IDENTIFYING THE FOUNDATIONS

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND SOLUTIONS FOR INDIGENOUS HOUSING IN CALGARY

ABORIGINAL STANDING COMMITTEE
on Housing and Homelessness

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IN RECOGNITION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Identifying the Foundations: *Cultural Perspectives and Solutions on Indigenous Housing in Calgary* was implemented in response to Calgary's limited access to Indigenous specific affordable housing. While Calgary is the largest urban centre to the seven (7) largest of Alberta's 48 First Nation communities within the Treaty 7 area, there are less than 300 units allocated specifically for Indigenous peoples in the city of Calgary. Community stakeholders identified the need to gain a stronger understanding of the relationship between solutions for increasing sustainable and affordable housing and improving overall housing stability for Indigenous peoples.

The context of sustainable housing frameworks specifically around Indigenous housing for the city of Calgary have not been viewed from the perspective of the local territory in the past. Urbanization of Indigenous cultures has meant a diversity and a pan-Indigenous approach to developing the concept of Indigenous specific housing. In order to understand how to enhance the prospects of culturally informed Indigenous housing it was important to be guided by the territorial Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers throughout from the implementation to the validation of this project.

Current-State of Analysis of Indigenous Housing

A housing provider survey was conducted to explore a present current-state analysis of housing for Indigenous peoples while identifying strengths, gaps and limitations to inform recommendations for a desired future state of housing.

The survey identified that a limited number of affordable housing providers in Calgary maintain data on the percentage of Indigenous tenants in their housing, and only a few allocate their units specifically for Indigenous peoples. Cultural perspectives are limited, based on the lack of Indigenous staff employed by local housing providers and the minimal access or expectation around attending Indigenous Awareness Training. Most housing providers cannot accommodate the cultural needs of Indigenous peoples, such as providing sufficiently sized units for larger families, nor do the rental leases and housing policies accommodate extended family connections and visitors length of stay. In multi-unit dwellings, most housing providers are unable to accommodate smudging and ceremonies due to smoke detectors and sprinkler systems which hinder the cultural needs of those living in affordable housing.

The survey provided key recommendations including the need for housing providers to establish specific targets for tenancy and allocate a percentage of housing units specifically to Indigenous tenants. It also identified the importance of community collaboration on the development of Indigenous specific housing projects to increase culturally informed Indigenous housing stock. Further, it identified the importance of housing providers building upon stronger cultural awareness amongst their staff to support housing stability of their Indigenous tenants. Lastly, the survey uncovered the importance of increasing recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff to integrate cultural perspectives more effectively within their work with Indigenous tenants.

Identifying Cultural Perspectives

An environmental scan of Indigenous housing across Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand was conducted to identify how cultural perspectives, and housing policies inform Indigenous housing frameworks which can support the development of concepts towards a localized perspective.

The scan commenced by defining key terminology related to Indigenous housing and homelessness, and provided an overview of the existing national housing policy. Further, it outlined existing perspectives of the context of affordability. It also established a review of various existing Indigenous housing programs which incorporated culturally appropriate perspectives into design and model. The scan provided an overview of models which reflected the needs of urban Indigenous peoples, and reviewed culturally enhanced models in both structure and operations. In addition, the scan identified models that reflected the localized environmental elements constructed from cultural perspectives within an Indigenous housing model.

Successful models included practical solutions related to adopting strategies to improve access to ceremonial spaces, dispelling myths related to neighbourhood NIMBYism by engaging community members more integratively, addressing options that contribute to increasing access to kinship relationships, as well as strategies that prevent the potential of unnecessary evictions.

Informing Policies, Funding and Programs

An analysis of focus groups of frontline staff and individuals of lived experience contributed to recommendations conceptualized through an Indigenous lens and led from an Indigenous paradigm. Through both literature review and focus groups, the project outcomes identified a number of key factors as relevant to informing future policies, funding and programs. In

particular, the findings illustrated the importance of autonomy as a vital factor in increasing personal agency and advancing the values that define Indigenous culture.

The analysis uncovered the need for effective policy to establish cultural safety and advance culturally informed practices towards improving Indigenous peoples' housing security. Additionally, housing programs would benefit from incorporating resources which support the diversity of cultural needs, and addresses the common barriers which may typically affect urban Indigenous peoples' housing stability and prevent eviction and homelessness. Overall, funding strategies should incorporate local perspectives as well as national ones, in order to address the unique needs of each community more directly.

Recommendations:

1. **Supporting Reserve to Urban Migration –** Addressing the resource needs of Indigenous peoples transitioning into the urban centre from the reserves prepares and prevents gaps that may lead to barriers in securing and retaining housing.
2. **Developing Culturally relevant Assessment Methods –** Revisioning standard assessments to incorporate a culturally relevant approaches to screening and assessment are essential to timely intervention before situations become critical or chronic.
3. **Increasing relational capacity –** Housing should provide a space where meaningful connection and cultural freedom are accessible and enhance the lives of Indigenous peoples.
4. **Identifying, supporting and creating a community network of supports to enhance community relational capacity –** Contributing resources towards collective and community connections which provides opportunities to learn, share and mentor.
5. **Affordable and safe housing must be seen as a guiding principle in the development of housing design, programs and support services –** Mapping out a community capacity pathway within the context of housing design which builds a support mechanism that increases accessibility to resources and programs.
6. **Implementing cultural security –** Housing as a right can be fortified through the process of cultural security, guiding organizational operations to ensure cultural needs and differences are regarded with respect and dignity.
7. **Supporting the hiring and retention of Indigenous frontline workers –** Enhancing operational practices and policies reflect cultural perspectives into hiring and retaining Indigenous employees.
8. **Anticolonial, antiracism training/professional development framework –** Professional development needs to move beyond the surface level acts of reconciliation and standardized accreditation policies to support more intentional approaches towards addressing anticolonial and antiracist belief systems.

