Endaamnaan:

Homes for all Nations

canadian observatory on homelessness

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Canadian Observatory on Homelessness

On behalf of the
Assembly of First Nations

A First Nations Homelessness Literature Review

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Acknowledgements	4
Preface	5
Methodology	6
Review of Literature	12
Definitions of Home and Homelessness	14
Current State of First Nations Homelessness	21
Forms of First Nations Homelessness	23
Experiences of First Nations Homelessness	34
Factors Influencing Homelessness	40
Approaches to First Nations Homelessness	42
Recommendations	47
Conclusion	57

Executive Summary

This review is an Assembly of First Nations (AFN) initiative to support a First Nations action plan through a systematic analysis of First Nations homelessness in Canada. This literature review identifies various gaps in research, influencing the need for First Nations-specific recommendations to address homelessness.

This literature review aims to address[1] the following four areas of inquiry:

1) **Understanding First Nations Homelessness:** How are the concepts of home and homelessness understood? How do First Nations' descriptions differ from Western definitions? What is the current state of First Nations homelessness in Canada? What are the various forms of First Nations homelessness?

2) **Experiences of First Nations Homelessness:** How do First Nations people experience homelessness? How do factors such as location (on and off-reserve), migration, gender, and age impact experiences of homelessness?

3) **Factors Influencing Homelessness:** Why are First Nations people overrepresented in the homelessness population? What are the root causes of this overrepresentation? How is homelessness for First Nations people connected to the legacy of residential schools, discrimination, colonization, intergenerational trauma, physical and mental health, and systemic racism and sexism?

4) **Approaches to First Nations Homelessness:** What solutions or preventative strategies are there to address homelessness for First Nations people? What works? What are innovative ways to better understand and address homelessness among First Nations?

Additionally, this literature review aims to address research gaps and provide recommendations for rectifying the disproportionate rate of homelessness that First Nations people in Canada experience. This literature review aims to unpack definitions of homelessness, experiences of First Nations homelessness, factors that influence First Nations homelessness, and approaches to addressing First Nations homelessness. There is significant overlap throughout the themes discussed in this

1. Due to gaps in existing literature, there is much more work to be done to thoroughly address these areas of inquiry.

review as experiences of homelessness are complex and interrelated. This review aims to ensure that First Nations homelessness is increasingly prioritized by government and non-government bodies moving forward. This review may be of value to First Nations people, First Nations organizations, service providers, policymakers, government agencies, and community partners.

Acknowledgements

The **Canadian Observatory on Homelessness** (COH) is located at York University in the City of Toronto, situated in the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. Furthermore,

> York University recognizes that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region. (York University, 2021)

The reviewer wishes to acknowledge and thank the following members of our Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC): Elder Alex Jacobs, Betty Edel (End Homelessness Winnipeg), Tracey Doherty (Reaching Home), Fran Hunt-Jinnouchi (Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness), Bernice Kamano (Portland Hotel Society), Cindy-Sue Montana McCormack (Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership), Samantha Restoule (Wabano), Marcel Swain (Lu'Ma), Steve Teekens (Na-Me-Res), Pauletta Tremblett (Nunatsiavut). The reviewer also wishes to thank Sade Auger, Monique Fry, Jillian Mah, Ryan Mallon, Fayyaz Samii, and Taylor Sparklingeyes from HelpSeeker. We would also like to thank those from the COH who have supported this project in immeasurable ways: Stephen Gaetz, Justine Levesque, Allyson Marsolais, Erika Morton, and Carter Sehn.

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Preface

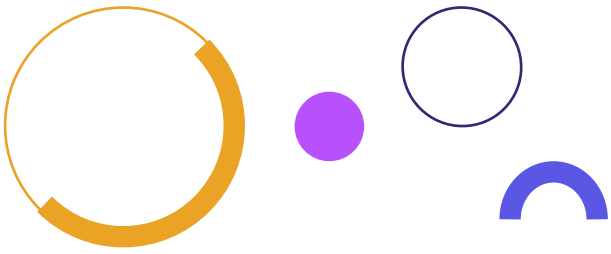
Directed by the **Assembly of First Nations** (AFN), this review is part of a larger initiative to establish a First Nations Homelessness Action Plan. The findings and recommendations were developed to reflect the reality of First Nations homelessness. This review will synthesize the existing literature on First Nations homelessness in Canada.

The AFN is a long-standing advocate for improving housing for First Nations people. The AFN envisions a society where all First Nations people living on or away from their community have a right to shelter and to be provided with an opportunity to access safe, secure, adequate, and affordable housing.

In 2019, the AFN increased the scope of their work with a resolution from the Chiefs-in-Assembly's Resolution no. 79/2019 titled *Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off-Reserve.*

Today, the AFN's portfolio includes the future development of a *National First Nations Homelessness Strategy* that is aligned with the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy.

This scoping literature review on First Nations homelessness aims to bolster the important work carried out by First Nations people. First Nations people have the right to exercise self-determination in providing care to their people regardless of where they reside and are increasingly searching for methods to do so that reflect First Nations people's inherent and Treaty rights, title, and jurisdiction. Considering the disproportionate rate at which First Nations people experience homelessness on and off-reserve, further research and advocacy are required to mobilize long-lasting change.



Methodology

The lead author of this review is Jessica Rumboldt, Postdoctoral Fellow in Indigenous Homelessness at the COH. With the help of the Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC), AFN, and colleagues at the COH, this review takes a phased approach.

The key phases and activities of this project are as follows:

Phase 1: Engagement & Informational Gathering

Objective Setting and Creation of the Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC): Prior to the start of the project, we met with the project team to define the objectives and methodology, project schedule, and expected outputs. We also engaged our partners to create the Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC).

IAC Meeting 1: During the objective setting meeting, we coordinated a schedule of monthly meetings and ceremony plans with the project team and the IAC.

Elder Engagement and Ceremony: Elder Alex Jacobs from Whitefish Lake First Nation led the first IAC meeting in ceremony.

Review of Background Materials: We reviewed relevant information, data, and reports as established by the AFN.

Phase 2: Literature Review - Data Collection

Annotated Bibliography: We completed an annotated bibliography for all literature collected in the initial research stages.

IAC Meeting 2: We conducted monthly check-ins with the IAC to discuss the literature that was collected and the next steps for completing summaries of each of the relevant articles.

Phase 3: Literature Review - Analysis

Summaries of Literature: We completed summaries of all relevant articles and paid particular attention to themes that emerged from the literature.

Analysis: A thematic analysis of the retrieved data/literature was conducted.

IAC Meeting 3: We conducted check-ins with the IAC to discuss the results from the analysis.

Phase 4: Final Reporting

Final Report: We created the final report based upon the findings from the literature review.

IAC Meeting 4: We conducted check-ins with the IAC to contextualize the recommendations stemming from the results from our analysis.

Knowledge Mobilization/Dissemination Strategy: COH's communications team worked collaboratively with the project team to design and mobilize a final report.

Indigenous Advisory Circle

Phase 1 of the project involved creating an Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC), planning of ceremony, objective setting, and reviewing background literature. To commence this work, we asked Elder Alex Jacobs to guide us in a ceremony. The COH understood that it could not conduct this work without proper engagement and collaboration with Indigenous communities. The COH had an existing IAC that agreed to support this project and help inform Indigenous protocols and ways of knowing. As a result, the following agencies agreed to participate: Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership, End Homelessness Winnipeg, Na-Me-Res, the Portland Hotel Society, and Wabano. In addition, monthly virtual meetings were held to receive ongoing input throughout the various stages of the project to guide the approach, methodology, recommendations, and deliverables.

Data Collection

From engagement with the IAC, an annotated bibliography was created using the following keywords for the literature search:

> **Indigenous/First Nations/Aboriginal/Native homelessness in Canada; housing; experiences of homelessness; causes of homelessness; urban/rural homelessness; understanding homelessness; housing and health; housing outreach; definition of homelessness; poverty in Canada; street community census; homeless shelters in Canada; homelessness and mental illness; causes of homelessness; housing interventions; Aboriginal People Canada; Indigenous People Canada; First Nations; Status Indians; non-Status Indians; homeless publications; housing; on-reserve; off-reserve; Two-Spirit; reserve; culturally-appropriate; services; street-involved; Indigenous children/families/men/women/youth**

During the literature search, we prioritized non-academic literature, including technical reports, position papers, policy reviews, and news articles (especially from First Nations organizations). The research timeframe reviewed literature from 2000 to 2021. We acquired literature through searching mainstream search engines (e.g., Google and Google Scholar), academic databases (e.g., PubMed, Semantic Scholar, Social Science Research Network, York University Library), non-profit organization websites, and government websites. Additional resources were located through the references provided in the bibliographies of the articles and reports collected. Qualitative literature was highlighted as the search aimed to emphasize perspectives, opinions, and experiences of First Nations people.

Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography was created to provide a synopsis of each source that would inform this work. The first draft of the annotated bibliography was presented to the IAC and consisted of over 100 entries. It was noted that the annotated bibliography was a working document and additional resources should be added at various stages throughout the project to ensure that all relevant information was included. Each citation provided in the annotated bibliography was colour-coded to identify the major themes presented in each article. Sources were removed if they were deemed to be irrelevant or not appropriate for this project. After creating the first annotated bibliography (which contained general Indigenous homelessness literature), an additional annotated bibliography was created that specifically

identified literature that spoke to experiences of homelessness among First Nations people. Going through the sources was ongoing and an essential step throughout each phase of the project.

Summaries of Literature & Development of Themes

A summary of each article was written even if it did not exclusively focus on First Nations. As Patrick (2014) claims, it is essential to incorporate literature that may not necessarily focus on First Nations/Indigenous homelessness for various reasons. First Nations/Indigenous homelessness "...is part of the broader issues of homelessness, housing inadequacy and poverty in Canada. The causes of, and solutions to, homelessness are largely structural and must be understood before discussing segments of the population" (Patrick, 2014, p. 9). All information was reviewed that was deemed relevant to addressing the areas of inquiry being considered. After the summaries were completed for each of the relevant articles, they were organized by theme. Table 1 presents the original themes and sub-themes that were considered during the literature search. It is important to note that there were significant gaps in the existing literature for some of the themes, including experiences of First Nations 2SLGBTQIA+ and services not being accessed.

Table 1: Original Literature Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
Gender	Experiences of First Nations 2SLGBTQIA+
	Experiences of First Nations Women
	Experiences of First Nations Men
	Parenthood
Age	Experiences of First Nations Youth
	Experiences of First Nations Adults
	Experiences of First Nations Seniors
Location	Urban Experiences
	Rural Experiences
	Migration

Approaches To Homelessness	Housing First Approach
	Outreach and Support
	Cultural Safety, First Nations-Led Programs, and Services
	Best Practices and Strengths-Based Approaches
	Services Not Being Accessed
Understanding Homelessness	Intersecting Sites of Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination
	Current Statistics
	Definitions Of Homelessness
	First Nations Perspectives and Definitions of "Home"
Factors Influencing Homelessness	Experiences of Trauma and Intergenerational Trauma
	Residential School System
	Poverty
	Health and Wellbeing
	Criminal Justice System
	Mental Health
	Substance Use
	Child Welfare System
	Employment
	Systemic Racism, Barriers, and Public Systems

After careful consideration and refinement of the search to focus on First Nations homelessness specifically, some of the themes collapsed into one another. Table 2 highlights the themes and sub-themes that were explored in the literature search focusing specifically on First Nations homelessness.

Table 2: Final Literature Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
Understanding First Nations Homelessness	First Nations in Canada (Statistics)
	Definitions of Home and Homelessness
	Status of First Nations Homelessness
	Forms of First Nations Homelessness
Gender	Experiences of First Nations 2SLGBTQIA+
	Experiences of First Nations Women
	Experiences of First Nations Men
Age	Experiences of First Nations Youth
	Experiences of First Nations Adults
	Experiences of First Nations Elders
Location	Rural Experiences and First Nations Homelessness On-Reserve
	Urban Experiences and First Nations Homelessness Off-Reserve
	Migration
Factors Influencing Homelessness	Residential School System and Intergenerational Trauma
	Physical and Mental Health (Including Substance Use)
	Systemic Racism, Barriers, and Public Systems (Including Education, Employment, Criminal Justice System, Child Welfare System, Poverty)
Approaches to First Nations Homelessness	Best Practices and Strengths-Based Approaches[2]
	Services Not Being Accessed

The themes *gender*, *age*, and *location* are more focused on the experiences of First Nations individuals, communities, and families. This is compared to the other themes (e.g., *residential school system or systemic racism, barriers, and public systems*) that look more to broad interacting systems and factors influencing homelessness. These themes and sub-themes play a crucial role in understanding and addressing First Nations homelessness in a Canadian context.

2. There are gaps in existing literature on the analysis of First Nations strengths-based approaches, as well as services not being accessed. It is recommended that future research addresses best practices, strengths-based approaches, and housing/homelessness services that are not being accessed by First Nations people in Canada.

