

Preventing, Reducing, and Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada

7-Cities Conference - May 7, 2015

Dr. Alex Abramovich

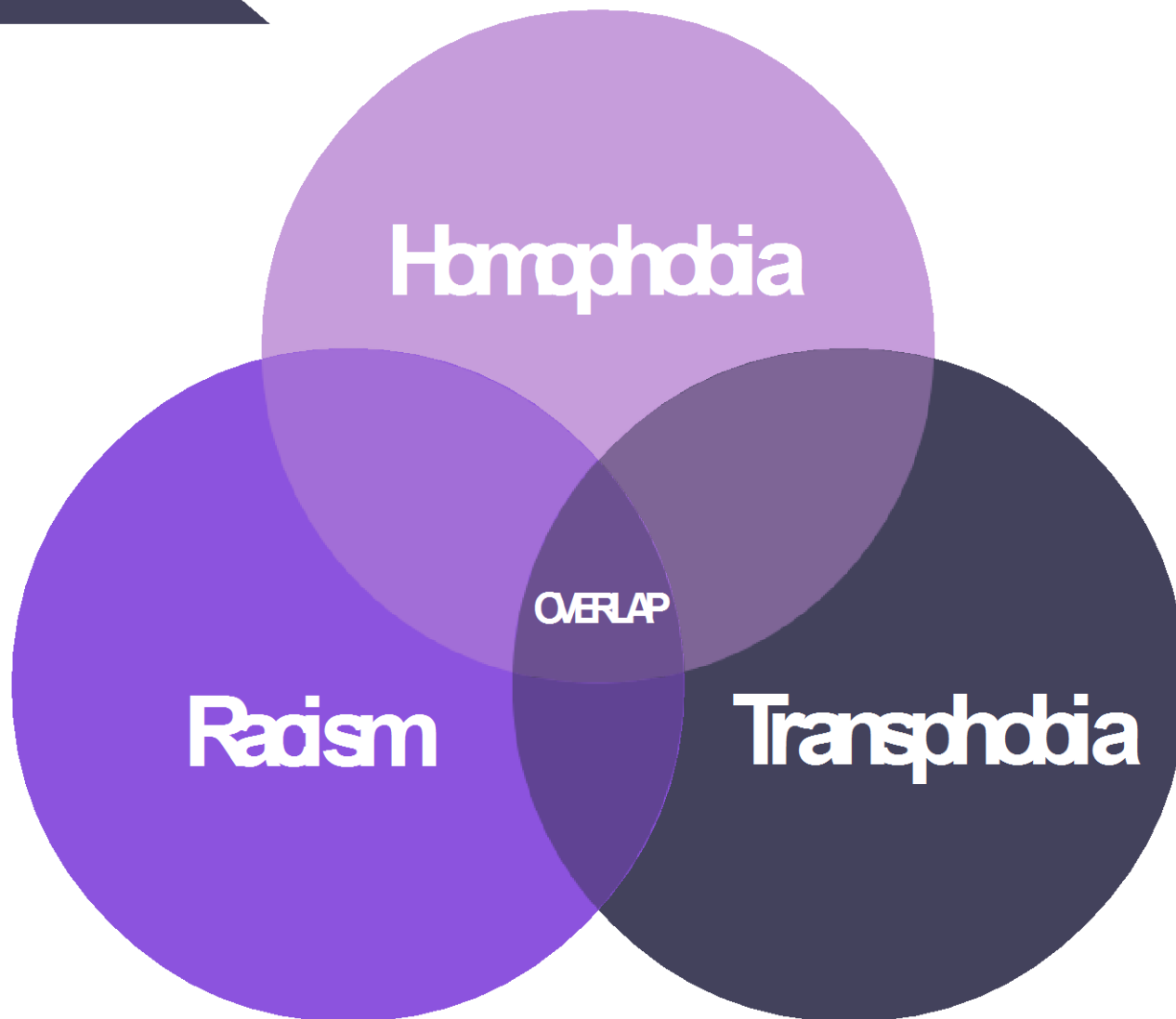
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

@AlexAbramovich



Everyone deserves a safe bed.

