

Turtle Mountain Housing Authority

PRELIMINARY

TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN TO

**END
HOMELESSNESS**

February, 2008

Prepared for the

Turtle Mountain Housing Authority

by

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SUMMARY

There are at least 150 homeless individuals – including about 50 children and 100 adults -- among Tribal members on the Turtle Mountain reservation. This represents 16% of the homeless in North Dakota. There are no habitable vacant housing units available on the Turtle Mountain reservation; at least 20% of rental units are overcrowded, and 25% of rental units need replacement. Within two years, the Turtle Mountain community will need more than 600 new housing units.

38% or more of the Turtle Mountain community live in poverty and 65% are unemployed. Individuals and families with significant unmet needs related to employment, education, food, literacy, physical and mental health are at major risk for homelessness. When interrelated economic and social stresses continue unrelieved in a community, risk factors multiply, and often perpetuate a vicious cycle.

To break this chain once and for all, the Turtle Mountain community must mobilize to –

1. Increase the supply of permanent affordable housing to shelter homeless and at-risk families, with priority to those with children; and
2. Coordinate and enhance all services to homeless and at-risk individuals and families.

There are many well-educated, skilled, creative, compassionate and hard-working people throughout the community, and a widespread willingness to improve the community for the homeless, for the youth and elders, and for all members. The Turtle Mountain Housing Authority will work closely with the Turtle Mountain Tribal government, the Pathways to Prosperity initiative, and all concerned public and private agencies and individuals in the region to focus this extraordinary human resource on eliminating homelessness and its root causes in Turtle Mountain over the next ten years.

VISION and VALUES

Vision

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (the Tribe) is a deep-rooted multi-cultural rural community that respects and celebrates our rich and diverse cultural, social and spiritual heritages.

We are creative and unified in our collaborative approaches to assess and realize fully our many opportunities for sustainable and self-reliant personal, family, community and economic growth and development.

Our homes, farms, streets and places of work and recreation are safe, uncrowded, stable and thriving. Our children, youth, elders and families are well-loved, healthy and happy. Our lands and waters are well-cared for and abundant with life -- our farms and woodlands are clean, rich and productive; our lakes, streams, and the air we breathe are clean and clear.

Values

We value our rural quality of life -- safe, peaceful, stable, family and community oriented, caring, compassionate, empathetic,

We are concerned for the welfare of our fellow citizens; we are open, generous and welcoming to new people, industries and businesses; we value being proactive, positive, collaborative, cooperative and unified.

We believe in equality, social justice, service to others, advocating for those less fortunate;

We are understanding and respectful of cultural, social and spiritual diversity.

We value our tribal sovereignty and self-determination; and the legacy of hard work, determination, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency which we have received from our ancestors -- our legacy of helping each other survive and prosper in the face of formidable challenges.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A. Current Conditions, Needs, and Trends

1. Social and Economic Context

(Data from the US Census 2000, unless otherwise identified)

Population Characteristics

The Turtle Mountain Tribal population has been increasing at a rate of about 2% per year since at least 1980. In 2000, 42% of the approximately 10,000 tribal members living on or near the Turtle Mountain reservation were under the age of 18; about 53% were between the ages of 18 and 64; and about 5% were over the age of 64.

The number of households on the reservation more than doubled between 1980 and 2000 – from 984 to 2,381 households - while the average number of persons per household declined. Single women with children accounted for one of five households in the community in 2000.

Poverty, Unemployment and Income

Turtle Mountain Tribal members suffer from severe poverty and accompanying interrelated social stresses which have long threatened the social fabric of the community.

In 1999, the poverty rate among Tribal members in Rolette County on the Turtle Mountain Reservation and off-Reservation lands was 38% -- more than three times the rates for North Dakota (10.2%) and the U.S. (11.3%).

In 2001, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Labor Market report found the unemployment rate on the Turtle Mountain reservation to be 65% -- compared to 2.8% in North Dakota and 4.8% in the U.S. as a whole. Unemployment has almost certainly increased since 2001, given the regional and national economic slow-down.

The median household income on the Turtle Mountain reservation in 1999 was \$24,514 – compared to \$41,994 in the US as a whole. The average per capita income in 1999 was \$8,855 – less than half the US average of \$21,587.