INTRODUCTION

Affordable housing for Indigenous peoples remains a significant priority for Indigenous nations and despite the ongoing rise in homelessness and the poor housing conditions that many Indigenous people are forced to endure, very little has actually been accomplished in terms of making a discernable impact on the lives of Indigenous people who are homeless or living in poor quality housing. Access to poor quality housing is reflected not only in the numbers identified throughout the homeless sector, but also those that are unable to attain housing in their First Nation communities. Developing and strengthening strategies to address housing issues for Indigenous peoples is not only an issue for Calgary's urban Indigenous population but across Canada.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

Indigenous peoples make up a disproportionate share of people experiencing both core housing need and absolute homelessness in Calgary. Once in housing, outcomes for Indigenous tenants are typically less favourable than for non-Indigenous households. Both phenomena have prompted calls by local Indigenous communities, affordable housing advocates and other stakeholders for more ‘culturally appropriate’ housing for Indigenous tenants. However, it is not entirely clear to policymakers (including housing providers) what that would entail. This research project is focused on the alignments of the NHS's priorities in several areas inclusive of vulnerable populations most specifically Indigenous populations. In particular the NHS priority to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% is only possible if there is a tailored approach to addressing culturally responsive housing and programs for Indigenous Peoples. This current project informs the strategy by identifying knowledge gaps and developing recommendations on a responsive and appropriate Indigenous housing solutions to help better serve Indigenous populations. Calgary, like much of Canada, lacks a defined understanding of the context of Indigenous housing, including processes and tools to identify designated urban Indigenous housing units for

Indigenous peoples, as well as effective approaches to integrate cultural perspectives into affordable and non-market housing delivery.

The primary outcome for this project is to create a shared vision on common language for Indigenous housing in the Calgary community by creating a shared approach to defining the context and considerations for Indigenous housing. Secondary anticipated outcomes include:

- recommending new processes that guide policy and practice;
- increase equitable access to housing;
- identifying central and key elements of housing design;
- developing housing programs and policies that are culturally relevant and meeting the needs of a diverse, urban Indigenous populations; and
- creating a methodology and tool-kit that can be shared with other communities to support their objectives surrounding Indigenous housing needs and data collection.

COLONIZATION AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

A distinct feature of this project is that it aimed to explore issues and interpret findings through an anticolonial theoretical lens. Anticolonial theory acknowledges that colonization is an ongoing reality, that it structures our society in ways that further exclude Indigenous people, and that it is not event-driven (Dei, 2001; Galvez & Muñoz, 2020). Therefore, anticolonial theory allows for a more nuanced understanding of how colonial forces are ever-present and ever-evolving in the lives of Indigenous people. It is distinct from postcolonialism, which is a field of study that can be misleading in that it assumes colonization is over and that, as Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) has pointed out, the colonizers have vacated. With regard to decolonial parallels, critical educator and anticolonial scholar George Sefa Dei (2019) posits that “Anticolonial and decoloniality are intertwined logics. Our political and discursive practices for change must be anticolonial in outlook and orientation. This way the anticolonial becomes the path to a decolonial future” (para.4).

To illuminate this path, unpacking the nature of colonization is required. This is done here by briefly examining colonization through the process of settler colonialism. Settler colonialism is defined as both a system of power and a process of elimination that, through policies, ideologies and practices, seeks the destruction of Indigenous nations in order to gain access to Indigenous lands and resources (Wolfe, 2006). While colonization can be conceptualized as a process through which colonizers overtook Indigenous lands, extracted resources, upheaved Indigenous people and then left, settler colonialism is understood as a similar destructive and extractive process, but

the colonizers never left. Colonialism is a temporary occupation of Indigenous lands to exploit resources and gain material wealth for the colonizer while settler colonialism is a permanent takeover of Indigenous lands through which the colonizers erase and replace Indigenous lands and identities by normalizing settler violence as a natural order of human development (Cox, 2017).

Canada, like Australia, New Zealand and the United States, is a settler colonial state where the violence of colonization has been justified through genocidal policy development and implementation through mechanisms such as the education system, religious indoctrination, and state-sanctioned land thefts. This justification occurs through the reproduction of a distinct set of Eurocentric ideologies and philosophies that have emerged from the European enlightenment and gave rise to capitalist economies, neoliberal politics and the naturalization of racist policies and practices that ensure the continued success of Euro-settler society and the unrelenting subjugation and destruction of Indigenous nations (Lindstrom, Pomeroy, Falvo & Bruhn (2020). The most notorious example of settler colonial violence is found in the Indian Residential Schools. The effects of these schools reverberate through Indigenous nations, which have been now reduced to reserves, settlements and communities. The legacy of colonialism and its arm, settler colonialism, also reverberate throughout the findings of the focus groups and are reflected in the structure, policies and practices of housing systems, individual landlords, non-Indigenous mainstream society and its leaders. The survey results also point to how colonial ideologies function through the privileging of Eurocentric systems, overemphasis on materialism, market economic processes as an answer to human suffering, and the continued marginalization and oppression of Indigenous culture and people.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Due to colonial processes described above, it should be expected that Indigenous peoples are having housing-related challenges in Canada's urban centres. In a recent study, the authors asserted (Lindstrom, Pomeroy, Falvo & Bruhn, 2020), "Since 1867, the jurisdictional divide of Indians from settler society has been cemented by successive laws, policies and institutions. Collectively, these contribute to a symbolic and attitudinal divide that continues to "other" First Nations people who live in cities (p. 9). Colonial policies that have been perpetuated through ongoing settler colonial priorities have contributed to absolute homelessness among Indigenous peoples living in Canada's urban centres. According to Belanger et al. (2019), "more than one in 15

urban Indigenous people are homeless, compared to one out of 128 non-Indigenous Canadians. This means that urban Indigenous people are eight times more likely to be or become homeless than non-Indigenous urban individuals" (Belanger et al., 2019, p. 9).