Review of Literature

Distinctions-based Approach

Generally, Indigenous people have been viewed as wards of the state by the Canadian government since confederation, which has led to the managing, defining, and documenting of Indigenous people in general and their rights (Akee & Feir, 2018). **Under The Constitution Act 1982, there are three legally defined populations of Indigenous people in Canada – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Akee & Feir, 2018).** The term First Nations refers to those who identify as such and may not be recognized under the *Indian Act* (Peters, 1998). The term First Nations became widely used due to political activism for Indigenous peoples' rights in Canada. According to the Assembly of First Nations (2013):

> The First Nations population represents over 50 distinct nations and language groups and is made up of 634 First Nations communities (or 'reserves'). First Nations have had a special relationship with the Canadian Crown since the mid-18th century, when their inherent rights to land and state benefits were manifested in various Treaties – many of which have yet to be realized. (p. 19)

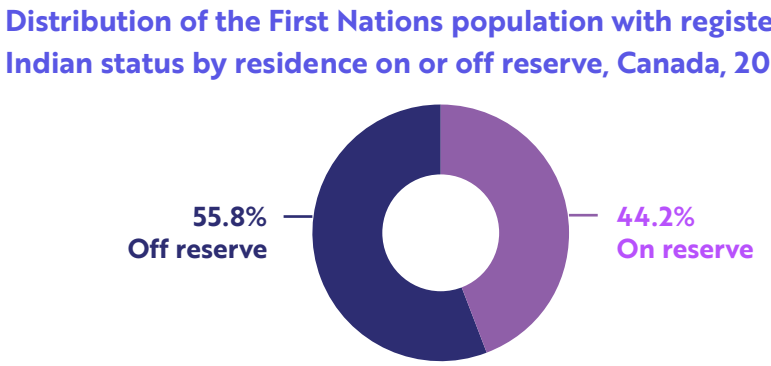
While it is also important to acknowledge the legal infrastructures that impact Métis and Inuit people, research suggests that the infrastructures governing Status First Nations are the most pervasive and systematic (Akee & Feir, 2018).

In 1951, the federal government developed a centralized Indian Register to officially record all Status First Nations (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), 2010). The Indian Register led to band membership that requires all persons to be designated as Status First Nations, regardless of where they reside (INAC, 2010). Certain rights and advantages are bestowed with legal definitions of First Nations Indian Status, including the right to vote in band elections, reside on-reserve, and own or inherit land on-reserve (Akee & Feir, 2018; Furi & Wherrett, 2003). On the other hand, other rights and advantages accessible to non-status individuals in Canada have historically been limited by First Nations Indian Status (Akee & Feir, 2018; Furi & Wherrett, 2003). Research on homelessness among First Nations compared to non-Indigenous people requires a distinct approach given the difficult living and housing conditions in First Nations communities, First Nations migratory patterns, and a colonial legacy that destabilized traditional social systems (Harvey, 2016). With direction from the AFN, a distinction-based approach was taken for this review to better address First Nations' experiences of homelessness both on and off-reserve.

First Nations in Canada

Statistics Canada (2019) suggests that there were 1,673,780 Indigenous persons in Canada in 2016, accounting for 4.9% of the total population. The vast majority of Indigenous people identified as one of three groups: First Nations, Métis, or Inuk (Inuit) (Statistics Canada, 2019). More specifically, 58.4% (977,235) of Canada's Indigenous population were First Nations, 35.1% (587,545) were Métis, and 3.9% (65,025) were Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2019)[3]. The term "First Nations people" refers to both Status and non-Status Indians (Statistics Canada, 2021). In Canada, there are over 630 First Nations communities representing over 50 nations and 50 Indigenous languages (Statistics Canada, 2021). Figure 1 below presents information on the distribution of the First Nations population with registered Indian status on or off-reserve in 2016.

Figure 1: Distribution of the First Nations with Registered Indian Status



Statistics Canada. (2017). *Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario.

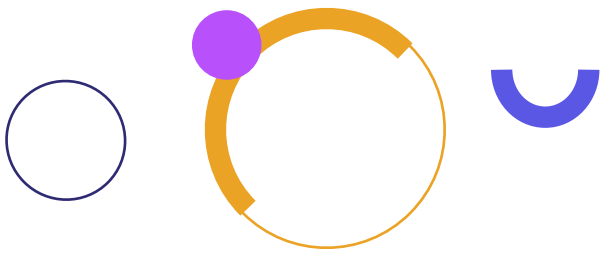
The *Indian Act* defines Registered or Treaty Indian status as 76.2% (744,855) of the population of First Nations people (Statistics Canada, 2019). The remaining 23.8% of the First Nations population (232,380 people) were not registered under the law. The percentage of First Nations who do not have Treaty or Registered Indian Status has increased by 75.1% from 2006 to 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). From 2006 to 2016, the population of First Nations individuals increased by 39.3% (Statistics Canada, 2017). This includes those registered or identified as Treaty Indians under the *Indian Act* and those not registered (Statistics Canada, 2017). In 2016, 29.2% of First Nations people were 14 years old or younger, which was more than four times the proportion of those 65 and older (6.4%) (Statistics Canada, 2017).

3. There were 21,305 persons who reported more than one Aboriginal identification, and 22,670 people who were categorized as having an Aboriginal identity that was not mentioned elsewhere, in addition to those who reported a single Aboriginal identity (Statistics Canada, 2019).

In 2016, 44.2% of First Nations people with Treaty or Registered Indian Status resided on-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2017). Between 2006 and 2016, the number of First Nations living on-reserve and off-reserve increased (Statistics Canada, 2017). The 2016 Census of Population showed that over 50% of First Nations people reside in the Western provinces of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). Specifically, 11.7% of First Nations live in Saskatchewan, 13.4% live in Manitoba, 14% live in Alberta, and 17.7% live in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2017). Of the provinces in Canada, Ontario has the largest population, representing 24.2% of all First Nations in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). In comparison, 2.1% of the population of First Nations live in the territories, and 7.5% live in the Atlantic provinces (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Definitions of Home and Homelessness

While this review explicitly focuses on First Nations, most of the research on perceptions of home and homelessness apply to Indigenous people and ways of knowing across Canada. A First Nations-specific understanding of home and homelessness is the impetus behind this literature review. The existing research falls short of arriving at an understanding of home and homelessness for First Nations people and it is important to consider this gap. Concepts of home and homelessness are relatively contemporary, gaining prominence in discourses and policies in the second part of the 13th century (Bahr, 1968; Jackson, 1985; Thistle, 2017; Weissman, 2013). Studies suggest that homelessness became a significant policy concern as recently as the late 1980s and 1990s due to cuts to social services that provided low-income Canadians with housing and social assistance (Thistle, 2017). Social cuts drove thousands of individuals onto the streets and into shelters due to rapid decreases in social assistance and divestment in affordable housing options (Thistle, 2017). These changes resulted in a considerable surge in homelessness across Canada. Furthermore, the federal government delegated their responsibility in the governance and funding of housing to the provinces (Hulchanski, 2003). In doing so, funding allocated to housing was significantly limited, leading to an overreliance on the charitable sector to fill this void. Given the gradual increase in homelessness as a result of these policy changes, the visibility of homelessness has drawn increased public attention to the issue (Thistle, 2017).



There are significant differences between Indigenous and Western definitions of home and homelessness. Appropriate First Nations housing alternatives may be better identified and prioritized with a clear grasp of how home and homelessness are defined among First Nations people. Recognizing First Nations' definitions of home and homelessness would enable First Nations people, governments, and service providers to allocate culturally appropriate resources to First Nations, particularly those in crisis (Thistle, 2017). There is a lack of understanding of First Nations' definitions of home and homelessness presented in existing literature, which is a gap that needs to be addressed.

Home

In Canadian society, home is described from a Western and colonial perspective and significantly differs from an Indigenous understanding of home (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, & Distasio, 2015). A Western perspective recognizes home as an "...animate social force that was generative of proper gender roles, work habits, and domestic ways" (Homeward Trust Edmonton, Blue Quills First Nations College, & IRM Research and Evaluation, 2015, p. 19). As Thistle (2017) suggests, the Western understanding of home is frequently connected to a physical structure or simply a "brick and mortar building" (p. 14). Instead, Indigenous accounts of home often highlight networks of responsibilities and connections (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, & Distasio, 2015; Memmott, Long, Chambers, & Spring, 2003; Thistle, 2017; Turner, 2008; Turner, 2014). This includes relationships with plants, animals, elements, and spirits (Memmott et. al., 2003; Thistle, 2017; Turner, 2008; Turner, 2014). It also includes ties to the land, water, Earth, and territories, as well as connections to human kinship networks, teachings, songs, names, stories, and ancestors (Memmott et. al., 2003; Thistle, 2017; Turner, 2008; Turner, 2014).

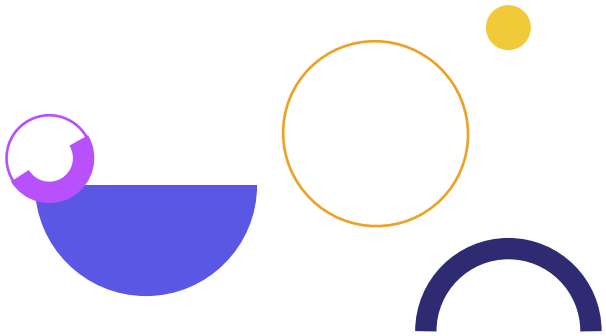
The concepts, routines, and behaviours that are culturally rooted in creating a home are often referred to as Indigenous homemaking practices (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Mallett, 2004). These practices may be relational, material, spiritual, and emotional (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Mallett, 2004). Christensen (2016) finds that the "...dynamics of homemaking [are] integral to pathways into and out of homelessness, and specifically [illustrate] the role and importance of family in Indigenous health and home" (p. 86). Individual factors influencing homelessness for Indigenous people are exacerbated when Indigenous homemaking methods are not reflected in Western housing policies (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Christensen, 2016; Mallett, 2004).

Although First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities have diverse definitions and understandings of home, they share common characteristics (Christensen, 2016). Christensen (2016) suggests that for Indigenous people in general, home is not reduced to "...four walls and a roof" (p. 87). Instead, the notion of home is often associated with deep cultural connections, as well as physical and mental well-being (Christensen, 2016). When these connections are removed or lacking, Indigenous people may feel disconnected or homeless (Christensen, 2013).

Indigenous homelessness can only be understood as a consequence of colonial practices that displaced and dispossessed Indigenous people from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors, and stories. To provide a description of First Nations-specific experiences of homelessness, Kauppi et al. (2013) reference Faries (2012) to suggest:

> Traditionally, in the pre-contact era before the influence of Europeans, no Cree person was ever homeless. All members of the community had a home because our society was based on large extended families in which everyone was cared for and included. The traditional society was egalitarian in the sense that everything was shared. But because of what has happened with colonization, we, as a race of people, have become homeless. This is mainly because our traditional homelands, which are now known as Canada, have all been taken away from us. We don't even have legal access to any of our traditional homelands. So, a race of people, on a macro level, has been left homeless. If you look at it historically, all of us are homeless through colonization and the oppression that came with it. (p. 44)

Colonial forces have also been mobilized to eliminate essential Indigenous ceremonial practices and cultural institutions that contributed to what defines a home (e.g., ceremony, languages, and matriarchy) (Christensen, 2013).



Homelessness

An understanding of homelessness cannot be contained to a home or physical structure (Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016). Homelessness is not a static situation for many people but rather a fluid experience where housing status is precarious (Gaetz et al., 2012). The definition of homelessness developed by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) (2012) describes homelessness as:

> ...the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing (Gaetz et al., 2012).

The Canadian Definition of Homelessness encompasses a four-part typology (COH, 2012):

1) **Unsheltered:** living in places that are unsuitable for human habitation.

2) **Emergency sheltered:** living in overnight shelters intended for crises or those escaping violence.

3) **Provisionally accommodated:** individuals with temporary accommodation or accommodation that lacks tenancy or security.

4) **At risk of homelessness:** encompasses those who are not homeless but are in a precarious housing or economic situation.

Figure 2 on the following page presents a detailed typology of the Canadian Definition of Homelessness.

Figure 2: Typology of the Canadian Definition of Homelessness

Operational Category	Living Situation		Generic Definition
1. UNSHELTERED This includes people who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, except during extreme weather conditions. In most cases, people are staying in places that are not designed for or fit for human habitation.	1.1	**People living in public or private spaces without consent or contract**	• Public space, such as sidewalks, squares, parks, forests, etc. • Private space and vacant buildings (squatting)
	1.2	**People living in places not intended for permanent human habitation**	• Living in cars or other vehicles • Living in garages, attics, closets or buildings not designed for habitation • People in makeshift shelters, shacks or tents
2. EMERGENCY SHELTERED This refers to people who, because they cannot secure permanent housing, are accessing emergency shelter and system supports, generally provided at no cost or minimal cost to the user. Such accommodation represents an institutional response to homelessness provided by government, non-profit, faith based organizations and / or volunteers.	2.1	**Emergency overnight shelters for people who are homeless**	These facilities are designed to meet the immediate needs of people who are homeless. Such short-term emergency shelters may target specific sub-populations, including women, families, youth or Aboriginal persons, for instance. These shelters typically have minimal eligibility criteria, offer shared sleeping facilities and amenities, and often expect clients to leave in the morning. They may or may not offer food, clothing or other services. Some emergency shelters allow people to stay on an ongoing basis while others are short term and are set up to respond to special circumstances, such as extreme weather.
	2.2	**Shelters for individuals/ families impacted by family violence**	
	2.3	**Emergency shelter for people fleeing a natural disaster or destruction of accommodation due to fires, floods, etc.**	
3. PROVISIONALLY ACCOMMODATED This describes situations in which people, who are technically homeless and without permanent shelter, access accommodation that offers no prospect of permanence. Those who are provisionally accommodated may be accessing temporary housing provided by government or the non-profit sector, or may have independently made arrangements for short-term accommodation.	3.1	**Interim Housing for people who are homeless**	Interim housing is a systems-supported form of housing that is meant to bridge the gap between unsheltered homelessness or emergency accommodation and permanent housing.
	3.2	**People living temporarily with others, but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing**	Often referred to as 'couch surfers' or the 'hidden homeless', this describes people who stay with friends, family, or even strangers.
	3.3	**People accessing short term, temporary rental accommodations without security of tenure**	In some cases people who are homeless make temporary rental arrangements, such as staying in motels, hostels, rooming houses, etc.
	3.4	**People in institutional care who lack permanent housing arrangements**	People who may transition into homelessness upon release from: Penal institutions; Medical / mental health institutions; Residential treatment programs or withdrawal management centers; Children's institutions / group homes.
	3.5	**Accommodation / reception centers for recently arrived immigrants and refugees**	Prior to securing their own housing, recently arrived immigrants and refugees may be temporarily housed while receiving settlement support and orientation to life in Canada.

