



RURAL EMPHASIS CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

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DESCRIPTION

The Community Resource Centre (CRC) of North and Centre Wellington provides child and family programming and resources in order to support community members in a way that fosters self-sufficiency. The CRC recently recognized a gap in knowledge and awareness of youth vulnerability in their community, specifically in regard to the prevalence of rural youth homelessness in Wellington County. In order to address this gap, they launched the Rural Emphasis Campaign in collaboration with other community partners. The campaign aims to create a dialogue around the issue of and solutions for rural youth homelessness in Wellington County. The campaign, which began in September 2018, includes the seven municipalities, which are predominantly rural in nature. The CRC and community partners reached out to the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute's (CESI) Research Shop to conduct an evaluation of the progress of the campaign.

Primary Goal

The primary goal of this project is to evaluate the Rural Emphasis Campaign by determining if their goal of raising awareness of local youth homelessness among community members was achieved. The focus of this evaluation is to determine the extent of awareness, the effectiveness and impact of the campaign, as well as ways to improve the campaign's presence within the community.

Data Collection

This report includes data collected and analyzed from a survey distributed to residents of North and Centre Wellington. Two different versions were created: one version for those who are aware of the campaign, and another for those unaware of the campaign. The survey was developed using Qualtrics, an e-survey platform



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through the University of Guelph. The link was distributed via the CRC's social media platforms, networks, and at several community events including Music at the Museum in Centre Wellington, the Downtown Harriston Street Party, Breakfast at the Fair in Mapleton and the Fall Harvest Market in Minto. The survey was completed online by a total of 114 respondents.

KEY RESULTS

The following section highlights both quantitative and qualitative findings from survey responses. The results have been organized into the categories of who, where, what, why and how; this will ensure a clear understanding of the different aspects of the survey and how they revealed information about the Rural Emphasis Campaign.

WHO

Who did the Rural Emphasis Campaign reach?

In total, 114 people participated in the survey. Of those who participated, 84% (96) indicated they are residents of Wellington County, whereas 16% responded they live outside of Wellington County. Of the 114 respondents, 26% had already been aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign, whereas 74% had no previous exposure to the campaign.

Of those respondents who were previously aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign, 79% were female and 21% were male. The vast majority were adults aged between 25 and 54 years, while youth aged between 15 and 24 years were the minority. Specifically, 33% were between the ages of 45-54 years, 30% between 35 and 44 years, 26% between 25 and 34 years, while only 7% were between 15 and 24 years old and 4% over the age of 65.

Largely, similar demographic characteristics are observed from the respondents who were not aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign at the time of the survey. The majority of this 'unaware' group were women (85%), and respondents were also predominantly between the ages of 25-54. Specifically, 38% were between the ages of 45-54 years, 20% between 35 and 44 years, 20% between 25 and 34 years, while only 10% were between 15 and 24 years old and 12% over the age of 65.



WHERE

Where did those who were reached by the Rural Emphasis Campaign reside?

Of those aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign, the majority (80%) were residents of Wellington County. Therefore, those who were exposed to the campaign were predominantly from the communities it intended to reach. Most (57%) were from the Township of Centre Wellington, followed by Minto (17%), Mapleton (13%), Wellington North (9%), and Erin (4%). Notably, none of the respondents aware of the campaign at the time of the survey were from Guelph/Eramosa or Puslinch.