Today, no order of government in Canada accepts responsibility for developing the necessary new supply of affordable housing that would address these issues for Indigenous peoples whether they live 'on reserve' or in urban centres.

A 2019 report from Canada's Parliamentary Budget Officer included a very revealing assessment of future planned federal spending on urban Indigenous housing in Canada. It noted: "The planned level of funding for federally administered community housing for Indigenous households not living on reserves ($257 million) is less than half the level of funding provided over the prior 10 years ($534 million)" (Segel-Brown, 2019, p. 17). What makes this statement all the more troubling is that it holds even after the re-emergence of long-term federal involvement in housing, broadly outlined in the National Housing Strategy unveiled in November 2017. At that time, the federal government indicated that it is working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations to develop separate housing plans for those respective groups. In January 2020, the Assembly of First Nations announced its intent to create a national homelessness strategy for First Nations people living off reserve. They announced that such a strategy will include data gathering and analysis, as well as the identification of service gaps (Hamilton, 2020). The Alberta context shows some momentum around addressing Indigenous housing.

THE ALBERTA CONTEXT

Alberta's Ministry of Seniors and Housing is the province's lead ministry for the design, administration and funding of housing policy and programs. It is also responsible for the regulation of landlord-tenant relations. This Ministry negotiates bilateral housing agreements with the federal government, provides program oversight of already-existing units of private non-profit and public housing, and funds new units and repairs to existing units of affordable housing for low-income households. In recent years, there has been some positive momentum vis-à-vis the provincial government's interest in housing for Urban Indigenous peoples. However, to date, this interest has not translated into significant actions, including limited success in putting a roof over the heads of Indigenous people. Further, the Alberta government significantly reduced the allocation of Indigenous capital housing funds by 88 million from 120 million implemented for

Indigenous family housing projects in 2018 down to 32 million in 2019. The section below offers a brief overview of the local urban context.

THE CALGARY CONTEXT

According to Belanger et al. (2019), "Indigenous peoples have been migrating in larger numbers to urban centres such as Calgary since the mid-1950s. Friendship Centres were established in response to this influx…" (p. 8). Belanger et al. (2019) also identified the following barriers to Indigenous peoples finding and maintaining rental housing in Calgary: including long wait lists for subsidized housing; racist stereotypes held by landlords; and a lack of transitional support for individuals transitioning from reserve to city (Belanger et al., 2019). Having interviewed Calgary landlords, the authors found that

[t]he landlords were most concerned about Indigenous peoples importing reserve lifestyles to the city and as such their properties. Reserve lifestyles were portrayed as being incompatible with being a suitable renter and citizen. As the landlords noted, living on reserve means your rent is paid, and that home maintenance remains the First Nations government's responsibility. Being raised with an expectation of subsidies led landlords to conclude that Indigenous tenants' rents will fall into arrears due to the fact that they've never had to formally pay their rent…[T]he landlords condemned reserve lifestyles, while portraying those individuals moving from the reserve and into the city as ill prepared for urban living. (Belanger et al., 2019, p. 18)

In order to assess housing need for Canadians, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation uses a measure called core housing need. A household is said to be in core housing need if, out of financial necessity, they either pay more than 30% of their gross household income on housing, live in housing requiring major repairs, or live within housing with insufficient bedrooms for the household size in question (as determined by the National Occupancy Standards). According to the 2016 Census, whereas just under 10% of Calgary's population experiences core housing need, the corresponding figure for Indigenous households is nearly 17%.

Table 1.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CORE HOUSING NEED, CALGARY

Date based on 2016 Census

	Number of people	Number of people living in core housing need	Percentage of households living in core housing need
Total population	1,335,095	130,290	9.8
Indigenous persons	39,405	6,605	16.8
Status Indian persons	13,225	3,260	24.7
Non-status Indian persons	5,820	975	16.8
Métis persons	21,845	2,555	11.7
Inuit persons	455	45	9.9
Non-Indigenous persons	1,295,695	123,690	9.6

Source. CMHC. (2019). Core housing need characteristics by population and gender. Retrieved from CMHC website: https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca

A 2018 study followed Indigenous tenants housed in Housing First programs funded by the Calgary Homeless Foundation. It found that Indigenous peoples needed social-work support longer than non-Indigenous peoples, even after controlling for income, education, and a history of family violence. Put differently, the study found that it took Indigenous tenants longer to move on to independence than non-Indigenous tenants, even non-Indigenous tenants with the same income, same education and same reported history of family violence (Jadidzadeh & Falvo, 2018). However, missing from the study was a critical analysis of the cumulative impacts of racism and the ongoing context of settler colonial processes as precipitating unstable housing. What this

current project establishes is that culture matters in the context of housing. Making comparative assumptions based on Eurocentric metrics only serves to reinforce the deficit paradigm through which mainstream systems conceptualize Indigenous peoples. While the City of Calgary's Housing Needs Assessment (2018) states *"There is a need for culturally sensitive housing and supports specifically for the Calgary Aboriginal population"* (p. 4), this current project demonstrates, at least from the perspectives of Indigenous service-users, that this need is not being met. The same report recommends that Indigenous households be one of six groups to whom new affordable housing should be targeted (City of Calgary, 2018).