Figure 2: Typology of the Canadian Definition of Homelessness (Continued)

Operational Category	Living Situation		Generic Definition
4. AT-RISK OF HOMELESSNESS **Although not technically homeless, this includes individuals or families whose current housing situations are dangerously lacking security or stability, and so are considered to be at-risk of homelessness. They are living in housing that is intended for permanent human habitation, and could potentially be permanent (as opposed to those who are provisionally accommodated). However, as a result of external hardship, poverty, personal crisis, discrimination, a lack of other available and affordable housing, and / or the inappropriateness of their current housing (which may be overcrowded or does not meet public health and safety standards) residents may be "at risk" of homelessness.**	**4.1**	**People at imminent risk of homelessness**	Those whose employment is precarious • Those experiencing sudden unemployment • Households facing eviction • Housing with transitional supports about to be discontinued • People with severe and persistent mental illness, active addictions, substance use, and / or behavioural issues • Breakdown in family relations • People facing, or living in direct fear, of violence / abuse
	4.2	**Individuals and families who are precariously housed**	Those who face challenges that may or may not leave them homeless in the immediate or near future. CMHC defines a household as being in *core housing need* if its housing: "falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards)."

Source: Gaetz, S.; Barr, C.; Friesen, A.; Harris, B.; Hill, C.; Kovacs-Burns, K.; Pauly, B.; Pearce, B.; Turner, A.; Marsolais, A. (2012). *Canadian Definition of Homelessness*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

Unpacking the Canadian definition, Thistle (2017) recharacterizes this articulation of homelessness as "settler homelessness". The Canadian definition of homelessness does not account for the role colonial violence has played and continues to play in homelessness among Indigenous and First Nations people. For this reason, a settler definition of homelessness cannot address the distinct experiences of homelessness that Indigenous people and specifically First Nations people face (Thistle, 2017). There is a need for a First Nations-specific definition of homelessness as existing definitions are largely pan-Indigenous.

Indigenous homelessness is defined by the Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness (ASCHH) (2012) as individuals, families, or communities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who lack secure, permanent, suitable housing, or the imminent possibility, means, or capacity to get such accommodation. Thus, Indigenous

homelessness is not characterized as a lack of residence structure, as the settler definition implies (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017). Instead, Indigenous homelessness is more robustly articulated and understood through the lens of an Indigenous worldview (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017). Through this lens, individuals, families, and communities who have been cut off from their connections to land, water, place, family, kin, social networks, animals, cultures, languages, and identities fall within a multifaceted definition of Indigenous homelessness (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017). Importantly, individuals experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally, or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017). Growing literature asserts:

> Indigenous homelessness is a product of a breakdown of healthy Indigenous relationships brought to bear by historic processes of colonization, such as land displacements, disconnection from identity, loss of cultures, linguicide, domicide, and a loss of Indigenous cosmology, among others. Indigenous youth, in many ways, have taken the brunt of Canadian nation state-building projects, expressions of which are found in the institutions such as residential schools and child welfare. Taking Indigenous children and placing them into state-run institutions historically and contemporarily has caused a deep cultural destabilization, destroyed institutions responsible for the socialization of Indigenous people, and has had the effect of traumatizing generations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Dealing with both loss of kin and identity, coupled with the extreme emotional and psychological pressures of being in care, and underlying intergenerational trauma, are key contributors to Indigenous youth homelessness. (Kidd & Gaetz, 2019, p. 164)

Thistle (2017) suggests that "...Indigenous homelessness [...] is best understood as the outcome of historically constructed and ongoing settler colonization and racism that have displaced and dispossessed First Nations, Métis and Inuit people from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors and stories" (p. 6). For instance, departing from a settler definition that describes home as a fixed, physical structure, select First Nations in southern Alberta find a mobile lifestyle more closely reflects traditional life customary to Indigenous people in the prairies (Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016). Furthermore,

> It is within this context that mobility emerges as an important channel of spiritual renewal, of (re)asserting territorial sovereignty, and of ensuring economic reproduction. It is also within this context that ideas such as mobility, home, and land have arguably taken on different meanings. What we see unfolding in southern Alberta, then, is a process prevalent in Canada:

> homelands mapped by First Nations over centuries of ecological interaction are supplanted by an "authoritative" colonial map that reflects recently introduced, foreign concepts of property ownership and land utilization (McManus 2005).

Young (1998) introduces the concept of "spiritual homelessness" to describe Indigenous homelessness, which covers the impact of being cut off from spirituality, identity, and knowledge anchored in culture. Memmott and Chambers (2008) expanded this definition as:

> ... a state arising from separation from traditional land, and from family and kinship networks (noted earlier as a result of historical governmental policies) and involving a crisis of personal identity wherein a person's understanding or knowledge of how they relate to country, family, and Aboriginal identity systems is confused or lacking. (p. 2)

Current State of First Nations Homelessness

Indigenous homelessness, in general, is an issue in Canada that has endured for more than 200 years yet has received little attention (Thistle, 2017). Even though Indigenous people make up just 4% of the Canadian population, they experience homelessness at disproportionate rates to their population size (Belanger et al., 2013; Harvey, 2016; Sider, 2005). Gaetz et al. (2014) suggest:

> While making up 4.3% of the total Canadian population, [Indigenous] people form a disproportionate percentage of the homeless population in communities across the country. They make up 16% of the homeless population in Toronto, 30% in Ottawa, 46% in Saskatoon, over 60% in Winnipeg and over 70% in Regina. In Canada, one cannot really discuss homelessness—and its solutions—without explicitly addressing Aboriginal homelessness. (p. 60)

Although accounting for just 0.6% of the Montreal population, Indigenous people make up 10% of the homeless population (Latimer, McGregor, Méthot, & Smith, 2015).

The overrepresentation of Indigenous people among the homeless population largely stems from: a lack of culturally appropriate policies and practices in addressing Indigenous homelessness; broken treaty promises; a lack of supports for Indigenous people in rural and urban settings; inadequate housing and tenancies on and off-reserve; and the state's failure to deliver vital infrastructure, healthcare, education, and employment services and opportunities to Indigenous communities (Thistle, 2017). Canada's legacy of colonialism has deprived First Nations of the ability to satisfy

their housing requirements (Akee & Feir, 2018). This has left many First Nations entirely reliant on government programs due to inadequate access to financial resources, capacity development, and reliable governance structures for housing. As a result, housing has become a source of contention and discord in many First Nations communities (Akee & Feir, 2018). Rather than addressing First Nations housing needs, First Nations housing delivery has been judged on how well it meets government financial and program goals (Akee & Feir, 2018). Consequently, there is a pressing need for better housing and living circumstances for First Nations people throughout Canada (Akee & Feir, 2018).

While making up 4.3% of the total Canadian population, Indigenous people form a disproportionate percentage of the homeless population in communities across the country.

Montreal: 10%

Toronto: 16%

Ottawa: 30%

Saskatoon: 46%

Winnipeg: Over 60%

Regina: Over 70%

Sources: Gaetz et. al (2014); Latimer, McGregor, Méthot, & Smith (2015).

Housing for First Nations people has been dispersed among federal, provincial, municipal, and territorial governments (Akee & Feir, 2018). This has resulted in a divide between on-reserve and off-reserve housing, causing many First Nations people to fall between the cracks (Akee & Feir, 2018). According to the AFN's National Housing Strategy, federal housing programs are not meeting the needs of First Nations. Moreover, "in addition to government funding, First Nations and their residents are expected to secure funding from other sources for their housing needs, including shelter charges and private sector loans" (p. 2). According to the First Nations Market Housing Fund, "budget 2007 confirmed an investment of $300 million to create a First Nations Market Housing Fund (FNMHF) designed to give First Nations people living on-reserve a better chance to own their own home by providing a backstop for private-sector loans. The Government of Canada expects that the Fund will assist with the generation of 25,000 housing units over ten years." This goal has been substantially exaggerated since current evidence suggests that just two homes have been built as a result of this initiative in its five years of operation. In the absence of a unified plan from the federal government, it is up to First Nations to chart a course for future First Nations housing, both on and off-reserve.

First Nations housing and related infrastructure services are moving toward self-de-

termination and governance by First Nations (Akee & Feir, 2018). Due to a shortage of housing on-reserve and off-reserve, First Nations who are homeless have significant challenges in locating appropriate and affordable accommodation and getting the essential medical and mental health treatment they require (Akee & Feir, 2018). First Nations youth, Elders, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and those living in the North are the most affected by these living circumstances (Akee & Feir, 2018).

Each year, the number of First Nations people who experience homelessness rises, creating a growing need for national-level estimates that are more reliable and thorough (Akee & Feir, 2018; Belanger et al., 2013; Schiff et al., 2016). Akee and Feir (2018) argue that the construction of national-level estimates of homelessness rates is essential for Status First Nations, the largest population of Indigenous people in Canada. Akee and Feir (2018) have found that approximately 12% of Status First Nations in Canada are either institutionalized or homeless. For these reasons, it is crucial to consider the unique experiences and state of homelessness connected to location (Akee & Feir, 2018). There is a growing need to acknowledge rural experiences, urban experiences, the significance of migration, and the unique forms of First Nations homelessness.

Forms of First Nations Homelessness

Housing conditions among First Nations people are far below those of broader Canadian society, a situation that has been extensively documented for years (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996; CMHC, 2004; CMHC, 2011; AFNQL, 2014). The majority of First Nations in Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996; Peters and Robillard, 2009; Peters, 2012; Patrick, 2015) are plagued with chronic housing shortages which contribute to overcrowding, the prevalence of hazardous mould, and a lack of affordable housing (Harvey, 2016).

Gaps in research on Indigenous homelessness make it difficult to assess the scope and severity of the issue. Consequently, this lack of data on experiences of homelessness among First Nations people impacts policy advocacy and service provision (Akee & Feir, 2018). *The Portrait of Homelessness in First Nations Communities in Quebec* finds that First Nations communities experience several forms of homelessness (Harvey, 2016). Harvey (2016) sheds light on the extent of the phenomenon, profiles of at-risk populations, and contributing factors to various types of Indigenous homelessness. The First Nations Labour and Employment Development Survey (FNLED)[4] (2019) suggests that over 35.2% of First Nations adults have had to temporarily reside in their

4. The First Nations Information Governance Centre coordinates and funds the FNLED, which is a collaborative project of ten First Nations organizations in Canada (FNIGC).

vehicle or with friends or family due to no alternative options. Of this population, 36.5% indicated they experienced hidden homelessness for more than a year, while 21.2% experienced hidden homelessness for less than a month (Harvey, 2016). The goal of the FNLED is to collect data on significant aspects connected to both Western and traditional understandings of social and economic well-being to better understand employment and labour situations in First Nations communities.

According to the Canadian Definition of Homelessness (2017):

> ... the "hidden homelessness" population falls under the category of "provisionally accommodated." It refers specifically to people who live "temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing." Often known as "couch surfing," this describes people who are staying with relatives, friends, neighbours or strangers because they have no other option. They generally are not paying rent and it is not a sustainable long-term living arrangement but they do not have the ability to secure their own permanent housing immediately or in the near future. This population is considered to be "hidden" because they usually do not access homeless supports and services even though they are improperly or inadequately housed. Because they do not access services, they do not show up on standard statistics regarding homelessness. (p. 1).

According to the FNLED (2019), 8.8% of First Nations have been visibly homeless at least once, in addition to receiving temporary housing from a family member or friend. Instead of focusing on hidden homelessness, most of the studies addressed visible homelessness in shelters or on the streets (Peters & Robillard, 2007).