Community Survey

In 2004, the Tribe's Pathways to Prosperity initiative conducted a survey of some 530 Tribal members to assess their priorities with respect to community conditions and needs.

Access to employment, housing, medical care and substance abuse prevention resources were consistently cited as the four most important community needs. Many people also identified the lack of land – of space to grow into, for new housing and other needed developments – as a major concern and constraint to community well-being.

2. Housing Needs

For decades, the Turtle Mountain community has suffered from a lack of adequate housing of all kinds -- rental and owned, apartments, single and multi-family dwellings.

Twenty years ago, in 1989, there were 561 families and individuals living in trailers in Rolette County; 318 housing units were overcrowded (with more than one person per room); and 286 housing units lacked complete plumbing (US Census 1990).

In 2005, a study commissioned by the Tribal Housing Authority found that there are ***no habitable vacant housing units available*** on the Turtle Mountain reservation. At least 20% of the households in rental housing live in overcrowded conditions, and 25% of the existing rental stock needs replacement. The need for new rental units by 2010 is estimated at 366 to 390; for homeownership 245 to 270 – ***more than 600 new housing units are needed*** (Maxfield Research, Inc., 2005).

According to the Tribe's Pathways to Prosperity Plan (2005) nationwide studies have shown that people living in substandard housing are more likely to have asthma and other chronic health conditions that affect their ability to succeed at school or work. Also, overcrowded housing has been linked clearly to both domestic violence and to reduced academic achievement.

There have been no new public housing units constructed on the reservation for over 20 years. One major obstacle is the lack of an accepted Land Use Plan for the Tribe, with careful identification of suitable housing sites and their coordination with availability of water, sewage disposal, utilities, roads and other community infrastructure and facilities.

3. Homelessness

Long-term homeless is defined as an individual or a family with a disabling condition who has been homeless continuously for at least one year or four or more times in the last three years... This includes individuals and families who are currently living "doubled up" with friends and family.

-- N.D. Interagency Council on Homelessness

A "disabling condition" is a physical, mental or other health condition that limits the kind or amount of work a person can do, or that limits a person's daily activities; and also, conditions that interfere with memory or daily decision making. Disabling conditions may include mental illness, substance abuse, developmental disability and chronic medical conditions.

According to the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People's Statewide Point-in-Time Survey of Homelessness, there were at least 140 homeless individuals – including about 50 children and 90 adults -- among Tribal members on the Turtle Mountain reservation in January, 2007. This represented about 90% of all homeless people in the state's Region 3, and some 16% (one-sixth) of all the homeless in North Dakota.

The homeless at Turtle Mountain are described as "precariously housed" -- that is, people who are at imminent risk of becoming literally homeless at any time. Often, they are temporarily doubled up with friends or relatives -- contributing to the overcrowding of many reservation homes.

According to the state survey, the homeless at Turtle Mountain tend to be younger than those statewide -- 35% of homeless households were headed by someone 21 or younger. None of the homeless at Turtle Mountain use transitional housing -- because none is available. 62% are unemployed; 38% are unable to locate an apartment.

According to the survey, at Turtle Mountain, homeless peoples' most common sources of income included family and friends (35%), general assistance (31%), and TANF (16%).

In regard to most needed services, the homeless at Turtle Mountain mention permanent housing (50%), transportation (45%), transitional housing (44%), emergency shelter (43%) and relocation assistance (41%) as being difficult to obtain. Other services reported as being hard to access include job training/placement (35%), clothing (34%) and housing planning (26%).

Only 1% of the homeless surveyed at Turtle Mountain reported that they use Case Management services.

4. Communication and Coordination among Social Service Agencies

Tribal families without housing, employment and income opportunities are in urgent need of consistent, coordinated, and high quality counseling, referrals and follow-up in the full spectrum of social services, including -- housing, job training, substance abuse prevention and treatment, physical and mental health care, child care, parenting and adult education -- as well as transportation to employment and education opportunities.

At present, there is not sufficient coordination and integration of these services. This issue is assessed at length below, in the sections on **Weaknesses** (p. 10) and on **Goals, Strategies and Objectives** (p. 11).

B. Strengths, Resources, Skills and Capabilities

Turtle Mountain Tribal lands are beautiful, with woodlands, pastures and farm lands, lakes, wetlands and streams, and still relatively abundant fish and wildlife. The air is clean, and the water of good quality. The community enjoys year-round outdoor recreational opportunities.