What this current project establishes is that culture matters in the context of housing. This project aims to fill in the gaps that are missing from previous reports. Rather than researching and writing on Indigenous peoples, this project is Indigenous-led and aimed to conduct research with Indigenous people. The methodology, outlined below, highlights how an Indigenous research methodology can be an effective modality for addressing power imbalances, ensuring that the research benefits Indigenous peoples and illuminating the role of culture and colonization in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous people.

METHODOLOGY

This project used an Indigenous research methodological approach aimed at centering Indigenous voices, issues and historical antecedents in ways that are aimed at making a discernable benefit to Indigenous peoples. As asserted elsewhere,

The foundational assertion that fuels Indigenous research is that research has been weaponized against Indigenous peoples, has taken place without the consent of Indigenous peoples, has advanced Western society's agenda and propelled Western academics' personal advancement without direct benefits to Indigenous communities, has defined problems according to Western interpretations and has served to perpetuate stereotypes and colonial policies based on exclusive Western understandings of Indigenous cultures. (Lindstrom, Pomeroy, Falvo & Bruhn, 2020, pp. 15-16)

Indigenous research is self-determining because Indigenous researchers are advancing the needs and interests of Indigenous communities, are defining problems according to their direct

experience with the issues, and incorporating Indigenous philosophical paradigms, ethics and protocols into the research. An Indigenous research methodology is grounded in the notion of relational accountability in that researchers strive to create and sustain respectful relationships and advance the needs of the community. As such this project represents a community-based, multi-method approach that is rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing (Lindstrom, Pomeroy, Falvo & Bruhn, 2020). The methods used in this research include:

- Environmental scan of current housing stock and program options;
- Quantitative survey with housing providers (see appendix for full results);
- Qualitative interviews and focus groups with Indigenous stakeholders (including people with lived experience), and housing providers;
- Community validation session.

Advice and guidance were sought by Elders at each stage of the research process particularly with regard to the research questions when developing approaches to sharing research results and recommendations.

DATA ANALYSIS

Anticolonial theory (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001) was used in conjunction with an Indigenous relational data analysis approach (Deloria, 1999) to interpret and analyze the focus group findings and synthesize the data into a series of recommendations. Anticolonial theorizing involves a careful examination of the multiple layers of colonial violence that make up the fabric of specific social phenomena.

In keeping with an Indigenous research methodology, a relational analysis was used both at the conceptual stages of identifying the findings as well as the final write up of the research results. While Indigenous research resists fragmentation of participants' voices, the coding and analysis process require breaking down the perspectives in order to illuminate deeper sites of meaning. Although the focus group questions guided our discussions, the participants' responses often overlapped with other questions or confronted issues that were not directly included in the question or topic area. The organization of the findings has been purposefully shaped by an Indigenous epistemology which holds that knowledge is relational and part of a universal holism within which human beings are active participants able to enact meaningful changes through

relationships to each other and everything around them. Indigenous research flows from this holism and fluidity which influences how data is conceptualized, organized, presented and disseminated and validated. Below, is an overview of the focus group participants. A detailed overview of survey respondents is found in the appendix section of this report.

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

The following describes the profiles of focus group participants and the varying support they provide followed by a profile of people with lived experience. This project recruited Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers in both management and frontline positions who worked with Indigenous peoples within the homeless and affordable housing systems as well as Indigenous peoples who were accessing affordable housing supports. Between April and June 2021, we held 6 focus groups, 4 with service providers and 2 with Indigenous peoples accessing affordable housing services for a total of 34 participants. Recruitment for the frontline workers was achieved through email invitation while participants with lived-experience were invited to focus groups through the organizations they were accessing at the time of the project. While the lived experience groups were open to all demographics of Indigenous peoples, unintentionally, the outcome was that only women attended these particular focus groups. The table below offers a detailed profile of the focus groups that were conducted with frontline participants.

Table 2.

Participant	Organization	Role	Years In Service
P1	Métis Calgary Family Services – Rainbow Lodge	Provides resources and case management to housed Indigenous families	Not disclosed
P2	Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary-Restorative Justice	Intake and systems navigation of women involved in the justice system and experiencing homelessness	1.5 years
P3	Inn From the Cold – Housing Case Management	Works with Indigenous families in the shelter system progressing into stable housing	7 years
P4	Trellis Family and Youth Services – Sustainable Families Program	Works with families to secure stable housing options in the community.	undisclosed
P5	Trellis Family and Youth Services– Sustainable Families Program	Support to families experiencing homelessness	5 years

P6	Closer to Home – Community Service	Locates housing and provides support to retain stable housing in the community	5 years
P7	Métis Calgary Family Services – Rainbow Lodge	Assists Indigenous families with resources and case management living in their housing program	2 years in role but prior experience in addictions
P8	Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary– Restorative Justice and Integration Team	Case Management with women who are homeless and transitioning from incarceration into the community	2 years but draws on years of lived-experience overcoming addictions and homelessness
P9	Drop-In Centre – Housing Program	Works in affordable housing units run and operated by the DI	7 years
P10	Inn From the Cold – Housing Case Management	Adaptive case management for housing and case management supports for homeless families	1 year in Canada and undisclosed years in home country
P11	McMahon – Youth Housing Program	work with Indigenous youth 16-24- housing first program	3 years
P12	McMan – Youth Program – Aboriginal Hope Homes	Works with Indigenous youth 16-24 in a housing first program	10 years
P13	Calgary John Howard Society- Housing Case Management	Assists adults with histories of chronic homelessness, supports Indigenous individuals, anyone over the age of 18, any gender	5 years
P14	Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary – Housing Program	Assists Indigenous individuals to get stable enough to be housed, meet individuals' basic needs, and connects to supports in the community	3 years with the AFCC, 1 year in current role
P15	Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary – Housing Program	Case manager for singles housing program, harm reduction approach, teaches life skills, works with Indigenous individuals to get ID, furniture, etc. Wrap around supports	3+ years