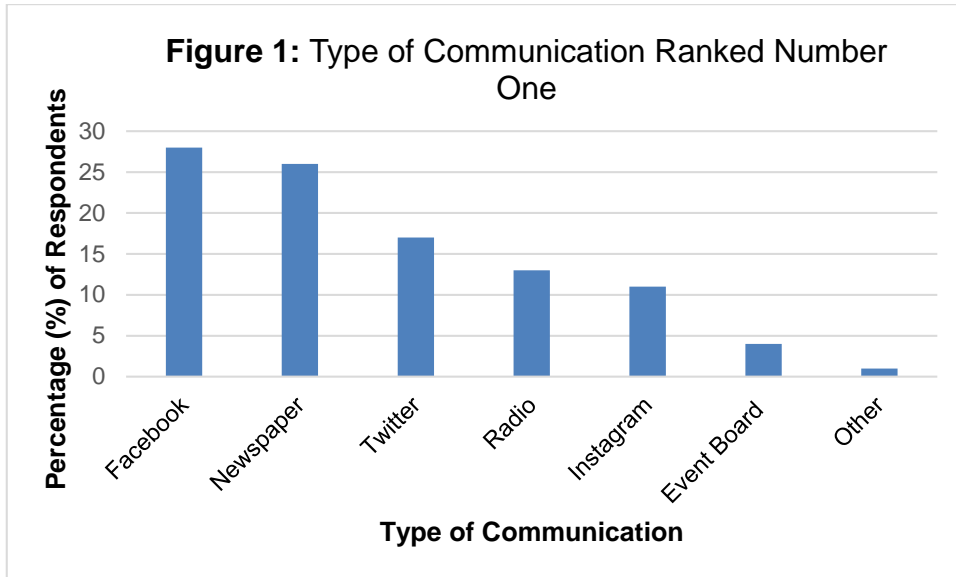
As mentioned above, 74% of total survey respondents were unaware of the Rural Emphasis campaign at the time of our survey, and 86% of this 'unaware' group were residents of Wellington County. The majority (61%) were from the Township of Centre Wellington, followed by Wellington North (14%), Guelph/Eramosa (9%), Erin (5%), Minto (4%), Mapleton (3%) and Other (4%).

WHAT

What did respondents find effective about the Rural Emphasis Campaign?

Of the respondents who were aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign, 74% indicated an increased understanding of rural youth homelessness as a result of the campaign. Among those with previous awareness of the Rural Emphasis campaign, individuals most widely reported having been exposed to campaign materials via social media (52%), followed by 'other' avenues (26%), which included through work, brochures and newspapers. Others noted they were exposed to the campaign through school talks (7%) and through school posters (15%).

Respondents who were unaware of the Rural Emphasis Campaign were asked to rank which type of communication would be most effective in reaching them in the future. Figure 1 depicts the prevalence by which each type of communication was ranked as a number one choice. Out of the 54 respondents who answered this question, Facebook and newspapers are the most requested form of communication.



In addition to the effectiveness of materials they were exposed to, the survey asked respondents specifically how informative they found the campaign materials. This question used a Net Promoter score for analysis which divides the responses into three categories based on the scale point (1-10) they selected.¹The majority of respondents (57%) were categorized as ‘passive.’ Over one third (39%) were categorized as ‘detractors’ and only 4% were categorized as ‘promoters.’ This indicates that the majority (96%) did not feel strongly enough about the campaign materials to give a point score of 9 or 10 and instead chose a point score of 8 or less.

¹ Respondents who give a scale point of 7 or 8 are categorized as ‘passive’ meaning that they are relatively neutral in their response; respondents who give a scale point between 0 and 6 are categorized as ‘detractors’ meaning that they were more likely to be less-than neutral; respondents who give a scale point of 9 or 10 are categorized as ‘promoters’ meaning that they were more likely to be positive.





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The survey also asked respondents how engaging they found the materials. The question also used the Net Promoter score for analysis. 43% of respondents were categorized as 'passive' having given a scale point of 7 or 8, indicating that they were relatively neutral in terms of how engaging they found the campaign. Equally, 43% of respondents were also categorized as 'detractors,' having given a score between 0 and 6, indicating that they were more likely to be less-than neutral. Finally, 13% were categorized as 'promoters,' having given a score of 9 or 10, meaning that they were more likely to hold a positive view in terms of how engaging they found the materials. Once again, while this does not necessarily show the exact opinion of the respondents in terms of what they found engaging about the materials, it does indicate that the majority (87%) did not feel strongly enough about the campaign materials to give a pointscore of 9 or 10 and instead chose a point score of 8 or less.

WHY

Why do people think youth homelessness is an issue?

Both people aware and unaware of the Rural Emphasis campaign were asked why they thought youth homelessness was an issue in their community. A few of those who were not aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign indicated that they did not think youth homelessness was an issue in their community. One respondent noted: "I am unsure about youth homelessness in my community. Although if there happens to be homeless youth within my community, it would be due to lack of resources provided to youth when it comes to homelessness".