Intersectionality of Oppression



Toronto




13 shelters
Capacity of 529 beds

1.5-2K
Homeless youth
on any given night



65- 150K
homeless youth
in Canada

25- 40% of homeless youth
identify as LGBTQ2S



But there are NO shelters for
LGBTQ2S youth in Canada

Homelessness in Alberta

2014



6,663 Individuals experienced homelessness across 7 cities

Calgary
50%



Edmonton
35%

▼ 16% less than 2008

20% Younger than 24

0.8%

Self-identified Transgender *

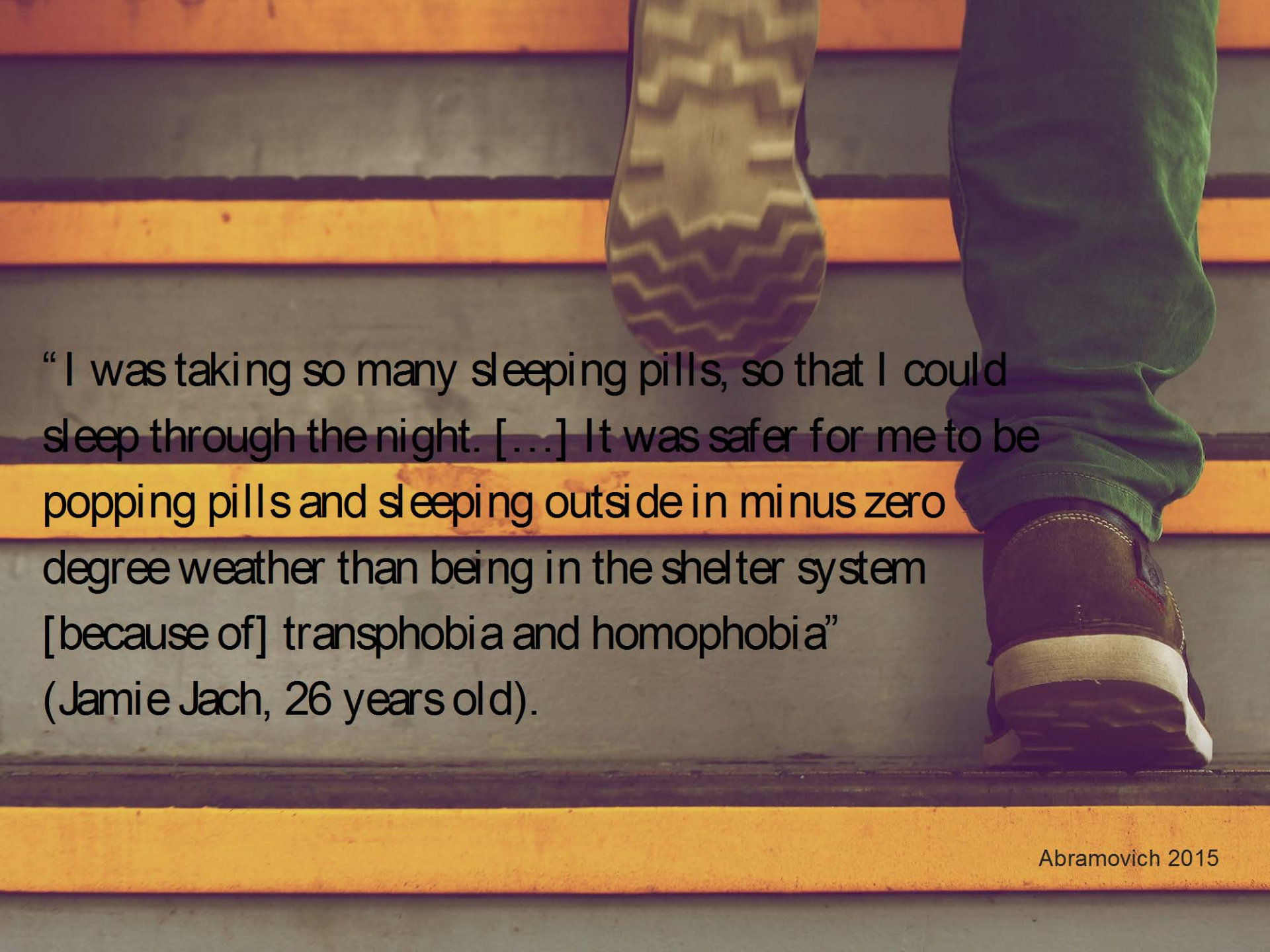
30%

Self-identified Aboriginal



may not be accurate
representation
of trans population



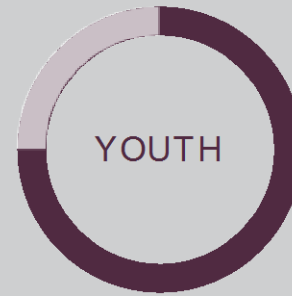
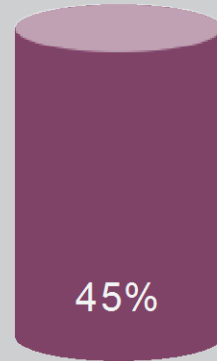
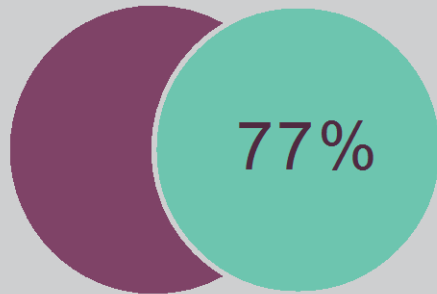
A photograph of a person's legs and feet standing on a set of stairs. The person is wearing green pants and dark sneakers with white soles. The stairs have orange-painted risers and grey treads. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“I was taking so many sleeping pills, so that I could sleep through the night. [...] It was safer for me to be popping pills and sleeping outside in minus zero degree weather than being in the shelter system [because of] transphobia and homophobia”
(Jamie Jach, 26 years old).

Increased Risk

MENTAL HEALTH

FINDINGS FROM TRANSPULSE STUDY (2010)



1

77% of trans people
in Ontario had seriously considered suicide

2

45% of trans people
in Ontario had attempted suicide

3

Trans youth
at the greatest risk of suicidality

4

Family support
decreases risk of suicide by 93%



Normalized Oppression

& remote communities

- Minimal knowledge of LGBTQ2S
homeless youth experiences in rural
communities

That's so...

heinous hideous
dime contemptible
uncouth hapless foolish
corrupt narrow
preposterous inauspicious
unfortunate ridiculous
trashy atrocious
deplorable

...and
you choose
gay?

Buy a dictionary.

Trans and gender
non-conforming youth
are frequently

**rejected by shelters
based on their
gender identity.**

- Alex Abramovich



NOV. 20 - **TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE**

