

Homeless Count Jumps in North Van

**By Kelly McManus – North Shore Outlook –
Thursday, April 10, 2008**

The preliminary numbers from the 2008 Homeless Count show an increase of 19 per cent in Metro Vancouver's counted homeless population since 2005.

On the North Shore, the homeless population has increased by 148 per cent since 2005, according to the count, with a total number of 113 identified homeless on the North Shore. Administered by the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C. (SPARC), the count drew upon the services of 600 volunteers who conducted interviews over a 24-hour period, March 10-11.

Volunteers approached the potentially homeless with three screening questions. If the interviewees agreed to continue with questioning, volunteers asked an additional set of 17 questions and submitted the data to SPARC for analysis.

Robyn Newton, project manager with SPARC, explained that homeless surveys almost always undercount, mainly because some homeless people

do not want to identify themselves. During the Metro Vancouver survey, 398 people were perceived to be homeless but either refused to be interviewed or were sleeping.

"This (the count) is just the tip of the iceberg," said Newton. "Quite frankly, people have gotten really good at hiding ... who wants to be moved every few weeks?"

But the count, even if it does not encapsulate the full homeless population, is important for policy makers and service providers, explained Newton.

"If we built 100 low income units on the North Shore we know we could fill them," she explained.

John Langer, outreach worker with the Salvation Army on the North Shore, explained that workers in daily contact with the homeless population may have more accurate numbers. He estimates the population here sits somewhere around 230 individuals.

Almost three quarters of the 2,592 homeless counted in the 2008 Homeless Count were found in Vancouver and Surrey (including Delta and White Rock).