The issue around a lack of resources was echoed by other respondents, including references to the difference between resources available in urban and rural areas, and how homelessness differs between those environments.

Some respondents stated that youth homelessness may be an issue due to unsupportive and unsafe family environments. For example, one respondent explained:

"Youth who do not have a safe home environment, or who are struggling with their family of origin, need options. When these are limited, youth are often faced with hard decisions to either stay in a situation that they know isn't safe or to risk being in new environments, with friends or moving to another town".



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The most commonly mentioned reason was lack of affordable housing for youth:

“I have seen some homeless people first hand on the street. In our smaller communities the housing prices are high or nothing available, young and older folks can't afford the housing cost these days, which in turn puts folks on the street.”

Based on responses, other reasons for rural youth homelessness included:

- a) Addiction and/or mental illness
- b) Pregnancy
- c) Struggles related to LGBTQ+ identity
- d) Lack of support for these personal issues
- e) Ineffective parenting
- f) Youth wanting freedom

HOW

How did the campaign impact people?

Respondents who were aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign were asked how it inspired them to become more engaged in combatting youth homelessness in their community. Responses included that it:

- a) Inspired them to learn more
- b) Made them more aware
- c) Encouraged them to find ways to help and take action
- d) Motivated them to share this information with others

It is clear that many respondents are increasingly aware that rural youth homelessness exists but are also now able to view homeless youth as a particular group of people who are in need of more support and funding. Furthermore, the Rural Emphasis campaign opened their eyes to *rural* youth homelessness in particular. For example, one respondent stated: “I have worked with youth homelessness for 25 years, primarily in larger urban areas. This campaign has inspired me to learn more about rural homelessness, and especially homelessness in my own community, and to look for ways in which I can use my experiences to assist those closer to home.”

The results of this study seem so suggest that many respondents have a higher awareness of youth homelessness due to the campaign as well as have an



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intention to become more involved with youth homelessness in their communities. Another interesting finding is the way in which the Rural Emphasis campaign inspired those to share their new-found awareness with others. For example, one respondent noted: "I talk about it with family and friends as people are shocked when you talk about. They don't believe it's happening in their community." This demonstrates that those who come in contact with the campaign are able to spread their awareness with others, an act that expands the reach of Rural Emphasis further.

FUTURE

What communication campaigns would people like to see used in the future?

Respondents who were aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign were asked what communication campaigns they would like to see used in the future. Their responses indicated that the following means of communication should be used in the future:

- a) Posters
- b) Town-talks
- c) Radio
- d) Snapchat
- e) Presentations at local councils
- f) Talks at schools

And, although Rural Emphasis was social-media based, respondents did request more social media presence.

What community-led initiatives would people like to see happen in the future?

Respondents who were both aware and unaware of the Rural Emphasis campaign were asked what sort of community-led initiatives they would like to see in their community going forward?

- More awareness and education (for the general public and youth)
- Youth forum with council members
- More affordable and transitional housing
- Addiction services
- Town-hall meetings about the issue



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- Collaboration between different services in the community
- Life skills and employment workshops for youth
- Increased access to counselling and mental health support
- More prevention efforts
- Encouraging stronger families
- Youth shelter/safe space for youth to hangout
- More outreach programs
- Staff who are qualified to help
- Host homes
- Community events to raise awareness and money to help with the issue

Just as respondents identified that the reasons for rural youth homelessness were unique given the context of a rural setting, respondents also identified that the solutions are equally unique. As one respondent explained: “I think awareness needs to be raised, as many think it’s a city problem, and I think solutions can be a bit trickier to determine in a rural setting.”

One of the most consistent responses was related to the need to establish youth shelters and more safe spaces for youth to find support in. As one respondent explained: “I’d love to see a safe, youth shelter in center wellington with proper intake for each youth, beds, incentives to get jobs, volunteers helping with meals”. Similarly, another respondent stated that: “Creation of safe spaces for youth. Peer supports, educational efforts to help the wider community understand the need to love and support our young people”.

What could the campaign do better?