Institutional rules
and policies that do
not consider trans
people often end up

**erasing trans
people from
existence.**

- Alex Abramovich



NOV. 20 - **TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE**



Institutional Erasure

- The assumption that all people born female will identify as women, & all people born male will identify as men
- Erasure begins when youth first enter the shelter & undergo a formal intake process
- The use of “male” & “female” dismisses the possibility that trans people could even exist
- Trans & gender-nonconforming people are left out of key forms, reports, and statistics

Prioritizing youth homelessness

Strategies that focus on longer-term solutions

Focus on helping youth find & keep housing

Separate plan for youth experiencing homelessness that prioritizes subpopulations of youth (e.g. LGBTQ2S) to ensure the population is served more appropriately (e.g. Alberta Youth Plan)

Prevention Strategies

Preventing LGBTQ2S youth from becoming homeless may not be possible, therefore, we need to shift our thinking from traditional “prevention”

More emphasis on preventing LGBTQ youth from becoming adults experiencing chronic homelessness

Working collaboratively across systems



Mon, Mar 16, 2015 04:21 pm

Toronto › News

Toronto budget approves shelter beds for LGBT homeless youth

YMCA's Sprott House will open first space later this year

by HG Watson



Inside Canada's First LGBTQ Transitional Housing Program

After 10 long years of battling for a homeless shelter for LGBTQ youth, advocates will see their work come to fruition this summer.

BY ERICA LENTI



Abramovich 2015

Towards a Standardized Model

- ▶ Mandatory & ongoing LGBTQ2S cultural competency training for all staff
- ▶ Inclusive intake forms
- ▶ Close consideration of physical environment of services
- ▶ Appropriate, diverse, & inclusive resources and learning tools

It is time to support LGBTQ2S youth
experiencing homelessness in Canada



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