, and availability and gaps in local homelessness services. Both systemic barriers and personal factors and challenges were found: invisibility of the issue; barriers and challenges related to employment, housing, health care and health, education, services/supports, justice, finances, and caregiving; and experiences of grief, loss, trauma, abuse, and violence. Recommendations are located in the published research [report](#).

mobility (routes), and the availability/gaps in services and supports for individuals experiencing rural homelessness. What arose were powerful case studies that exemplify the myriad of barriers and challenges these individuals have faced and call for organizations, government, and communities to take action.

### How the research was conducted

The principal investigator conducted initial interviews in 2021 with five participants (with rural roots) who had experienced homelessness and mobility (three individuals and a couple); two interviews of community members who

had worked with individuals experiencing rural homelessness and mobility were conducted by the project's videographer in 2022. Data (of the anonymized audio transcripts) were coded, analyzed, compared, and revised by all researchers both separately and together in several phases.

### What the researchers found

Individuals experiencing rural homelessness and mobility face both systemic barriers and personal factors and challenges.

Of the systemic barriers, one of the most prominent themes was the denial that homelessness existed in rural places. Participants also faced a lack of available, affordable, quality, and safe housing; challenges in accessing services due to availability, local knowledge, and poor system navigation and intercommunication; issues with finding employment due to lack of opportunities and transportation, health, COVID-19, and caregiving responsibilities; barriers in accessing health care and treatment, especially in regard to mental health and addictions, including the stigma associated with each; a lack of education; and barriers from experiencing incarceration.

Often tied to and a result of systemic barriers, the following personal factors and challenges were noted: financial issues; impacts and invisibility of trauma, abuse, and violence, which were often intergenerational; grief and loss, often resulting from mourning lost people, belongings, and opportunities; the burden of caregiving responsibility; and physical and mental health issues such as cancer, ADHD, depression, and substance use.

### How this research can be used

Recommendations are provided for institutions and people (organizations for housing and homelessness, child welfare, and system supports and benefits; government, including health care, education, justice, and municipalities; local businesses, organizations, and non-

profits; and the community) to address the roots and routes of rural homelessness and to raise awareness. The most effective strategies are those with community-specific initiatives and buy-in and those that integrate support across systems. See the report for all recommendations:

<https://www.bucares.ca/publications/rural-homelessness>

### About the researchers

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### Keywords

Rural, homelessness, causes, challenges, barriers, employment, housing, education, health, trauma, stigma

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