P16	Calgary Alpha House Society – Clayton House	Offers wrap around supports, i.e., life skills, referrals, access to Elders. About 93% of clients are Indigenous.	4 years
P17	Miskanawah Community Services Association– Program Resource	Case Management supporting families in poverty and involvement with Child and Family Services	Undisclosed
P18	Calgary John Howard Society – Youth Housing	Provides housing for 50 youth between ages of 15-24	Undisclosed
P19	Calgary Fetal Alcohol Network – Addresses challenges FASD individuals face in housing	Responsible for supporting FASD individuals in Calgary area, including Siksika	Undisclosed
P20	Calgary Alpha House Society-Housing Program	Permanent supportive housing manager – Building she works in has 24 units, works with individuals with mobility needs, cognitive disabilities. About 50% of population is Indigenous	Undisclosed
P23	Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary-Restorative Justice and Integration	Providing housing supports to Indigenous women transitioning from incarceration to the community and experiencing homelessness	Less than 1 year
P24	Horizon Housing Affordable Housing	Provides communication for Horizon Housing	1.5 years
P25	Calgary Alpha House Society – Veterans Building	Provides supports to previously homeless veterans, who are struggling with alcohol or other addictions	Less than 1 year

FRONT-LINE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

As the table above demonstrates, those taking part in the focus groups had varying degrees of experience with some being very new to their role, less than one year, to others who carried over

over tens of years of experience. The average years of experience working in a supportive capacity were around five years. The participants were from a diverse range of ethnicities from Euro-settler origins to relatively recent immigrants as well as Indigenous workers from both First Nations and Métis backgrounds. One participant shared how as an immigrant working with Indigenous peoples, they brought their experience in working within a similar field in their home country to how they practice in their current role here in Calgary.

The focus groups revealed a multitude of contexts within which service providers assisted Indigenous peoples in accessing or maintaining affordable housing which ranged from community outreach/restorative justice approaches that involved helping Indigenous women find housing, community integration, assisting clients in navigating the various social and health systems, working in homeless shelters, and youth and singles housing and seniors' supportive housing. Participants often acknowledged that some of them provide services and supports to the most vulnerable of the population: Indigenous women fleeing abuse as well as youth who are experiencing homelessness.

Indigenous service providers would often draw on their lived experience which helped them to relate to Indigenous clients. Many of the participants worked for organizations that offered wrap-around services which were specifically geared towards providing support to Indigenous families, youth and singles. Others worked with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and one person held a specialized position in providing support and advocacy for individuals experiencing housing related barriers due to a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) diagnosis. It was noted that many, if not all, of the participants expressed going over above what is required of them in order to support families and others they served. They would often find creative ways to solve problems that included building positive partnerships with moving companies, subsidizing clients' rent, paying damage deposits, and assisting with budgeting. Below, are some additional details that focus group participants shared in relation to their roles serving Indigenous families.

FAMILY SPECIFIC SUPPORTS

Many of the focus group participants provided support services to Indigenous families and many held a great deal of experience. One participant shared how they assisted with supporting the needs of families once they were in housing as opposed to helping families finding housing. Some of the organizations serving families helped with furniture, food, clothing as well as access to programs such as parenting groups, counseling, addictions support, and cultural and spiritual supports. Another shared how they work specifically with Indigenous families experiencing homelessness in the shelter system. They noted that many of the individuals expressed how the transition from the reserve to the city is difficult as is navigating the urban system.

In their work with clients, some participants found there was a lack of understanding and knowledge about tenant responsibilities and a general lack of cultural understanding with regard to how Indigenous peoples conceptualize family. Many participants working with families also shared how there was a lack of empathy from landlords which made it even more difficult for families to either obtain or maintain affordable housing. Other family specific supports included assisting women in temporary housing situations, especially those fleeing violence and domestic abuse, or offering supports to Indigenous parents, some of whom were homeless, in trying to get their children back from custody of child services.

The focus group data further highlighted how providing affordable housing supports to Indigenous families is not a straightforward process. When frontline workers are actively trying to locate housing units, they consider not only the cost but also the size of the unit and whether it's appropriate for Indigenous families based on their needs. Understanding the needs and relational dynamics of Indigenous families is part of the process of setting them up for success. Facilitating healthy and positive relationships with landlords was also identified as a safety practice that was inclusive of the supports provided to families.

The landlord was seen as a key determining factor in Indigenous families' safety so many of the participants shared how they would be advocates for families and attend meetings with landlords. Moreover, Indigenous affordable housing approaches must include family preservation as a key focus and several focus group participants asserted that more affordable housing programs are trying to incorporate family preservation ideals when housing families. Young Indigenous parents are particularly vulnerable to family destruction and many of the focus group participants acknowledged the importance of wrap-around supports that are rooted in Indigenous culture as pathways to prevent child apprehensions and involvement with the systems and other barriers

that destroy Indigenous families (child welfare, addictions, gang involvement, etc.). Much of this work involves goal-planning and educating families and connecting them with cultural resources.

NON-INDIGENOUS SPECIFIC HOUSING SUPPORTS

In addition to working with Indigenous families, affordable housing supports for Indigenous peoples occur within the broader housing system that is inclusive of serving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Many of the focus group participants provided services to Indigenous peoples within this context. For example, Closer to Home is a non-Indigenous organization and provides housing support that Indigenous women and families often access.