Visible Homelessness

Various homelessness studies in Canada have indicated that Indigenous people are overrepresented among the visibly homeless, especially in recent years (Harvey, 2016). This representation reflects the significant disparity between Indigenous peoples' social and economic circumstances compared to the rest of Canada (Harvey, 2016). However, data on this disparity is limited (Belanger et al., 2013; Schiff, Schiff, Turner, & Bernard, 2016; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), 2015). In *Portrait of Homelessness in First Nations Communities in Quebec*, Harvey (2016) provides a review of experiences of homelessness among First Nations people. Loss of an individual's residence was frequently a result of family network concerns caused by mental health challenges compounded with drug and alcohol use patterns. Visible homelessness among First Nations people is more prevalent in the summer months

as individuals are more likely to couch surf in the winter months. A lack of homelessness services in the territories further contributes to migration off-reserve in the winter (Harvey, 2016, p. 4). The number of individuals experiencing visible homelessness places a considerable strain on already limited services, particularly health clinics and nursing stations which are inadequately staffed (Harvey, 2016).

Among First Nations people in Quebec, young males ages 18 to 35 represent the group most at risk of experiencing visible homelessness (Harvey, 2016). However, Grantham (2021) suggests that there appears to be no link between visible homelessness and an individual's age, education, geographic location, gender, mental health, or employment status. FNLED (2019) found that 9.9% of all First Nations adults in Canada have experienced visible homelessness, meaning they have lived in an abandoned building, shelter, or on the street (and are visible to others) (Harvey, 2016). Of this population, 34.8% suggested that they had been visibly homeless for over a year, while 36.9% indicated that they had been visibly homeless for under one month (Harvey, 2016). Further, 48.3% of First Nations people who have experienced visible homelessness have a criminal record (Harvey, 2016). In comparison, 14.6% of those who have not experienced visible homelessness have a criminal record (Harvey, 2016).

Houselessness

Houselessness refers to a state of homelessness where an individual has no place to live following release from incarceration or rehabilitative services (Harvey, 2016). This term may be used to refer to homelessness in general as an attempt to reframe the issue as a lack of adequate shelter. First Nations men of all ages are most likely to lose their house as a result of incarceration (Harvey, 2016). Houselessness further refers to instances where an individual is left houseless as a result of fleeing intimate partner violence or 'aging out' of youth care (Harvey, 2016). Among this population, young First Nations women with children and older populations are most vulnerable to experiencing violence, thus are at greater risk of houselessness (Harvey, 2016).

Hidden Homelessness

Another form of homelessness impacting First Nations people is hidden homelessness, which includes extreme overcrowding, unfit housing, and insecure housing (couch surfing) (Harvey, 2016; Harvey, 2016). Grantham (2021) states "the issue of hidden homelessness and its potential impacts are not well known in the communities and as a result are often overlooked" (p. 7). In Canadian cities, however, hidden homelessness accounts for a significant portion of homelessness among First Nations people

(Peters, 2012). Harvey (2016) states that the scale of the issue "...can be explained by the effects of the housing crisis in most of the territories, in a context of strong family values that materialize into a sense of solidarity among extended family as well as the absence of the notion of property in traditional First Nations cultures" (p. 4). To ensure policy addresses this crisis and funding is appropriately allocated to relevant services, it is critical to promote public awareness about the rate at which First Nations people experience hidden homelessness (Harvey, 2016).

Extreme Overcrowding

In 2019, Leilani Farha, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing condemned Canada's treatment of First Nations people living on reserve. In a report, Farha (2019) discusses on-reserve housing conditions as a violation of an adequate right to housing. This chronic undersupply of adequate housing contributes to homelessness among First Nations people who live on reserve (Peters & Robillard, 2007). Accessing assistance and resources for people experiencing homelessness in rural towns is challenging at best, given the scarcity of such services (Pelletier, 2000). According to Aubrey, Currie, and Pinsent (1996):

> Rural areas may lack services that are specifically for the homeless, or they may take a different form. The absolute homeless in rural areas may be small in comparison to the relative homeless (McLaughlin, 1987). (p. 6-7)

First Nations homelessness was investigated at the Cowessess First Nation reserve[5] community in southeast Saskatchewan as part of the SIIT Urban First Nations Without Homes in Saskatchewan study project. The following is an extract from the study that depicts homelessness in a First Nations community:

> Sometimes when the children grow up and they are staying at home past 18 years of age and they have a spouse by the time they are 19 and raising a family, that's how we end up with 2 or 3 families in a house. So the funding first of all, doesn't address the backlog that I have and it certainly doesn't address the future problems that we are going to have with housing. Out of 240 people in the next 4 years, if you are asking if a quarter of them are going to be past the age of 18, going to be young adults. In the 4 years after that, so 8 years total another 60, that's another 120 adult persons, just on the reserve. If half of those 120 have a child, that's another 60 or so in the next 8 years, that's 180 and the housing situation is allocated to 6 houses

5. Cowessess is located just off of the Trans-Canada Highway less than two hours from Regina, Saskatchewan.

every second or third year. There is no way that it will keep up with the demand we have now. There is absolutely no way that the units that are in need of repair can ever be upgraded. Even minimally, unfortunately those units are going to be on Cowessess for a long time and people are going to consider them liveable because that's the standard on the reserve. Those units if they were in the city would have been condemned a long time ago, but we still have people living in those units. Everyday apparently, someone moves into those units. There is almost nothing we can do to prevent people from moving in because as much as we bug them or anything else, they still need a place to stay, there are desperate for a place to stay and they will just move in like that. So on the band owned houses, that's what we call the houses built before 1984, that's a whole other half of the issue. Again I see no end in sight to that, not with the amount of money that we are currently are getting to maintain them. If you have a large family, and there are a lot of large families on this reserve living in a single unit, when there is that many people living in a house with no work for that family, they are living on social assistance and the reserve doesn't have the resources to maintain that unit. The maintenance on a unit that is housing that high a number of people is non-existent. There is no way we can maintain that unit, and there is no way that the tenant can maintain that unit" (Pelletier, 2000). (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, 2000, p. 9)

Many First Nations people and families do not have their own dwellings, and many homes are already overcrowded (Peters & Robillard, 2007). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2018):

> Household crowding is a condition where the number of occupants exceeds the capacity of the dwelling space available, whether measured as rooms, bedrooms or floor area, resulting in adverse physical and mental health outcomes. Crowding is a result of a mismatch between the dwelling and the household. The level of crowding relates to the size and design of the dwelling, including the size of the rooms, and to the type, size and needs of the household, including any long-term visitors. Whether a household is "crowded" depends not only on the number of people sharing the dwelling, but on their age, their relationship and their sex. For example, a dwelling might be considered crowded if two adults share a bedroom, but not crowded if those adults are in a relationship. Crowding relates to the conditions of the dwelling as well as the space it provides: people may crowd into particular rooms in their home to avoid cold or uninhabitable parts of the dwelling or to save on heating and other costs. (p. 1)

Overcrowding is an issue that impacts a large number of First Nations families, including "extreme" overcrowding, in which this ratio is considerably exceeded (Harvey, 2016). FNLED (2019) found that 14% of First Nations adults on reserve reside in overcrowded residences. In cases of family homelessness, the majority of extreme overcrowding situations involve households with multigenerational residents (Harvey, 2016). The lack of housing on reserves results in minimal housing options, leading families to raise their children in the same household (Harvey, 2016). FNLED (2019) also suggests that 20.5% of adults living with children experience overcrowding. For First Nations people, 18.7% of houses in remote locations are overcrowded, while 7% are overcrowded in urban households (FNLED, 2019; Harvey, 2016).

To alleviate the current state of overcrowding in Quebec alone, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) (2014) predicts that 5,032 dwellings would be required. Studies indicate that young families are particularly susceptible to situations of extreme overcrowding. Harvey (2016) states:

> **The reality is that young families – young mothers, young families, young couples – don't have access to their own housing. They have to live with their parents. If we include that in our definition of overcrowding, I can tell you that we're talking about a lot of young people. People under the age of 25. If you look at it in the context of that particular dynamic. (p. 32)**

In addition to a lack of adequate housing supply, access to housing is also a contributing factor to overcrowding on-reserve (Peters & Robillard, 2009). When assigning band housing, community housing rules usually prioritize families, increasing the vulnerability of single persons and couples without children (Harvey, 2016). First Nations homelessness is inextricably linked to the housing crisis that many First Nations are experiencing (Harvey, 2016). The issue is not only a shortage of housing but limited types of housing as well (e.g., single-person dwelling) (Harvey, 2016). The current housing stock is largely comprised of ill-suited dwellings that are intended for larger families or single persons (Harvey, 2016). In addition, certain First Nations communities allocate homes to individuals on waitlists based entirely on seniority, rather than need (Harvey, 2016).

Extreme overcrowding among First Nations is more widespread in remote and rural communities (First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission, 2013; Harvey, 2016). Furthermore, "one hypothesis claims it is more difficult for people who live in remote zones to find a place to live outside the community due to the distances that separate them from neighbouring cities" (Harvey, 2016, p. 33). Table 3 outlines extreme overcrowding among First Nations people, including the phenomenon's scale, at-risk populations, and contributing factors (Harvey, 2016).

Table 3: Extreme Overcrowding & First Nations

Scale of Phenomenon	At-Risk Populations	Contributing Factors
• Shortage of housing stock investment • Found in the majority of communities • Found primarily in remote and rural communities	• Households with multiple families • Couples without children • Single persons • Households with high tension levels • Households with several generations	• Lack of available housing • Lack of affordable housing • Increased waiting periods for band housing • Increased solidarity within First Nations communities

Source: Harvey, M. (2016). *Portrait of Homelessness of First Nations Communities in Quebec.* First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC).

When it comes to recommendations for addressing extreme overcrowding for First Nations housing, Grantham (2021) shares,

> The problem is not the number of people living in a single residence, but rather the size of the residence. Offering a range of housing types is therefore a priority. Notably, constructing multi-unit residences allows extended families (multiple generations) to live under the same roof with each family in its own space. (p. 7)

Additionally, by building tiny houses for singles and couples, larger homes may be reserved for larger families (Harvey, 2016).

Unfit Housing

Although an individual may have somewhere to stay, unfit housing is recognized as a place that is insecure and unsafe (Harvey, 2016; Patrick, 2014). A significant amount of band housing in First Nations communities requires major repairs (FNQLHSSC, 2013). When it comes to lack of care, poor construction quality, physical factors (e.g., mould, leaking roof), or inadequate maintenance, the AFNQL (2014) found that 16% of First Nations' housing stock in Quebec required major renovations. According to the First Nations Regional Health Survey (2015), 20.8% of First Nations adults on-reserve lived in a household that required significant renovations (Harvey, 2016). Unfit housing poses a threat to the overall health and safety of individuals (Harvey, 2016; Patrick, 2015). The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) (2013) found that an alarming 27.5% of First Nations residences on reserve in Quebec require significant repairs.

The most common reason for unfit housing is mould infestation, which has negative implications for residents' health (e.g., respiratory issues) (Harvey, 2016). Mould issues were connected to inadequate housing conditions and situations of overcrowding (FNQLHSSC, 2013). Data from the First Nations Regional Health Survey (2015) also found that 23.1% of First Nations adults found mould in their place of residence (Harvey, 2016).

Despite serious mould infestation, families remain in their contaminated homes because there is simply no place else to go (FNQLHSSC, 2013). Indigenous communities already face an inadequate supply of affordable housing. For the limited amount of overcrowded homes that do exist in communities, significant health and safety concerns are rampant. It is for this reason that First Nations are subjected to unfit housing (AFNQL, 2014). Far too many First Nations communities demonstrate unfit housing conditions, including the Innu (27.1%[6]), the Naskapi (35.7%), the Mohawk (46.1%), and the Atikamekw (46.9%)[7] (AFNQL, 2014).

Table 4: Unfit Housing and First Nations

Scale of Phenomenon	At-Risk Populations	Contributing Factors
• Found in majority of communities	• Young families • Households with alcohol use • Households with substance use	• Minimal maintenance • Health and safety issues • Mould concerns impacting health • Damage of property

Source: Harvey, M. (2016). *Portrait of Homelessness of First Nations Communities in Quebec.* First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC).

The AFNQL (2014) suggests that "given the specific context of each community, a great deal of care must be exercised when interpreting situations of unfit housing" (p. 31). Electricity, for example, is not equally available to all communities. As a result, some communities predominantly heat with firewood and the dry air produced by this heating method is shown to have a detrimental influence on inhabitants' health and well-being (AFNQL, 2014). A lack of access to health services on-reserve further exacerbates the health risks this population faces, particularly for older First Nations people. Such housing conditions force individuals to leave their communities and temporarily stay with family members who have functioning utilities, particularly during harsh winter months (AFNQL, 2014). Thistle (2017) describes this phenomenon

6. The percentages represent the population experiencing unfit housing conditions.
7. These numbers and communities are only in Quebec, due to the research available. To a certain extent, this data can be extrapolated across the country but does not tell the whole story.

as "escaping or evading harm homelessness", where Indigenous persons are forced to flee or vacate unstable, unsafe, unhealthy, or overcrowded households to obtain a measure of safety or to survive harsh winter months (p. 38).

To address unfit housing, there must be opportunities for First Nations communities to secure funding for renovations (Harvey, 2016). In many cases, communities cannot address unfit housing due to the lack of available housing for families that need to be relocated during the renovations (Harvey, 2016). Addressing this issue should include providing temporary housing for individuals and families who require major renovations (Harvey, 2016).