The Tribal population is diverse and multi-generational, with tight-knit families; and many active youth and elderly. Most community members are respectful and understanding of the diverse backgrounds and religious faiths of Tribal members. There are a large number of people with higher education in the community -- and also skilled craftspeople and creative people -- carpenters, builders, a wide variety of business people and entrepreneurs; also, gifted artists, musicians, and sculptors.

There are many good and compassionate people throughout the community -- at the Housing Authority, in the Tribal leadership and departments, at the College, with the Pathways to Prosperity initiative and their allies, at St. Ann's Parish, at the Indian Health Service and BIA, and in numerous agencies and private sector businesses -- who volunteer and work hard for the well-being of the entire community, often without recognition. There is a widespread willingness to improve the community for the youth, for elders, for the homeless, and for all members -- this extraordinary human resource must be focused.

The community has good schools and health care facilities; a volunteer fire department and ambulance crew; a variety of active churches, service and civic organizations; and our own radio station and newspaper. There is good police-community cooperation.

C. Opportunities

The Turtle Mountain Tribe has the major opportunity to build on its existing very strong sense of family and community; and on its legacy of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, of overcoming severe challenges to survive and prosper.

To end homelessness among Tribal members on the reservation and throughout Rolette County the Housing Authority, the Tribe, the Pathways to Prosperity initiative, and all community members are challenged to work together to reinvent and improve their systems of governance and of social service delivery.

To build more permanent housing, the Tribe must finalize its comprehensive Land Use Plan and identify suitable Housing sites – in close coordination with water, sewage, electricity, roads and other community infrastructure and facility planning.

Resources must be mobilized to design and build energy-efficient housing for owners and renters. Innovative financing and educational approaches are also needed to expand and strengthen home ownership – for example, the Habitat for Humanity model of building equity.

And once the Homeless are housed adequately, supportive social services must be coordinated and provided to help the (former) Homeless to obtain and keep their new homes, jobs, families, health and well-being.

In 2005, the Tribe's Pathways to Prosperity initiative identified several excellent opportunities relating to Housing, including --

- contracting with a design firm with expertise in "green buildings" to meet the needs of low-income families, cut utility costs, and protect the natural environment;
- incorporating locally available materials and skills; working with local construction firms to build the housing; creating a Housing Construction Apprenticeship Program in cooperation with the College; use 'green' products and construction techniques;
- developing a modular housing program -- build component parts for new homes at Turtle Mountain Manufacturing or other local facilities.

The Housing Authority, Tribe, Pathways, and other agencies and partners must now work together to realize these opportunities.

D. Weaknesses and Internal Problems

1. Root Causes of Homelessness

To address and prevent Homelessness, we must understand the effects of severe poverty as a risk factor. When interrelated economic and social stresses continue unrelieved in a community, risk factors multiply, and may perpetuate a vicious cycle; for example –

*stress → substance abuse → behavior destructive of self, family, and community → **Homelessness** → more stress → more substance abuse → more destructive behavior ...*

These cycles often continue from generation to generation, unless the causes of stress are identified and dealt with -- the cycles broken and replaced with positive self-amplifying cycles of healing and well-being.

2. Coordination is Essential

"... Prevention services <whether for Homelessness or Substance Abuse...> are not likely to be successful for families with significant unmet needs related to food, shelter, employment, literacy, and physical and mental health...basic needs must be met during and after intervention if the prevention program is to be successful.."

"... Because families in crisis are likely to receive services from multiple agencies, prevention service providers should be linked with social and other service agencies. Interagency collaboration and coordination, and integrated case management are essential. Formal agreements or similar mechanisms are necessary to spell out roles and services ..."

-- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
Substance Abuse, 1998 (emphasis added)

The lack of adequate communication, cooperation, and coordination among and between the many and diverse social service agencies and jurisdictions is a major challenge -- recognized in the Tribe's 1998 Empowerment Zone Strategic Plan, 2000 Renewal Community Plan, and 2005 Pathways to Prosperity Plan.

Agencies need to communicate and work together better ***within*** the Housing, Employment, Substance Abuse, Children and Family Services, Education, Health, and Law Enforcement sectors, as well as ***between*** those sectors.