Respondents who were aware of the Rural Emphasis campaign were asked what the campaign could do better. The four main answers were:

- a) Be more engaging for youth
- b) Attend more events and gatherings to raise awareness
- c) Engage in more activity on social media (i.e. polls, questions) to engage people
- d) Use real stories

In general, respondents felt that Rural Emphasis needs a broader reach, as one respondent explained: “I think it reached adults and people working in social



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services but I wonder if it reached the general youth population as much as it could have.”

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Based on the data collected and the results of this report, the following should be considered for future initiatives:

Demographics

- More youth engagement
 - Less than 7% of respondents were in the age bracket of 15-24.
 - Future campaigns or initiatives may wish to investigate pathways through which to reach this age bracket, especially considering the implications of youth homelessness on this age bracket.
 - It is likely that both the survey and the campaign did not reach a significant number of youth.
 - Although it may be very well possible that more youth were aware of the Rural Emphasis Campaign, this was not captured by our survey. Therefore, the findings outlined above mostly reflect the views of adult members of Wellington County rather than the views of youth themselves.
- Broader geographic reach
 - None of the respondents who were aware of the Rural Emphasis Campaign resided in Puslinch or Guelph/Eramosa.
 - While it is unclear exactly why the survey did not reach these geographic areas, a different kind of approach may need to be used by the Rural Emphasis campaign going forward to increase awareness of youth homelessness in these communities.
 - On the other hand, 51% of participants indicated they reside in the Township of Centre Wellington.
 - Out of these 58 total respondents who indicated they reside in Centre Wellington, only 13 respondents (22% of the total respondents from this township) had been exposed to the Rural Emphasis Campaign, a percentage that resembles that of the overall level of awareness within the entire sample
 - This means that while the Rural Emphasis campaign did not necessarily reach more people in Centre Wellington than in



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other areas of Wellington County, the survey itself did. So, why our survey reached more people in Centre Wellington than in other areas may be worth investigating in the future, as it may shed light on pathways through which the campaign can expand its reach both in Centre Wellington and other areas of Wellington County.

Campaign Materials

- Create materials that are both more engaging and informative
 - This will be important for ensuring that those who do come in contact with the Rural Emphasis Campaign both remember the campaign and find it useful. For example, respondents indicated that using real stories would make the campaign more engaging.
- Expand the means by which the materials are distributed
 - This will be important to reach different people and areas that were not reached as per our current survey suggests . For example, respondents indicated that posters, town-talks, radio, snapchat and presentations at local councils as well as schools were some ways in which information about rural youth homelessness could be shared in the future.
- Facilitate more engagement on social media platforms
 - Since the Rural Emphasis Campaign did involve social media platforms, it is important to make sure that this means of communication is being used effectively in reaching people in the future. Respondents indicated that the campaign could be more active on social media by engaging in polls and asking questions. This would simultaneously engage people while also providing important information. This would particularly be important for engaging more youth, as they are more likely to engage in these types of social media activities.

Community involvement

- Attend more events and gatherings in the community to spread awareness
 - This is important for ensuring that campaign materials are being distributed throughout all of North and Centre Wellington
 - This also presents the opportunity for community members to receive immediate responses to their questions, which is not



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necessarily available through social media, posters and other similar means of communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the primary goal of this project was to evaluate the Rural Emphasis Campaign by determining if their goal of raising awareness of local youth homelessness among community members was achieved. In order to do so, an e-survey was distributed to residents of North and Centre Wellington. This report has detailed the findings of that survey by organizing the results using a who, where, what, why and how framework; this structure presented the results in terms of who the Rural Emphasis Campaign reached, where those who were reached resided, what they found most effective about the campaign, how the campaign impacted them as well as why they thought rural youth homelessness in general was an issue. Following this, results related to respondent's opinions as to which direction future initiatives should take were analyzed. Finally, these results were combined to provide recommendations for future initiatives of a similar nature. These recommendations include considerations related to demographics, campaign materials and community involvement. Overall, it is clear from the survey results that community members of North and Centre Wellington have a variety of opinions about youth homelessness in general. The key to combatting rural youth homelessness in North and Centre Wellington will be ensuring that those with general knowledge are given specific information regarding rural youth homeless in their own community. It is our hope that the recommendations provided in this report will allow Rural Emphasis to adapt their campaign in the future to ensure that this information is widely disseminated to all those living in rural Wellington.