The Haisla Nation identifies the following requirements as critical features required for habitable housing on-reserve: affordability, accessibility, durability, removing mould, capacity building, energy efficiency, flexible space, cultural aesthetics, food preparation, and outdoor living (MacTavish et al., 2012). Due to a lack of funding from the federal government, band councils cannot maintain and develop affordable and livable homes on-reserve (MacTavish et al., 2012). Because of this chronic under-supply, it can take years for First Nations on waitlists to obtain housing (MacTavish et al., 2012). Of existing housing stock, MacTavish et al.'s (2012) study found that many homes on-reserve were inefficiently built and not capable to endure Kitamaat's harsh environment and weather (MacTavish et al., 2012). MacTavish et al. (2012) claim that due to acute shortages, high reported cases of mould contamination, overcrowding, and structural problems, First Nations on-reserve housing in Canada is in crisis. The Haisla Nation's Kitamaat reserve is one such example (MacTavish et al., 2012). The goal of this project was to work with the Haisla to design a culturally suitable, ecologically friendly, and energy-efficient dwelling style that the Haisla might use in the future (MacTavish et al., 2012). Marceau-Evans Johnson Architects worked on this project in conjunction with University of Victoria academics (MacTavish et al., 2012). The project by the Marceau-Evans Johnson Architects found that housing thus deteriorates quickly, forcing the Haisla to live in dangerous conditions (MacTavish et al., 2012). Construction processes on First Nations must be improved and materials better utilized to construct homes that are structurally sound and mould-free (MacTavish et al., 2012). To accommodate accessibility concerns, designs and accessibility elements should consider the physical and mobility demands of seniors (MacTavish et al., 2012). In addition, housing development must prioritize the reality that Elders may wish to continue to age in their on-reserve home while not being isolated from family or community members or forced to leave due to a lack of safe, affordable, and livable housing (MacTavish et al., 2012).

Data collected by the Northeastern Ontario First Nations further demonstrates that

out of 86 male and female participants between ages 16 and 75, 42% had experienced some form of homelessness in their lifetime (Kauppi et al., 2015). The Northeastern Ontario First Nations had a population of 1,018 people, 120 homes, and 30 cottages at the time of the research in June 2009 (Kauppi et al., 2015). The current housing stock did not satisfy the community's demands (Kauppi et al., 2015). The Northeastern Ontario First Nations decided to gather data in June 2009 to look into the characteristics and causes of homelessness, the number at-risk, service usage, the effect of homelessness, and agency partnership models (Kauppi et al., 2015).

The housing conditions discussed continuously deprive First Nations people of their right to live in security and dignity. The Haisla Nation desire housing regulations that enable people to earn work and get training in the design, construction, and maintenance of houses on reserves (MacTavish et al., 2012). Members of the community seek to establish a community-based sawmill to use Haisla-owned forest resources for house building (MacTavish et al., 2012). Furthermore, housing that uses renewable energy sources and is constructed to minimize excessive heat loss is desired by residents (MacTavish et al., 2012). The Haisla community's traditional activities include big family gatherings – thus house designs with more room would be beneficial (MacTavish et al., 2012). The participants also expressed the desire to create homes with creative and adaptable rooms that can accommodate big groups as well as kitchen space for traditional food preparation (MacTavish et al., 2012). According to the participants, local cultural history should be included in home designs (MacTavish et al., 2012). There were requests for carved and painted emblems both inside and outside the front entryways, a traditional practice that signifies clan affiliation and identity (MacTavish et al., 2012). The views participants shared all point to the current reality that First Nations people do not have access to housing that is secure and that promotes autonomy and dignity.

Insecure Housing

Insecure housing is defined by an individual(s)' continuous movement and repeated relocation (Harvey, 2016). According to Katz (2020), housing insecurity is "an umbrella term that encompasses several dimensions of housing problems people may experience, including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing" (p. 1). Individuals with insecure housing often adopt survival tactics that expand the number of places where they may sleep (Harvey, 2016). Couch surfing is an example of insecure housing, which is the form that much of the literature focuses on (Harvey, 2016). Given this transient state of homelessness, it is difficult for caseworkers to provide ongoing support and services (Harvey, 2016).

Studies by AFNQL (2014) suggest that insecure housing is more common among First Nations men between ages 18 and 40 than among First Nations women (Harvey, 2016). Issues with substance and alcohol use and mental health concerns were the leading causes of insecure housing (Harvey, 2016). According to Harvey (2016), childhood maltreatment and the death of a family member were additional variables in these communities that intersected with insecure housing. **The AFNQL (2014) shares that "the reason behind the rise in this form of homelessness resided in the fact that housing stock development did not keep up with the communities' demographic needs" (p. 30).** Insecure housing likewise works as a barrier to accessing community services. This may be connected to the fact that clients require an address to access the majority of supports and services. Peters (2012) suggests that for individuals with insecure housing, mobility is influenced by stress and represents a means to preserve good relationships with their hosts. Sharing accommodations can also work as a strategy for coping with the high costs of housing (Peters, 2012). However, this arrangement can be stressful for both the host household and the guest (Peters, 2012), and reinforces the transient and unstable nature of this living arrangement.

Sylvestre and Mulligan (2005) suggest that social networks and support from extended family members are substantial factors in the value systems of First Nations communities. Although the evident shortage of housing contributes to unstable housing in First Nations communities, the literature suggests that the issue is also a product of extended families' strong feeling of solidarity (Distasio et al., 2005). Only 5% of 472 homeless First Nations people in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina, Saskatchewan, lived on the streets or in shelters, according to a survey conducted in 2000 (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), 2000). The rest of the participants indicated that they stayed with friends or family (SIIT, 2000). However, this spirit of solidarity has its limitations as accommodations may be provided, but only in exchange for services or monetary contribution.

Often, insecure housing impacts single First Nations men much more than First Nations women (Harvey, 2016). Imbalances based on gender are connected to the fact that when a relationship ends, the woman usually remains in the household (especially when children are involved) (Harvey, 2016). Women may also refrain from relying on insecure housing strategies that increase their risk of being sexually exploited (Harvey, 2016). Harvey (2016) shares, "when you sleep in an overcrowded space, there's a risk of abuse. And as a result, if you're not in your own environment, and even if you're with extended family and sharing a house with people you are more or less related to, etc., you become more vulnerable to sexual abuse" (p. 28).

In some cases, women will temporarily rely on insecure housing to remove themselves from violent partners (Harvey, 2016). According to participants, this form of homelessness is "situational, insofar as these episodes of insecure housing are not recurrent" (Harvey, 2016, p. 28). Some people, for instance, are evicted from their houses by family members during periods of violence and intoxication. Furthermore, "aside from addiction and mental health problems that foster individual 'disorganization', the life course of these individuals is often punctuated by violence or neglect in childhood or the death of a family member who was the 'pillar' of the family unit" (Harvey, 2016, p. 28).

Experiences of First Nations Homelessness

First Nations homelessness may be broken down further by analyzing general patterns to determine which groups are overrepresented based on gender, age, location, and other factors (Akee & Feir, 2018). While these themes have been integrated into the research discussed above, this section distills a thorough review of the existing literature on First Nations people's experiences of homelessness based on gender, age, and geographic location.

Mortality

While this research focuses primarily on First Nations homelessness, it is also essential to understand the rates of mortality among First Nations in Canada. Data from the Indian Register (2001) and the National Household Survey (2011) illustrate that the mortality rate[8] for First Nations (all age groups) is almost twice the average of the general population (Akee & Feir, 2018). This research demonstrates that First Nations girls aged 10 to 14 experience mortality rates that are 3.5 times higher than non-Indigenous girls in Canada (Akee & Feir, 2018; Indian Register, 2001; National Household Survey, 2001). On an annual basis, it is estimated that 435 Status females and 530 Status males suffer excess mortality (Akee & Feir, 2018). These figures represent the ongoing problem of Indigenous women and girls who have been reported by the RCMP as missing or murdered. Akee and Feir (2018) estimate that the rate of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is three times higher than the excess mortality reported by the RCMP. First Nations female mortality ratios are lower in communities with stronger employment rates, while female mortality ratios are higher in communities with low housing quality (Akee & Feir, 2018). First Nations male mor-

8. A mortality rate is a measurement of how often people die in a given population during a specific time.

tality rates also decrease in communities with self-governance agreements (Akee & Feir, 2018). Furthermore, First Nations mortality rates are higher in communities that are considered remote (Akee & Feir, 2018). These findings bolster the necessity for reducing poverty and promoting self-governance among First Nations communities (Akee & Feir, 2018). Higher poverty rates have negative implications for housing and homelessness, especially among First Nations people.

Gendered Experiences of Homelessness

There is an inextricable relationship between homelessness, violence, and the colonization of First Nations women (Boyer et al., 1993; Farley et al., 2005; Louie, Luu, & Tong, 1991; Silbert & Pines, 1983). Studies exploring the impact of colonization on First Nations women strongly correlate experiences of homelessness with sex work (Boyer et al., 1993; Farley et al., 2005; Louie, Luu, & Tong, 1991; Silbert & Pines, 1983). Farley et al. (2005) interviewed 100 women and children in Vancouver engaging in sex work. Of the participants, 52% identified as First Nations (Farley, 2005). Staggeringly, 83% of First Nations participants engaging in sex work reported experiences of homelessness in the past (Farley, 2005). When compared to the 58% of European-Canadian counterparts, 81% of First Nations women involved in sex work self-reported rates of physical abuse in childhood (Farley, 2005). Farley (2005):

> ... compared First Nations women with European-Canadian women in a number of analyses... [C]hildhood sexual abuse was reported significantly more often by interviewees identifying as First Nations than by those describing themselves as European Canadian ($\chi 2$ (1) = 5.2, p = .02). Of those First Nations women reporting sexual abuse, relatives were specified as perpetrators 41% of the time, adult friends or community members were specified as perpetrators 34% of the time, and an older child was specified as perpetrator 25% of the time. Significantly more First Nations women than European-Canadian women reported childhood physical abuse ($\chi 2$ (1) = 5.6, p = .02). (p. 253)

However, rates of sexual abuse in childhood as well as verbal abuse and sexual violence while engaging in sex work in adulthood were prevalent in both First Nations and non-First Nations participants' experiences (Farley, 2005). Research consistently demonstrates that early adverse childhood experiences, fleeing dangerous home environments, and abuse by caregivers significantly increases the risk of women engaging in sex work (Farley et al., 2005; Federal/ Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution).

Ongoing colonization of Indigenous people and land continues to result in an "immense overrepresentation" of First Nations women engaging in sex work and experiencing homelessness (Farley, 2005). In one study, 95% of First Nations women expressed their desire to stop sex work entirely but did not know how to survive financially without it (Farley, 2005). For Indigenous women, sex work can be a gendered survival strategy that enables them to escape violence. To transition away from sex work, First Nations women indicated needing rehabilitative treatment, job training, and mental health counselling (Farley, 2005). Unless this issue is addressed, poverty that manifests into housing insecurity and homelessness will continue to drive First Nations women into the sex trade for survival.

On-Reserve Experiences of Homelessness

While most Indigenous households are off-reserve, many First Nations people reside on-reserve (CMHC, 2011; NAHA, 2009). CMHC (2011) found that as of 2006, there were approximately 82,400 predominantly First Nations households located on-reserve. Literature suggests that the bulk of First Nations reserves are severely underdeveloped in terms of both infrastructure and housing (CMHC, 2011; Durbin, 2009; Monette et al., 2009; Patrick, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2008). The quality of life on reserves is severely impacted by substandard construction, lack of electricity and plumbing, structural deficiencies, mould contamination, overcrowding, and the need for significant repairs (Adelson, 2005; MacTavish et al., 2012; Monette et al., 2009; Patrick, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2008). For decades, the dire status of housing availability and conditions on-reserve have been severely neglected (Adelson, 2005; MacTavish et al., 2012; Monette et al., 2009; Patrick, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2008). **The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) (1996) found that housing conditions for First Nations populations continue to fall significantly below the standard of living in Canada (Peters & Robillard, 2007).**

Reserves may represent conflicting meanings, as they "are simultaneously associated with colonialist forced assimilation and perceived as safe havens for cultural preservation" (Patrick, 2014, p. 13). For First Nations people living in urban settings, reserves may also be relied on as "economic safety nets" (Patrick, 2014; Peters & Robillard, 2009). Relocating to or from a reserve is often connected with the desire to find a balance in safety, resources, emotional well-being, and relationships (Patrick, 2014). According to research conducted in Saskatchewan, First Nations people experiencing homelessness relocated to a reserve to avoid harmful relationships, a lack of money, or a loss of housing. On the other hand, some leave the reserve for a variety of reasons, including family or relationship conflict, experiences of abuse,

and off-reserve educational or career opportunities (Peters & Robillard, 2009). Moving off reserve often also occurs when individuals need to access treatment facilities or other services not available on reserve (Peters & Robillard, 2009). The migration of homeless First Nations people might be voluntary or involuntary. Furthermore, once First Nations people relocate, they do not always go to a location that they think of as "home" (Patrick, 2014).