Part of the difficulty is that these agencies work under different Tribal, federal, state, county, private, and faith-based mandates. Some services overlap and are duplicated; in other case, agencies compete for the same increasingly scarce human and financial resources.

Thus, comprehensive approaches to end and prevent Homelessness must ensure that basic family needs are met. While these needs start with safe and un-crowded housing, they also include, at a minimum: adequate nutritious food; employment opportunities, with attendant training in employability and job-related skills;; adequate physical and mental health care; safe and competent child care services; literacy, GED and related basic adult education; and transportation to employment, education, social and health-care opportunities.

The desired and needed comprehensive approach requires clear and effective inter-agency agreements and fully adequate communication and collaboration in all areas of service design, delivery, information management or evaluation.

Again, this is true both **within** particular sectors (e.g., close coordination among all health care or education or law enforcement agencies), and also **between** sectors (e.g., it is rare that law enforcement and health care and economic development agencies actually work closely together, rather than in separate fragmented efforts).

GOALS, STRATEGIES and OBJECTIVES

A. Preliminary Problem Ranking

1. Absence of Homeless shelters, short-term and transitional housing, and supportive, permanent housing;
2. Fragmented uncoordinated systems of care and service provision, and inadequate service capacity, including inadequate resources for discharge planning from jails, substance abuse counseling and treatment;
3. Difficulty of Homeless in knowing about and accessing available community resources;
4. Difficulties in engaging the long-term Homeless population in the solutions.

B. Mission

Provide permanent supportive housing for all at-risk and homeless individuals and families

C. Goals

1. Increase supply of permanent affordable housing to shelter homeless and at-risk families, with priority to those with children
2. Coordinate and enhance services to Homeless and at-risk individuals and families

D. Strategies

Overall, the Housing Authority, Tribe, Pathways, and other agencies and partners will (1) strengthen Collaborative Approaches -- try to minimize or eliminate the 'business as usual' fragmented and uncoordinated efforts of separate agencies; and (2) research and apply State-of-the-Art Information and Practices ("people do the best they can with the information they have"), to inform and empower all decision-making and service delivery

1. Collaborative approaches to build more Housing

- a. Identify, 'map', evaluate and coordinate local efforts and resources. Strengthen and replicate the most effective programs and delivery systems.
- b. Strengthen partnerships with federal (USDA, HUD, VA, BIA) and state agencies (BoND, NDHFA, etc.); with private sector (banks, Habitat for Humanity, other volunteer-based groups).
- c. Integrate vocational training programs of schools and College into housing renovation and construction.
- d. Research and develop manufactured housing construction enterprise to meet local needs first.
- e. Research and apply as useful energy-efficient designs, appropriate uses of renewable energies and of locally-available building materials.

2. Collaborative approaches to provide all needed supportive services to Homeless

- a. Identify, 'map', evaluate and coordinate all social, educational, economic, cultural and public safety programs and resources needed by or relevant to Homeless needs. Strengthen and replicate the most effective programs and delivery systems.
- b. Establish clear links between short- and long-term housing for Homeless and supportive services including substance abuse treatment and prevention counseling; employment training, placements and services; mental and physical health screening and services; child-care; transportation; parenting; whole family recreation; and others.
- c. Educate and engage the active compassion and participation of the entire community in understanding risk and protective factors relating to Homelessness; assessing needs; formulating coordinated integrative approaches; and contributing their own particular expertise and knowledge as resource people, tutors and mentors to the Homeless.

4. Objectives

Goal 1. Increase supply of permanent affordable housing to shelter homeless and at-risk families, with priority to those with children

Objective 1: Improve intra- and inter-Agency coordination

Establish community-wide Housing Coordination Council (build on the Tribe's Pathways to Prosperity "Housing Task Force") that includes management and field staff from all Tribal, federal, state, county, faith-based, public and private agencies, companies and individuals with resources and abilities to finance, plan, design, renovate, repair and build housing, including group shelters and apartments.

Outcome Measures: Formation of Council; effective Council action to plan, coordinate and enhance number of shelter spaces and housing repaired, renovated and built; number of families served.

Objective 2: Mobilize capital financing for construction

- a. Identify all potential spaces in the community which could be renovated or repaired, and rented or made available for emergency shelter and/or rental to homeless or at-risk families.
- b. Identify and use capital funds, including access to Low Income Housing Tax Credits, to increase the supply (and/or preserve) emergency and transitional housing for homeless families with children;

Outcome Measures : number of families, of children served, number of units developed or preserved for homeless families and for survivors of domestic violence.