Another participant worked at supportive housing buildings operated by the Drop-in Center (DI) of Calgary which caters to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, thus all of the people housed in buildings are adult renters. The participant further pointed out that although chronic homelessness is defined as being homeless for more than a year, most of the clients they serve have been homeless for five years or more. For Indigenous renters, some cultural programming was offered to residents but at the time of the focus groups, Covid-19 precautions halted all Indigenous programming.

Other participants supported social reintegration inclusive of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people coming from penitentiaries. One participant working in a leadership position with Alpha House stated that although it is not Indigenous specific, *"93% of the guys here are Indigenous. I have thirty units in my building and as permanent supportive housing. We usually do the same things, we do all wrap around supports, teach life skills, do tons of referrals."* Another participant working in the same organization added, *"My building has twenty-four units, we're an accessible building so we work with a lot of individuals who may have mobility needs, cognitive delays, cognitive concerns, brain injuries, early onset dementia, that sort of stuff. All of the units are accessible, but we have a lot of individuals who are a little older and I would say about 50% of our population is Indigenous as well."* In addition to this, Alpha House also has a veteran's building so there are few Indigenous people living there but it does have an Indigenous liaison who supports cultural connections. Another participant worked at Horizon Housing, an affordable housing complex that is inclusive of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, in

communications. Their role involved *"providing communications that resonate with the people that we serve."*

YOUTH SUPPORT

Providing supports that were specific to youth, Indigenous and non-Indigenous inclusive, was also part of the work that some of the focus group participants did. One person working with Hope Homes had been in the field of serving youth for over 10 years and the Calgary John Howard Society (CJHS) was also represented in the focus groups where 20% of the youth the organization served were Indigenous. Effective relationship building with Indigenous youth mean ensuring that youth have choice. Assessing the housing needs often involve drawing on culturally appropriate frameworks such as the Circle of Courage yet each youth is different so instrumental, cultural and emotional needs are considered in the context of what the youth want. Those serving youth also recognized the importance of educating youth on their rights and encouraged them to speak to landlords and to educate them on self-advocacy which in turn cultivates youths' sense of agency.

SINGLES HOUSING

Other focus group participants offered insights in the context of serving Indigenous clients in singles housing. Notable, the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary offers wrap-around supportive housing for Indigenous adults and many of the supportive housing buildings with the DI and Alpha House catering to single men who are experiencing multiple barriers to stable housing.

LIVED EXPERIENCE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

The following table provides a profile of the participants who took part in the focus groups geared toward Indigenous people accessing affordable housing services or in need of access.

Table 3.

Service User Participant (SUP)	Age range	Treaty region/Status/nation
SUP1	36-50	Treaty 7/Status
SUP2	25 years old	Cree/Métis/non-Status
SUP3	37 years old	Haida Gwaii/Nisgaa Treaty
SUP4	60 years old	Treaty 7/Status/Tsuut'ina
SUP5	49 years old	Treaty 6/Status/Cree
SUP6	54 years old	Treaty 7/Status/undisclosed
SUP7	25-24	Treaty 4/Status
SUP8	undisclosed	Treaty 4/Status
SUP9	36-45	Treaty 7/Status

All of the people who volunteered to be interviewed were women and so, the client focus groups provided a distinct Indigenous women's perspective to the issues related to challenges and opportunities that Indigenous people encounter when accessing affordable housing in the City of Calgary. With the exception of one young woman, all were Status First Nations and ranged between 24 – 60 years of age. Two women were from territories outside of Alberta and most others were from Treaty 7 with one woman from Treaty 6. Although the focus groups were held over Zoom. It appeared that many of the women projected a sense of deep frustration with the lack of affordable housing, yet they offered each other support and advice around where to locate resources in the community and strategies for conversing with landlords.

Many women had children as well as grandchildren and our dialogues often revolved around ensuring the safety of children and meeting their needs. A notable absence was the voices of Indigenous men which, due to the history of how research in general has been weaponized against Indigenous peoples, both historically and currently, many Indigenous people in general are reluctant to engage as participants in any kind of study. Discernable benefits of research are not always directly felt in Indigenous communities and Western research approaches tend to be extractive in nature. Despite these challenges, most of the women in our focus groups openly shared their perspectives and experiences in accessing affordable housing. Detailed findings from the focus groups with both frontline workers and clients are presented in the following sections.

Focus Group Findings

The findings are organized into a series of categories and subcategories which have been broadly informed by the research questions and identified and interpreted using the data analysis approach described earlier. These research questions included:

1. **How do cultural perspectives of Indigenous Peoples inform the housing design and opportunities across the housing continuum to better meet the needs and preferences of a diverse urban Indigenous population?**

2. **What are the implications for the National Housing Strategy and non-market housing providers in planning, designing, delivering and reporting on housing for Indigenous Peoples?**

The findings are understood here as shared experiences. In unpacking the findings, it was important to identify how the concept of autonomy along with understanding how the centrality of culture in housing are relevant factors; essentially to clarify why Indigenous culture matters. Other themes which arose were related to how power and oppression function and current housing barriers and gaps in services. The findings conclude with a focus on possibilities such as current successful strategies and features of culturally relevant housing.