Peters and Craig's (2016) study on homelessness in Flin Flon, Manitoba, reported that none of the twenty-four First Nations people who participated in the study had their housing on the reserve. Moreover, of these participants, only three of the First Nations band members had applied for housing (Peters & Craig, 2016). Some participants stated that finding housing was especially challenging for younger First Nations individuals, particularly young males (Peters & Craig, 2016). It was also noted that there were extensive waitlists to obtain housing on-reserve (Peters & Craig, 2016). One participant shared that he had been homeless for twenty years since his house had burned down in a fire (Peters & Craig, 2016). Influenced by the lack of desire to live on-reserve, 23.8% of participants shared they had not sought on-reserve housing (Peters & Craig, 2016). Most (90.5%) of the First Nations participants indicated that they could stay on the reserve with family but only for a short term, while 62.5% would remain on the reserve if housing were available (Peters & Craig, 2016).

Population expansion, a lack of money to develop and maintain housing, restrictive government regulations, and unsuitable home designs for First Nations people all contribute to the undersupply of housing for First Nations reserves in Canada (MacTavish et al., 2012). 26% of households on First Nations reserves are considered overcrowded (Adelsen, 2005; Drossos, 2003; Health Canada, 2000; Lawrence & Martin, 2001; MacTavish et al., 2012; Statistics Canada, 2008). Overcrowding in households increases the risk for the spread of illness and mould infestation (Adelsen, 2005; Drossos, 2003; Health Canada, 2000; Lawrence & Martin, 2001; MacTavish et al., 2012; McHardy & O'Sullivan, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2008). In a study on the Kitamaat reserve in 2006, mould was present in 22% of houses (MacTavish et al., 2012). To prevent and decrease the risk of mould on-reserve, there is a need for more rain-screen cladding, adequately sealed windows, bathroom and kitchen ventilation, and stove-top exhaust fans (MacTavish et al., 2012). Furthermore, 44% of the houses in Kitamaat require significant repairs for houses on-reserve to be considered habitable (Adelsen, 2005; Drossos, 2003; Health Canada, 2000; Lawrence & Martin, 2001; MacTavish et al., 2012; McHardy & O'Sullivan, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2008).

Over the late 19th century, colonial efforts to acquire control of First Nations territory across the continent, including traditional Niitsitapi land in the prairies, intensified

(Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016). The Niitsitapi people's way of life and their conceptions of home altered because of industrial operations such as mining and railway construction/destruction, treaty signing, and a more significant settler presence (Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016). With growing pressure from the colonial state for First Nations people on-reserves to imitate the ways settlers lived, and with isolation within settler communities, First Nations people were alienated from home in both settings (Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016). This separation resulted in the increasing movement of First Nations between reserves and urban environments (Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016).

Migration & Homelessness Off-Reserve

In general, the Indigenous population is recognized as a highly mobile population (Harvey, 2016). Along with poor living circumstances, this movement increases the likelihood of homelessness among First Nations people (AANDC, 2013; Harvey, 2016). Because of the loss of social networks and family, and the unsafe environments, First Nations people are often forced to leave their communities (Harvey, 2016). Demonstrating this, in a study of First Nations people living in Quebec, 6 out of 13 participants indicated the reason for their migration to urban centres was influenced by the availability of emergency shelters, slightly more access to affordable housing, and food banks (Harvey, 2016). The significant lack of services in First Nations communities is a key contributor to high rates of displacement of First Nations people from their communities to cities.

In a study of migration among First Nations people experiencing homelessness in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, participants cited family strife, work, education, visiting people off-reserve, attending penal or treatment institutions, and the dire circumstances on reserve as their reasons for migrating (Peters & Robilliard, 2009). Participants returned to the reserve when they lacked financial resources off reserve and were able to secure a place to sleep on reserve with family or friends (Peters & Robilliard, 2009). A nominal percentage of individuals returned to their home communities for education or employment purposes (Peters & Robilliard, 2009). There are two unique mobility patterns among First Nations people: first, extended time away from their homes, be it on reserve or in cities. Second, returning for an extended time to on-reserve communities to access food and shelter (Peters & Robilliard, 2009). In both patterns, a desire to maintain social ties or avoid disputes and improve socio-economic standing were prevalent (Peters & Robilliard, 2009).

This section has demonstrated that migration among First Nations people from home communities to urban centres is common practice. However, research shows that if

First Nations people were provided with safe, secure housing, communities with basic social and health services, and opportunities for upward mobility, migration would be significantly reduced. 48.9% of First Nations people in Prince Albert would remain on their reserve if housing were accessible to them (Peters & Robillard, 2007). A lack of employment and educational opportunities are a significant factor in migration for First Nations people living on reserves (Peters & Robillard, 2007). Of the participants (First Nations people in the Prince Albert study), 15.9% cited poor living conditions on reserve as their motivation for leaving (Peters & Robillard, 2007). Further, 27.2% shared that they did not live on reserve due to feelings of isolation from their home community, while 36.8% cited a lack of housing options (Peters & Robillard, 2007). The research is clear – there is a causal effect between the quality of life on-reserve and the forced migration First Nations people experience to obtain basic and essential services and opportunities.

Urban Experiences of Homelessness

In general, Indigenous homelessness is estimated to account for 20–50% of the entire homeless population in large cities, while other studies suggest that the range might be significantly broader, ranging from 11–96% (Belanger et al., 2012; Graham & Peters, 2002; Patrick, 2014; Walker, 2003). Addressing First Nations people specifically, the relocation to urban centres is often a cyclical experience – where individuals will move back and forth between urban and First Nations locations (Letkemann, 2004). Individuals experiencing this phenomenon are often referred to as "urban nomads" (Letkemann, 2004). As "urban nomads", First Nations people experience exclusion and discrimination and are not perceived as permanent members of the urban centres they relocate to (Letkemann, 2004). An "urban nomad" lifestyle is strongly associated with marginalization and poverty among First Nations people, which forces them to leave their home communities. One study found that predominantly young male participants experienced a highly mobile type of homelessness, where acts of robbery, violence, and binge drinking were regular occurrences (Letkemann, 2004). Often, kinship and survival influenced the formation of alliances and groups of two to four "urban nomads" (Letkemann, 2004). Because these "urban nomads" established a sense of belonging, strong social connections, and their own "community", feelings of isolation caused by homelessness were somewhat alleviated (Letkemann, 2004).

Compared to the national average of 0.78%, 6.97% of the urban First Nation, Métis, and Inuit[9] population in Canada are homeless on any given night (OAHS, 2016). The

9. Future research should focus on a distinctions-based approach to understanding urban experiences of homelessness for First Nations people specifically.

homeless First Nation, Métis, and Inuit population in Canada's cities account for 29% of the total homeless population, with 20,358 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people out of a total of 70,200 (OAHS, 2016). One in every 15 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit persons in urban areas is homeless, compared to one in every 128 in the overall population (OAHS, 2016). This suggests that urban First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people are eight times more likely to be homeless. Considering urban experiences, "racism and discrimination by landlords and mainstream service providers impede urban Aboriginal people's access to housing supports, while also limiting tangential services such as food support, mental health, and addictions and employment supports" (Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, 2015, p. 9). To eradicate urban First Nations homelessness specifically, all three levels of government must work together (OAHS, 2016). Additionally:

> Government of Canada has provided new direction on repairing Canada's relationship with FNMI people, the Province of Ontario has a goal of ending chronic homelessness in 10 years, and Municipal Governments and Service Managers (including Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMS) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABS)) who individually have a legal obligation to develop Housing and Homelessness Plans that consider and address the needs of FNMI people in their municipalities. (OAHS, 2016, p. 2).

One in every 15 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit persons in urban areas is homeless, compared to one in every 128 in the overall population.

This suggests that urban First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people are eight times more likely to be homeless.

Sources: OAHS, 2016.

Factors Influencing Homelessness

Indigenous people are not a homogeneous population. Any policy or programmatic response to Indigenous homelessness, and First Nations homelessness specifically, must first acknowledge that the state of Indigenous homelessness today is rooted through processes of violent colonization, particularly the multi-generational impact of residential schools. From there, various factors influencing homelessness must be acknowledged, including stifled economic development, mental health challenges, substance use, and a loss of connection to the land (Harvey, 2016). Further structural factors include deeply ingrained anti-Indigenous racism in societal institutions (including healthcare and the homelessness sector), sexism, barriers to education,

employment, and the over-policing and overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system. For any solutions to have a genuine impact, they must consider the noted factors associated with First Nations homelessness. Beavis et. al. (1997) claim that these factors include physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and substance use issues. Additional qualities include low levels of employment, education, and training (Beavis et. al., 1997). The intergenerational impact of familial violence, the significant lack of safe, secure, and affordable housing on reserve, anti-Indigenous racism, and migration from reserve to urban areas are common themes among First Nations people experiencing homelessness (Beavis et al., 1997).

A significant pathway into homelessness for First Nations people is involvement with the child welfare system (Clarkson, Christian, Pearce, Jongbloed, Caron, Teegee, Moniruzzaman, Schechter & Spittal, 2015; Kauppi, O'Grady, Schiff, Martin, & Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, 2017). Serge et al. (2002) argue:

> **One of the "systems" that has been set up to protect vulnerable youth is child welfare. However, there is evidence that some youth who have had experience with the child welfare system eventually become homeless, and that the numbers may be increasing. Several profiles of the urban homeless have discovered that many homeless youth and adults have a history of involvement with child welfare, including having been 'in care' and are over-represented among the homeless. While this group of youth is still a relatively small proportion of youth who have been through the child welfare system, this does suggest that some, very vulnerable youth, are not getting the kind of support that they need. (p. 2)**

According to a recent judgement by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) (2016), the federal government discriminated against children from First Nations communities, resulting in the underfunding of education and child welfare in relation to on-reserve programs (Kauppi et al., 2017). A history of foster care has also been connected to homelessness in Quebec, particularly among First Nations adolescents (Harvey, 2016). The provision of child welfare and child protection services is the responsibility of the provinces and territories. The federal government is responsible for funding child welfare programs for Indigenous children with status under the *Indian Act* (Serge et al., 2002). Indigenous youth make up over 50% of homeless youth who have been in care. Research evidencing the connection between an Indigenous child's involvement with child welfare services and future experiences of homelessness is beyond dispute (Gaetz et al., 2016; Serge et al., 2002).

Kauppi et al., (2013) provide a case study to represent factors influencing homelessness and the connection between childhood experiences of poverty, the signing of

treaties, and the establishment of the reserve system (Kauppi et al., 2013). The complex challenges linked to paths into and out of homelessness for an Indigenous man from a First Nation village on the western James Bay in Canada were investigated using the individual case study approach (Kauppi et al., 2013). In this case study, the participant cites the impact of colonization, the residential schools, and the cultural genocide of Indigenous languages and religions and its calamitous impact on their home community. Sexual assault was a violent reality that many children forcibly removed from their families experienced (Kauppi et al., 2013). This experience led to a lived reality coloured by physical abuse, loneliness, isolation, and fear (Kauppi et al., 2013). The participant importantly notes that homelessness among First Nations people is a product of violent colonial projects, as the phenomenon of homelessness was entirely non-existent prior to European colonization of Indigenous land.

Approaches to First Nations Homelessness

Services Addressing First Nations Visible Homelessness

The visibly homeless population in communities may have access to various programs that enable them to satisfy most of their basic requirements (Harvey, 2016). For example, food banks, clothing counters, and all front-line general services provided by nursing stations and social and health service centres fall under this category (Harvey, 2016). With the information provided by Grantham (2021) for a study on Quebec First Nations, Table 5 on the following page provides a non-exhaustive list of commonly offered services, services available in specific locations, and services that have yet to be established to help those who are visibly homeless (Harvey, 2016). It is important to note that while these services may be available in some communities, they are often lacking in many communities or are not accessed by First Nations populations.

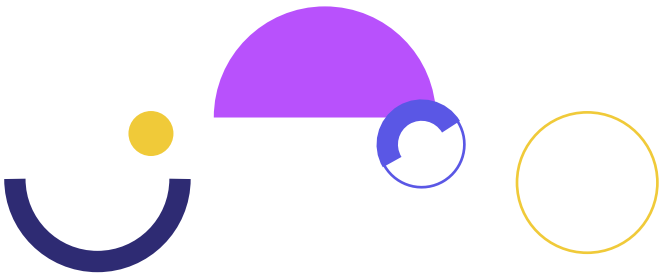


Table 5: Visible Homelessness and Available Services in Quebec First Nations

Services Offered in Majority of Communities	Services Offered in Specific Communities	Services Not Developed in Majority of Communities
• General front-line health services • General front-line social services • Food banks and kitchens • Clothing counters • Transportation to outside-of-the-community services • Support in obtaining identification cards (e.g., health insurance cards) • Low-cost housing • Support in obtaining employment • Support in locating housing	• Temporary housing • Street outreach • Supervised residences • Referrals to out-of-the-community services • Maintaining contact with those who relocate to urban centres	• Temporary and transitional housing with on-site staff providing a variety of services. • Warming centres (located in school gyms, community halls) • Support in escaping isolation (e.g., social integration through employment and life skills support) • Psychological support (e.g., self-esteem and social skills workshops) • Outreach workers • Assistances for caregivers and family members • Hot meal services • Culturally appropriate and land-based activities • Support for individuals with addictions (e.g., clean needles)

Source: Grantham, E. (2016). *Homelessness in First Nations Communities: New Insights to Guide Intervention.* First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission.

Services Addressing First Nations Hidden Homelessness

With the information provided by Grantham (2021), Table 6 below provides a non-exhaustive list of services that are commonly offered and are available in specific locations and services that have yet to be established to help First Nations people who experience hidden homelessness (Harvey, 2016).