Goal 2. Coordinate and enhance services to homeless and at-risk families, with priority to those with children

Objective 1: Coordinate resources and build agency capacity

- a. **Establish community-wide Homeless Coordination Council** that includes management and field staff from Tribal, federal, state, county, faith-based, public and private agencies serving Housing, Jobs, Education, Social Service, Health, Law Enforcement, and government policy-makers.
- b. **Assess community needs**; identify homeless individuals and families and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Outcome Measures: Formation of Council; effective Council action to coordinate and enhance all services to homeless and at-risk families; number of families identified and served; number and type of service provided;

- c. **Develop/adopt curriculum** and train agency staff in issues identification, availability of resources, and resolution strategies.
- d. **Coordinate with all area schools** so that school homeless liaisons will routinely connect and collaborate with their local social service partners and other agencies to increase awareness/access so that homeless children and youth will be appropriately identified and served;
- e. **Provide and coordinate networking and training** and professional development opportunities to strengthen local staff capacities to serve the educational needs of homeless children and youth

Objective 2. Prioritize, coordinate and enhance continuum of services to all homeless and at-risk households --

- a. Rental assistance or mediation :** identify and use general funds to provide up to two years of rental assistance to return homeless families to affordable housing, and to provide operating subsidies for transitional housing; provide landlord-tenant mediation as needed;
- b. Emergency shelter care, transitional and permanent housing :** establish community-based emergency shelter program (emergency shelter for up to 90 days – until homeless can find and move into transitional or permanent housing);
- c. Cash and food assistance :** provide accessible and timely ongoing cash and food assistance benefits to homeless families with children.
- d. Train and provide case managers** to counsel and work with homeless and at-risk individuals and families to establish long- and short-term goals to transition to permanent, stable housing and self-sufficiency.
- e. Financial and employment services:** coordinate, provide and follow-up on financial management mentoring, employment training and job skills, life skills, and transportation assistance to homeless and at-risk individuals in need;
- f. Family support services :** coordinate, provide, and follow-up on parenting and early learning support, childcare, and foster care mentoring and services to homeless and at-risk women and families in need;
- g. Physical and Mental Health :** Coordinate, provide, and follow-up on physical health, mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence services to homeless and at-risk individuals in need --
 - i. Strengthen and clarify access to medical and dental services.
 - ii. Strengthen and clarify access to mental health services for homeless adults and children.
 - iii. Strengthen substance abuse assessment and treatment services for homeless and at-risk women with children, youth, and families
 - iv. Strengthen assessment and treatment for family violence, abuse and neglect, as needed.

Outcome Measures Number of individuals and families served.

MONITORING and EVALUATION

This **Preliminary Ten-Year Strategic Plan to End Homelessness** is not written in stone. It is a dynamic document, to be monitored and refined as changing circumstances and improved information indicate.

The elimination of homelessness – and of the risk of homelessness -- in the Turtle Mountain community depends absolutely on strong communication and sustained, effective and cooperative action among many public and private agencies.

As these agencies establish the Councils to coordinate Housing Construction and the Delivery of Services, and as they review and refine the Goals, Strategies, Objectives and Activities contained in this Plan, they will work together to prepare a detailed Evaluation component.

The Evaluation Plan will set forth –

- how and when the Strategic Plan will be reviewed and updated;
- how all participants will assess and evaluate process -- how activities are carried out;
- how all participants will assess and evaluate short-term measurable outcomes (results), will refine specific indicators to be used; and who will collect what data by when, and in what format;
- how all participants will assess and evaluate long-term impacts from the accomplishment of the major Goals; and
- how all participants will inform and involve the community.

To end homelessness in the Turtle Mountain community in ten years, we will need to mobilize and strengthen partnerships among government agencies, service providers, faith-based organizations, and many other organizations. We must make better use of all existing program resources, and leverage available funds to build permanent supportive housing, and help each homeless and at-risk household to address their as they are ready.

The Turtle Mountain Housing Authority looks forward to the opportunity to work with the Tribe and the Pathways to Prosperity initiative to facilitate and sustain this long-needed process.