AUTONOMY

Autonomy is a primary value in Indigenous worldviews encompassing everything from parenting, education, and social and political systems. During the focus groups, both frontline workers, managers and the women experiencing housing barriers gave examples of the importance of autonomy to guide programs, resources and approaches as well as the need to feel as if there was a choice in accessing safe and affordable housing. In the context of safety, workers spoke of attempting to provide their clients with as much autonomy as possible, to put the *"ball in their court"* by asking their clients what they need and/or want and then looking for the *"best fit"* to align with clients' choices. Some of the frontline workers in the focus groups acknowledged that not all Indigenous people are wanting access to cultural supports. The notion of client-driven housing was often referred to as always based around meeting the needs of clients within

creating opportunity for them to make the decisions and choices around their housing. For example, one participant working at Alpha House shared how they tried to ensure *"the clients have a measure of choice and trying to advocate and also try to respect people's personal agency and personal autonomy."* There was an important acknowledgement that Indigenous parents, singles and youth have deep insights into their situation and what kinds of supports they know they need and then supplementing with supports that their clients may not know they need simply because they might be unfamiliar with the urban context or are new to living on their own. One focus group participant shared how their assessment for housing needs was encompassed into a one-page document that outlined what a family wants/hopes in a home, things they could live without and things they could not. Involving Indigenous peoples in planning of programs based on their needs was seen as high priority and in the context of housing design, consultation with Indigenous peoples was seen as a critical aspect.

From the perspective of service-user, Indigenous women in the focus groups expressed similar ideas around autonomy and the need to feel like they had a choice in both the type of dwelling as well as the location. One focus group participant shared how, *"I got in trouble from AISH today because I said I would not accept housing in the east. She said, no you have to accept housing everywhere. No, it is my right not to accept housing in a dangerous area when I'm a senior, as well as I have grandchildren."* Indigenous clients need space to feel they have a voice, to work through relationship difficulties and to accommodate their families. Because of the history and ongoing impacts of colonization, understanding the role of autonomy and incorporating practices into supportive housing approaches was seen as an important aspect of service provision that validates the relevancy of Indigenous identity and culture.

IDENTITY AND CULTURE MATTER

Analysis of the focus group data demonstrates the many ways that Indigenous culture and identity matter when it comes to programming, resource allocation, needs assessment, housing design, housing location, communication practices – both verbal and written – and the relationships that are created between frontline workers and Indigenous service-users. Access to and the freedom to practice Indigenous culture are rights that many of the frontline focus group participants recognized. Assessment was based on housing needs, physical needs, and cultural supports requirements – the ability for Indigenous peoples to access cultural resources in the

community. Alpha House, for example, takes a culturally-informed approach when it comes to serving Indigenous people: *"All of our programs, all of our buildings are very culturally informed, we all have very similar... we utilize a lot of the same supports, so we have the Elder who's able to go to several buildings. We have our Indigenous liaison that visits several buildings"* and while older clients already may have access to cultural supports or be connected to their Indigenous culture in embodied and active ways, youth and young families may require additional support. Many frontline workers, especially those who were Indigenous, expressed that spiritual safety was a key concern so having Elders visit clients' homes and do blessing was a key consideration in assessment of needs.

Another participant expressed that their organization tries to offer access to culture, but there is a need to improve upon this direction. One participant who worked closely with Indigenous youth expressed that it was important to avoid taking a pan-Indigenous approach to programming and instead to take the time to support Indigenous youth in connecting with the distinct aspects of their nation's identity. She further stated that Indigenous identity needs to be validated during the intake process, and *"when you meet an Indigenous person, acknowledging where they come from"* helps to understand that Indigenous people have different paradigms. Another participant provided an example of goal-setting using the medicine-wheel framework.

In regard to the physical building, some frontline participants spoke to how it is not so much about the design or structure of the space but more about the resources such as access to smudge kits, connection to Elders, drumming, and dialogues around Indigenous teachings. Housing design was also referred to as a safe place to practice culture, access to resources and the natural environment and to feel respected as an autonomous human being worthy of dignity.

One participant shared that while Indigenous identity is important, culture and identity must be understood in the context of how clients perceive themselves. Indigenous clients need to lead how they want to express their identities in accessing housing.

DIVERSITY WITHIN INDIGENOUS NATIONS

Indigenous people are not homogenous and the land we now call Canada was once home to hundreds of diverse Indigenous nations each with their own languages and distinct practices. This fact was not lost on some of the frontline focus group participants, particularly those working with youth. Some even shared how they were mindful of client conflicts that were based in tribal worldviews. Despite the diversity or perceived rivalries, there is also a lot of intertribal sharing of

knowledge and ceremonies. One participant working with youth further stated that *"as young as they are, they still know their history from their ancestors, and they'll talk about that."* Differences also exist with regard to how Indigenous peoples understand and experience family relationships.

One participant in the frontline focus groups talked about how "not all Indigenous communities are the same." From an anticolonial perspective, it should also be understood that colonization has impacted Indigenous familial relationships to varying degrees. Some Indigenous peoples adhere to traditional notions while others, especially those who have been raised in the child welfare system, may have internalized the nuclear family model as the norm (Lindstrom, et al., 2016).

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY

Many times, throughout the focus groups, both frontline participants as well as clients offered examples of Indigenous understandings of family which encompassed the street family, large extended families, kinship ties created through ceremony and spiritual connectivity. One participant explained that family *"means something different. It's now just the nuclear family, you know, a very insular way of thinking about family. It's that network, that familial network is quite large."*

Youth workers also stated that family is different for Indigenous youth and that the youth *"define what their family looks like, whether it's from the streets or Reserve or whatever, we want to walk with them in that journey."* Both case workers and clients expressed how important they felt it was for landlords to know and understand that Indigenous conceptualizations of family are different. Family structure is fluid in Indigenous kinship systems, but current affordable housing options often don't allow for the ebb and flow of relatives in housing spaces. Descriptions of experiences with traditional adoption practices demonstrate that Indigenous adoption protocols are still very much alive today. The focus group data demonstrated that providing culturally appropriate supports to Indigenous peoples means accepting and understanding how Indigenous family is structured, and that the approach in supportive housing services can no longer be about having the Indigenous family conform to the system but for the system to be adaptable to the needs of Indigenous families.