Table 6: Hidden Homelessness and Available Services

Services Offered in Majority of Communities	Services Offered in Specific Communities	Services Not Developed in Majority of Communities
• Housing renovations • Priority on the waiting list for community housing	• Day centre • Outreach worker • Tiny house initiative • Crisis beds	• Temporary accommodation during major renovations • Assistances for caregivers and family members • Increased awareness for caseworkers and the public • Diversified housing stock

Source: Grantham, E. (2016). *Homelessness in First Nations Communities: New Insights to Guide Intervention.* First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission.

Services Addressing At-Risk First Nations

Caseworkers in the community do not always identify the risk of homelessness in particular life situations (Harvey, 2016). This includes the unique circumstances when a person has just left the child welfare system[10], is residing in a shelter for victims of intimate partner violence, or has left an institution (Harvey, 2016). As a result, there is often a lack of processes or recommendations (if any) to guide treatments for at-risk clients (Harvey, 2016). In most cases, financial assistance is the first step toward obtaining services for those who are at risk of homelessness (Harvey, 2016). In addition, at-risk individuals may not be recognized since they typically do not have a permanent address to disclose (Harvey, 2016). Table 7 below shares information from Grantham's (2021) work to provide an overview of the services for at-risk individuals currently available in specific communities and those that have yet to be developed. These are in addition to those that have been shared for both visible and hidden homelessness (Harvey, 2016).

10. The terminology may vary from province to province, but child welfare is one of the more universally recognized terms.

Table 7: At-Risk Populations and Available Services

Services Offered in Majority of Communities	Services Not Developed in Majority of Communities
• Rooming house • Social worker • Support for capacity development • Land-based healing for individuals leaving institutions • Referral to the family	• Transitional, emergency, and long-term housing • Supervised residencies • Social reinsertion educator • Prevention programs • Personalized assistance program • Priority position on the waiting list for community housing

Source: Grantham, E. (2016). *Homelessness in First Nations Communities: New Insights to Guide Intervention.* First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission.

Available Funding Initiatives and Programs

The National Housing Strategy (NHS) serves as an amendable toolkit (CMHC, 2018; Harvey, 2016). The NHS toolkit brings together complementary activities to address issues across the housing continuum and spectrum of housing requirements (CMHC, 2018; Harvey, 2016). Initiatives within the NHS include increased support in capacity-building, innovation, and housing research (CMHC, 2018; Harvey, 2016). The NHS also seeks to create capacity in the community housing sector, providing technical help, tools, resources, and funding to support local groups (CMHC, 2018; Harvey, 2016). Renewing existing housing stock is a key priority of the NHS as well (CMHC, 2018; Harvey, 2016). Another federal initiative is the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), which operates through the CMHC, a Crown corporation of the Government of Canada (CMHC, 2021; Harvey, 2016). The RHI is a one-billion-dollar initiative that supports the rapid development of affordable housing to meet the urgent housing needs of disadvantaged Canadians, particularly in the context of COVID-19 (CMHC, 2021; Harvey, 2016). The RHI program is not without its limitations, however. Indigenous organizations on reserve are not as likely to be granted funding when competing against more sophisticated homelessness organizations in urban centres with the capacity for proposal writing. In 2021-22, RHI Phase 2 adds $1.5 billion to the Rapid Housing Initiative to address disadvantaged Canadians' urgent housing needs (CMHC, 2021). A minimum of 4,500 additional affordable housing units will be added to Canada's housing supply as a result of this new investment (CMHC, 2021). Women-focused housing initiatives will get at least 25% of the financing (CMHC, 2021).

The CMHC offers "Seed Funding, First Nations Development Funding and On-Reserve Renovation Programs" (CMHC, 2021; Harvey, 2016, p. 13). Through interest-free loans or non-repayable donations, the Seed Funding initiative promotes affordable housing. Two financing streams are available: one for new construction/conversions and the other for preserving existing community housing projects (CMHC, 2021). Lastly, **Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives** is a community-based initiative that provides direct support and financing to urban, Indigenous, territorial, rural, on-reserve, and isolated communities across Canada to reduce and prevent homelessness (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2020).

For more than 50 years, Friendship Centres have been and continue to be an essential service for First Nations (status and non-status), Inuit, and Métis people living in rural, remote, northern, and major metropolitan areas. Friendship Centres are the most extensive off-reserve Indigenous service delivery infrastructure in Canada, offering culturally enriched activities and services to urban Indigenous people (NAFC, 2021). Friendship Centres are grassroots organizations that, since their founding, have provided services to all people of their communities, regardless of their legal Indigenous Status (NAFC, 2021). In response to the increased calls for funding during the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government shared a plan ($44.8 million) to develop 12 shelters, with 10 of them being in First Nations communities (NAFC, 2021; Office of the Prime Minister, 2020). However, the National Association of Friendship Centres (2021) argues that

> ... spreading these funds over five years will not allow communities to respond now to imminent needs arising as a result of COVID-19. Further, all shelter funds that have been announced for Indigenous women have been targeted to on-reserve, First Nations women. While there is no debate that those funds are sorely needed, many Indigenous women and their children face violence and need shelter in off-reserve contexts." (p. 6)

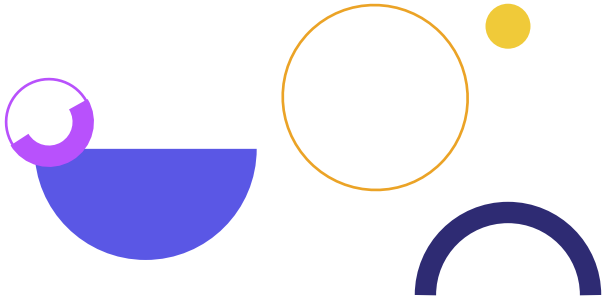
Although a moratorium on payments of student loans and $7.5 million has been allocated to Kids Help Phone by the Government of Canada, no additional financial supports are in place for Indigenous children and youth (NAFC, 2021; Office of the Prime Minister, 2020). A study completed by NAFC (2020) demonstrates that the two main concerns of Indigenous youth are: first, finances and the ability to obtain summer employment; and second, the safety of communities and families. Furthermore, when it comes to First Nations youth, no relief funds have been provided even though work terms have been extended (2020-2021) within the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy (Indigenous Services Canada, 2020; NAFC, 2021). The lack of funding and relief funds significantly increases the risk of this population for homelessness as they are more likely to experience systemic barriers to education, employment, and safe housing (NAFC, 2021).

Recommendations

There are various studies and reports that present recommendations to address homelessness among First Nations people. A commitment to foster respectful and equitable relationships with First Nations communities is an absolute requirement (Gaetz et al., 2016). First Nations people must be provided affordable, safe, and adequate housing (Gaetz et al., 2016). The TRC's (2015) final report claims:

> **... we must foster healing and work towards stronger partnerships with Indigenous communities. While the report did not mention homelessness specifically, the impact of residential schools can be seen as a direct cause of the overrepresentation of Indigenous People experiencing homelessness. The new short-term federal investment in affordable housing for Indigenous people both on and off reserve is only a first step towards improving outcomes for Indigenous people. Further political, social, and financial backing is required to end Indigenous homelessness in Canada. (p. 7).**

This review proposes a path forward that focuses specifically on addressing First Nations homelessness. Although recommendations for addressing Indigenous homelessness exist more broadly, a First Nations-specific approach could have significant impact. Various challenges have been identified, which may make the process of supporting transitions out of homelessness a complex task. For instance, the remoteness of First Nations poses a significant barrier in terms of service delivery (Harvey, 2016). There is relatively minimal coordination when it comes to services provided by the community and those offered outside of the community. Grantham (2021) suggests that "this limits the continuum of services and impedes proper follow-up for homeless or at-risk individuals who move from 'community to the city,' 'city to the community,' or 'community to community.' That said, certain agreements do exist, for example, between a community and a nearby homeless shelter" (p. 4). Finally, due to the qualifying requirements of some programs and mandated outcomes, program delivery and planning do not reflect the needs of the surrounding population (Harvey, 2016). Services that do not incorporate the needs of the surrounding population consequently struggle to gain funding due to infrequent use of their services (Harvey, 2016).



There are insufficient tools to measure visible and hidden homelessness in First Nations, making it challenging to identify the issue and organize appropriate approaches (Harvey, 2016). There is little difference between poverty reduction services and those geared towards at-risk and homeless populations (Harvey, 2016). In most cases, there are no caseworkers specifically assigned to address the problem of homelessness (Harvey, 2016). If this position were to be filled, there would be better opportunities for those experiencing homelessness to have their needs met (Harvey, 2016). Such a position would also allow for increased awareness of homelessness among the public and the caseworkers (Harvey, 2016). Lastly, it would enable establishing a continuum of services and developing and supporting collaborations with organizations (Harvey, 2016). For First Nations people this would mean greater provision of supports and services.

As this review noted, First Nations people often rely on their social networks (e.g., friends, family) for shelter and accommodation when experiencing homelessness (Harvey, 2016). In doing so, entire households will not experience financial destitution for a task the state must take responsibility for (Harvey, 2016). As Grantham (2021) notes, "the strong sense of solidarity in these communities should be encouraged and supported, and the implementation of a formal support system should not undermine it" (p. 4). Grantham (2021) argues that a multisectoral strategy (a holistic approach that First Nations prefer) is required to meet the state's obligation to provide adequate housing and emergency supports for individuals experiencing homelessness. It is important to note that these approaches must be created and developed from the ground up. One way to achieve this is to ensure cross-sector collaboration between health, housing, education, public safety, social services, and economic sectors. According to Grantham (2021):

> **At the community level, creating a multisectoral action plan is a course of action that may be worth prioritizing over the short term to open communication, encourage coordination and collaboration between sectors, and develop a community-wide prevention network. There is also a willingness in communities to invest more time and effort into homelessness prevention, for example, by focusing on building the self-esteem of at-risk individuals and offering pre-employment programs to them. (p. 4)**

To understand and address homelessness among First Nations people, the AFN (2019) recommends acknowledging the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People**, which states:

Article 3

Indigenous people have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

Article 21 (1)

Indigenous people have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Article 21 (2)

States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities.

Article 23

Indigenous people have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. Indigenous people have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

Article 24 (2)

Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.

Source: United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.*

In 2018, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) completed a **National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy** in collaboration with the Government of Canada (AFN, 2018; 2019). The goal of the Strategy is to guarantee that First Nations can care for, control, and direct their infrastructure and housing (AFN, 2018; 2019). The AFN's ten-year National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy intends to address the root causes of homelessness on and off-reserve and in the North (AFN 2018; 2019). The Strategy also aims to better serve First Nations individuals residing in urban, rural, and northern environments by coordinating housing governance delivery systems across all jurisdictions (AFN, 2018; 2019).

There is a growing need to obtain resources to complete ethical research and to collect information to establish the number of First Nations people experiencing homelessness. The information must then be analyzed to identify the root causes of homelessness and the gaps in services. There is a need to identify the resources that can help create a national First Nations Homelessness Strategy that aligns with the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy. This national strategy will determine solutions and present an advocacy plan. These solutions may include those that are short, medium, and long-term. There is a need to advocate for a solution that is multi-partner and comprehensive.

According to the AFN (2018), a First Nations housing strategy incorporates a transition process from "federal housing and infrastructure programming to First Nations care, control and management of housing and related infrastructure" (p. 4). When it comes to recommendations for a pathway forward, this vision must include housing governance systems that are innovative and responsive (AFN, 2018). According to the AFN (2018), "related infrastructure refers to the infrastructure associated with the construction of residences which are public utilities: connection to drinking water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and street lighting (excluding water and wastewater treatment facilities" (p. 2). A strategy to address First Nations homelessness must incorporate the broader initiative of First Nations care, control, and management (AFN, 2018).

A robust strategy must involve a "First Nations housing and related infrastructure strategy developed by First Nations for First Nations to ensure the strategy is based on First Nations perspectives" (AFN, 2018, p. 2). The strategy must incorporate the federal government's objective to promote Indigenous-led housing design and delivery (AFN, 2018). Additionally, the process must be respectful of Indigenous and Treaty rights (AFN, 2018). Any recommendations must be written in partnership with the federal government (AFN, 2018). Finally, the strategy must offer an approach to First Nations housing that is long-term and addresses urban, rural, and on-reserve areas (AFN, 2018).

Implementing resolutions that have been passed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly, the jurisdiction over housing should be supported and encouraged (AFN, 2018). A strategy is required that "builds the environment and lays out a road map for the research, design and implementation of new housing systems that will lead to a complete federal government withdraw and a full transfer of authority from the federal government to First Nations care, control and management over housing and related infrastructure" (AFN, 2018, p. 2). It is important to include the 2015 Senate Report, On-Reserve Housing and Infrastructure: Recommendations for Change, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UN Declaration). Importantly, the UN Declaration sheds light on the significance of housing in Article 21, "Indigenous people have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of...housing". Additionally, Article 23 states, "Indigenous people have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising [that] right." The AFN recommends that the strategy to address First Nations homelessness must comprise of the following components: 1) regional strategies and plans; 2) strategic plans with short, medium, and long-term objectives; and 3) the Policy Reform Framework Towards a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Strategy (AFN, 2018).

