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HOUSING



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Studio tour invites you to meet local residents

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BUSINESS

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Blue Jays are marketing gem for businesses

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**Aboriginals over-represented among homeless**

BY LISA QUEEN  
 lqueen@yrmg.com

**A**bout 12 per cent of York Region's homeless are Aboriginal residents, although they make up less than 1 per cent of the population, according to a new report.

"Aboriginal peoples are over-represented in homeless populations across the country and, as the data suggests, this is the case in York Region as well," according to the report, Understanding the Numbers: Working Together to Prevent, Reduce and End Homelessness in York Region, a joint document from York Region and the United Way of Toronto and York Region.

"Research has shown that many personal issues facing Aboriginal peoples experiencing homelessness can be linked to various types of historical traumas."

In addition to challenges experienced by the general homeless population, such as limited education and unemployment, First Nations residents may also face struggles such as transitions from reserves to urban living, systemic racism and landlord discrimination, the report said.

Pefferlaw's Suzanne Smoke, a member of the Alderville First Nation and an advocate for missing and murdered Aboriginal women, agreed the root causes of homelessness of Aboriginal people are based on issues ranging from unemployment, low wages and lack of housing to colonization, racism, discrimination and cultural and geographic displacement of the reserve system.

We need to acknowledge the problems and address overlapping crises in education, health, housing, infrastructure and resources, she said.

"Government and Canadians need to take emergency action to address structural discrimination, especially the over-representation of Indigenous children in care, murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and the



Susie Kockerscheidt/Metroland

Suzanne Smoke, a member of the Alderville First Nation and an advocate for missing and murdered Aboriginal women, is concerned about a new report showing 12 per cent of homeless people in York Region are Aboriginal although First Nations people make up less than 1 per cent of the region's population.

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