A strategy for First Nations housing must meet the requirements of all First Nations members, whether they live in or outside of their First Nation (AFN, 2018). Furthermore, transitioning care, control, and housing management to First Nations should be respectful of treaty implications and regional approaches to housing and related infrastructure (AFN, 2018). It must be accountable and transparent while accounting for geographic locations and economic considerations (AFN, 2018). While respecting cultural differences, a First Nations strategy should include a "holistic approach to housing that is inclusive of generations and all aspects of life" (AFN, 2018, p. 4). Additionally, a strategy must show respect for individual First Nations' level of capacity and readiness while aligning with the community's needs (AFN, 2018). As part of the guiding principles, a strategy should also be First Nations-led and be based on engagement and feedback from First Nations (AFN, 2018).

For a successful process of transitioning from federal housing and infrastructure to First Nations management and care, there must be financial resources (AFN, 2018). Financial resources must be available to design, develop, and implement regional and local plans and strategies (AFN, 2018). A successful transition process will require consistent commitment and engagement from First Nations and the federal government (AFN, 2018). Negotiations between First Nations and the federal government should follow a government-to-government model during the transition phase (AFN, 2018). Short, medium, and long-term transition milestones that respond to regional differences should be informed by engagement with First Nations.

The First Nations housing strategy proposed by the AFN (2018) presents various themes connected to First Nations information sessions, skills and capacity, governance and delivery, and funding and finance. Concerning First Nations information sessions, it is important to acknowledge that some First Nations are ready to take on managing, controlling, and caring for housing and infrastructure (AFN, 2018). However, others may wish to address the legacy of federal programs and define their treaty obligations before taking on management. The objective of First Nations Information Sessions is to discuss strategic considerations with First Nations communities, leadership, regional organizations, technical experts, and under-represented groups (AFN, 2018). Information sessions should be held with Indigenous housing service providers in northern, rural, and urban areas throughout Canada's municipalities, provinces, and territories (AFN, 2018). The transfer of management, control, and care to First Nations housing service providers and organizations is intended to offer a broader range of housing options (AFN, 2018). This may include homeownership, social housing, rental housing, and supportive housing (AFN, 2018). The development of sustainable and healthy communities, as well as enhanced housing conditions, is the ideal outcome (AFN, 2018). Skills and capacity encompass the transition to First Nations management, control, and care from federal power which requires "investments in skills and capacity as well as the flexibility to direct where and how the funding can be used better to support home occupants, housing and related infrastructure personnel, and First Nations organizations who serve them" (AFN, 2018, p. 7). The objective of including skills and capacity is to ensure that First Nations can exercise management, control, and responsibility (AFN, 2018).

For governance and delivery, there will be no transfer of current government programs and services in the process of shifting management, control, and care of housing to First Nations. Instead, governance and delivery will develop new methods for providing housing services, housing systems, and institutions (AFN, 2018). One objective of governance and delivery includes better serving First Nations people who reside in urban, rural, and northern locations (AFN, 2018). A key outcome would be bringing all jurisdictions' housing governance delivery systems together (AFN, 2018). There is a need to build partnerships between First Nations and current Indigenous housing service providers for off-reserve housing. When it comes to housing provision, there is also a need to define the role of Indigenous housing service providers, First Nations, municipal, territorial, provincial, and federal governments (AFN, 2018). This will help establish a system that ensures that First Nations people "no longer fall through the gaps between jurisdictions" (AFN, 2018, p. 5). Another goal connected to governance and delivery is to create a housing delivery framework at a regional and national level (AFN, 2018). The aim here is to develop a governance model that is free from

political influence (AFN, 2018). With the engagement of First Nations communities, there is a need to establish robust governance systems that address regional and cultural needs, variances, and priorities (AFN, 2018).

The AFN (2018) also recommends developing a First Nations Housing Policy and Research Institute. If established, the policy and research institute's primary responsibilities would be to create innovative housing delivery and governance systems (AFN, 2018). The benefits of this institute would be a resource to secure funding and serve as an archive for best practices, data, and tools (AFN, 2018). There is a need to obtain adequate funding and create a business plan for the policy and research institute (AFN, 2018). Moreover, the policy and research institute should be staffed with research experts (AFN, 2018). Lastly, it would be necessary to develop an appropriate mandate (AFN, 2018).

The funding and finance component acknowledges the significance of having control over budget to address the priorities and needs of First Nations (AFN, 2018). According to the AFN (2018), "funding and financing for a variety of different First Nations housing falls along a continuum of need, for example, shelters, social housing, housing for disabled community members, seniors' housing, rental units and rent to own, market based and private home ownership" (p. 6). If First Nations are to advance housing and living conditions for those living on and off-reserve, new financial instruments and additional government funding will be required (AFN, 2018). Furthermore, there is a need to close the current infrastructure and housing gap (AFN, 2018). Future research should address the possible economic advantages of housing (e.g., opportunities for revenue generation) (AFN, 2018). This will also require the increase of financial commitment among First Nations to their homes and a commitment from all levels of government (AFN, 2018). Innovative ways of financing and efficient methods of leveraging investments must also be identified (AFN, 2018).

Due to failure in policy changes to effectively address migration from First Nations communities, lack of employment, and fundamental housing needs, First Nations people are overrepresented in homeless populations, particularly in Northern regions (Kauppi et al., 2013). In a 2009 study surveying a Northeastern Ontario First Nation reserve, Kauppi et al. (2015) participants put forward recommendations which included recognizing the significance of education and enhancing services for the "near homeless" population and "absolute homeless" population (Kauppi et al., 2015). Additional recommendations included developing a traditional lodge shelter and establishing affordable housing units (Kauppi et al., 2015).

The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) included several recommendations to address homelessness, albeit specific to Toronto. Although it was developed in 2011,

some recommendations may still be beneficial to addressing First Nations homelessness in general. One recommendation was that training to build awareness of the factors influencing homelessness should reach out to a wide range of groups, including First Nations Band Councils and band members. Another recommendation suggested that educational work aimed at First Nations leadership (Elders, band councils, etc.) is also required (Cheechoo, 2020); TARP, 2011).

To address homelessness for LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirited First Nations people, the following recommendations may be appropriate:

1) **Community agency staff, school personnel, and child welfare professionals require sensitivity and awareness training** on First Nations Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ problems and this training should be provided by those who are considered specialists in this training (including foster-parents and adoptive families) (Cheechoo, 2020).

2) **A secure 'transition' house should be built** for Two-Spirited people relocating from rural areas to stay while adjusting to urban life (Cheechoo, 2020). It should be mandated to assist persons in gaining access to programmes and services like housing, work, transportation, and so on to prevent them from living on the streets or being involved in the sex trade (Cheechoo, 2020). It would also help them connect with First Nations traditional activities and gender-appropriate activities (Cheechoo, 2020).

3) **A thorough study should be launched with the goal of better understanding the challenges and concerns** of Two-Spirited First Nations, which includes the middle class, transgender people, and those who are HIV positive (Cheechoo, 2020). The research might look to the relationship between First Nations communities and the city when it comes to Two-Spirit issues (Cheechoo, 2020).

4) **Funding should be provided** to the Two-Spirited people of First Nations organizations for extra long-term case managers, allowing organizations to better address the needs of their clients (Cheechoo, 2020).

5) **That a "Two-Spirited gathering place" be established** to serve the social, cultural, and recreational needs of First Nations Two-Spirited people (Cheechoo, 2020). This could be either through an expansion of the mandate and facilities for First Nations Two-Spirited people or by forming a new organization (Cheechoo, 2020). Computer access, feasts and socials, drumming, traditional teachings, youth programmes, Elders' events, movie nights, cooking facilities, and other activities may all be held in the multipurpose area (Cheechoo, 2020).

6) **Participation of First Nations Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people in the city and other committees is required** (Cheechoo, 2020). This may include police organizations, health, community advisory councils, and particular program committees that serve Indigenous Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people (Cheechoo, 2020).

7) **That a "Two-Spirit house" be constructed for HIV positive Two-Spirited First Nations people,** as well as for families of Two-Spirited people suffering health difficulties (Cheechoo, 2020).

The *Report of the Standing Committee on Health* (2019) confirms that existing gaps in the literature emphasize the need for concrete measures (Cheechoo, 2020). Developing resilience and community appears to be a crucial component and it has been a recurring theme in the research (Cheechoo, 2020).

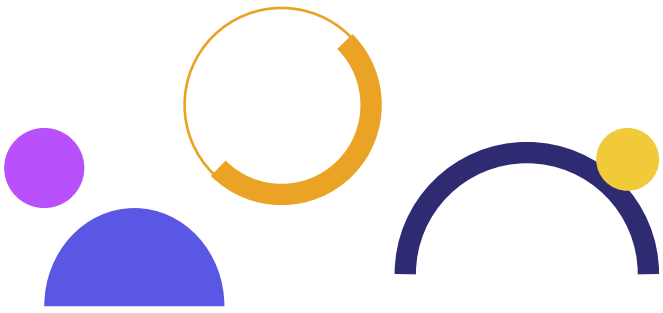
Addressing Gaps to End Homelessness in Rural and Urban Settings

To end First Nations homelessness, physical and social infrastructure must be improved (OAHS, 2016). Housing and supportive services must be given in a culturally appropriate manner to First Nations people living in urban and rural regions to reduce homelessness (OAHS, 2016). All levels of government must be held accountable to meet all commitments as soon as possible (OAHS, 2016). This necessitates equitable and significant expenditures in culturally appropriate housing, as well as related supporting and transitional services (OAHS, 2016). OAHS (2016) claims that the federal government's previous limited focus on Housing First has failed to deliver comprehensive and meaningful solutions for Indigenous peoples facing homelessness in both urban and rural regions. While more affordable housing expenditures are unquestionably required, promoting Housing First as "the" solution is at best incorrect as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to this complex problem (OAHS, 2016). Due to intergenerational trauma and socioeconomic obstacles, solutions and supports must

be offered at various levels to guarantee that First Nations individuals receive the help they need (OAHS, 2016). Starting with homelessness and emergency housing, as well as supportive and transitional housing, investments must be made across the housing spectrum (OAHS, 2016). The OFIFC (2015) claims "the development of new housing stock, specifically transitional and supportive housing, must be considered in addition to maintaining existing social and affordable housing stock" (p. 5). Both mainstream and underfunded Indigenous-led housing programs have substantial gaps, with negative consequences for First Nations people (OAHS, 2016).

Given the government's shift toward evidence-based policies and programs, the gaps in research on First Nations homelessness and housing concerns must be addressed (OAHS, 2016). The OAHS (2016) suggests that the following are required to reduce chronic homelessness among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in urban and rural areas:

> There must be a "needs-based" (i.e., evidence-based) approach to allocating funding. Budget allocation formulas should be developed in a collaborative manner and reviewed annually to ensure allocations reflect changes in community experiences. Allocations should not simply be population-based or pro-rata without taking into account the chronic need and overrepresentation of FNMI who have unacceptably high levels of homelessness and unsuitable housing; Budget allocations should reflect an aspiration to close the gap between the documented poor housing and abhorrent homelessness conditions for urban and rural FNMI people compared to the general population; Deeper budget allocations are required in higher risk areas, such as homelessness and supportive/transitional capital and operating funding, to reflect FNMI people that are part of a higher-risk population; and specific, Indigenous budget allocations must result in programs that are designed and delivered by community based organizations who have demonstrated the ability to successfully deliver in a culturally appropriate manner and achieve desired outcomes. (p. 5)



Conclusion

This literature review provided a systematic analysis of First Nations homelessness in Canada. Further, it addressed the following four areas of inquiry through an analysis of existing research. First, understanding First Nations homelessness involves asking the following questions: **How are home and homelessness described and understood, particularly among First Nations people? How do these descriptions differ from Western definitions? What is the current state of First Nations homelessness in Canada? Second, what are the various forms of First Nations homelessness? Third, experiences of First Nations homelessness, such as: What is it like for First Nations to experience homelessness? Fourth, how are experiences of homelessness impacted by factors such as location (on-reserve and off-reserve), migration, gender, or age?**

For factors leading to homelessness, this review asked why First Nations people are at such a high risk of experiencing homelessness and what are the root causes of this overrepresentation? How is First Nations homelessness connected to colonialism, the legacy of residential schools, intergenerational trauma, physical and mental health, and systemic racism and sexism? Lastly, for approaches to First Nations homelessness, questions included: What has been proposed in terms of First Nations homelessness prevention and solutions? What is or is not working? What are new ways to better understand and address First Nations homelessness? These inquiries provided opportunities to present possible recommendations for a path forward.

This literature review also addressed current gaps in research and provided recommendations for rectifying the disproportionate rate of homelessness among First Nations people in Canada. Understanding First Nations homelessness, experiences of First Nations homelessness, factors influencing First Nations homelessness, and responses to First Nations homelessness are fundamental in establishing a knowledge base from which informed solutions can be tailored to First Nations people and communities. Although there is overlap in experiences of and solutions to homelessness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, the recommendations discussed in this review speak to the unique and distinct realities of homelessness among First Nations.

This literature assessment may be of interest to First Nations communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, service providers, policymakers, governments, and community partners in achieving housing conditions for First Nations that respect the dignity, autonomy, and security of First Nations people.

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