It is also important to think about how Indigenous peoples conceptualize family in terms of housing designs. Additionally, the program structures should include Indigenous awareness training approaches for staff, which need to include the concepts of Indigenous kinship systems

and the training must be available to non-Indigenous community members, so they are aware of Indigenous peoples understand and experience family relationships. One focus group participant asserted, *"That is why you will see that they have friends and family over … I think that in terms of the Indigenous awareness training, it's not just for support staff but being able to share information with external partners."*

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND WORLDVIEWS

The women with lived experience described culturally defined needs and understandings of home that are diametrically opposed to Eurocentric, settler perspectives. One participant described how she struggled with the housing systems and landlords' approach to pest control. Within her particular nation's perspectives, she defines all animal as *"warrior people without voices to express themselves"* and often finds herself *"defending what other people don't understand like spiders, or crawfish, just creation itself. I'm kind of sensitive about how pest control is done. It might be viewed as a pest by someone else but to me it has meaning."* This is a significant finding because it offers direct insight into how Indigenous cultural worldviews impact Indigenous people's experiences in Western housing. These experiences influence how Indigenous people perceive their investment in affordable housing, and whether they are deemed as *'good'* renters.

In terms of programming, one young mother described how there was a need for a mentoring program much like Big Brothers but one that is culturally specific to the relational needs of Indigenous youth. Feeling extreme disconnection from culture while living in the city, another participant described the importance of *"finding that connection in the city for Indigenous people coming from the reserve and where they can feel connected and feel that sense of belonging."* From the clients' perspectives, it was also seen as important for landlords to know about smudging, medicines and the role of animals in Indigenous cultures. Practices such as bringing birds home to take their feathers for ceremonial purposes was identified as something not out of the ordinary for Indigenous peoples.

In light of the findings above, it is clear that Indigenous identity and culture are relevant to both frontline workers and clients in an affordable housing context. Despite the evidence, the affordable system originates and is structured both conceptually and pragmatically from a Eurocentric paradigm that has actively sought to destroy and oppress Indigenous identity and culture through the misuse and abuse of power that are manifest in the ongoing processes of

settler colonialism. The following section provides a detailed overview of how power and oppression function in the affordable housing system.

POWER AND OPPRESSION

Power and oppression were dominant themes throughout the focus group conversations with both frontline workers and the women accessing the supports and resources. Analysis of the raw data provided evidence to support the finding that frontline workers' relationships with Indigenous families is sometimes compromised due to the nature of the system as one steeped in power imbalances. Service providers and frontline workers as well as clients have little to no control over the rental situation and very often, workers are forced to treat clients as if they have no agency due to poverty. It was noted that landlords have a lot of power and not much can be done when they are using that power against Indigenous people.

Participants working with youth have encountered situations where landlords blame the Indigenous youth for problems at the rental unit (i.e., burst waterpipes, bedbugs). Filing a complaint usually goes nowhere and some frontline participants have seen Indigenous families treated so poorly in the housing system that many often give up their search for housing in the city.

Participants, many times over, spoke of the importance of advancing explorations of housing issues through an Indigenous lens so non-Indigenous people can be more understanding around the complex issues that originate from colonial oppression and the ongoing impacts of genocidal policy. Some of the frontline participants, additionally, offered deep insight into the history of trauma that Indigenous clients are experiencing and do their best to provide supports that will help them with that trauma.

Resistance on the part of landlords and neighbors around smudging was an ongoing theme and one resulting from oppressive colonial policies. One Indigenous frontline worker stated, *"I think even deeper we need to understand how Indigenous ceremonies have had to go underground in the past, and now we're reviving them but yet it's like we're still being, like our ceremonies, there's an attempt to erase them simply because people don't know. It's that lack of knowledge, where does that lack of knowledge come from and why do people have absolutely no idea of who Indigenous people are and our culture?"* One participant has witnessed Indigenous renters being evicted from units because they were smudging.

In terms of Indigenous peoples being employed in the housing system, some participants noted that the problem is not with Indigenous workers but with the colonial employment system. Indigenous workers are not feeling welcomed beyond tokenism and only a very few are retained in these positions.

The Western view of housing and social system is discordant with Indigenous ways of being and knowing. One participant shared how the destruction of Indigenous families has been a driving force on the colonial agenda and that it was disheartening to see that a major funder like the Calgary Homeless Foundation has not prioritized family preservation within their funding model. Living in an urban environment automatically disconnects Indigenous peoples from their identity because the community support, and access to land and ceremonies are missing. One participant shared that locking Indigenous people into leases is unrealistic for the clients they are working with because there is a fluidity in living patterns in that many migrate between the city and the reserve or will stay with relatives for an extended period of time if they get lonely.

Cameras and surveillance are not conducive to Indigenous lifestyles and can trigger past traumas and reactions to oppression. Some frontline participants held a deep awareness of colonial language surrounding affordable housing and one participant referred to being aware of the lateral violence that occurs within Indigenous organizations which is a by-product of internalized oppression. In regard to housing organizations that are supporting Indigenous peoples, one non-Indigenous participant from the frontline focus groups shared, *"what I've noticed is sometimes lateral violence coming from those organizations. A lack of compassion and support for where folks are at. I think, maybe comes from this internalized oppression…I am a settler, and I don't even fully understand that and it is really difficult. I'm not saying people with lived experience don't and that's not my place, but I do feel like there can be a lot of lateral violence. One of my Indigenous staff was saying the same thing in her experience as well."*

Oppressive experiences with power imbalances also emerged as a significant finding in the focus group with Indigenous women. One participant described feeling unsafe in the downtown area she resided due to crime and drug use, yet she had no choice but to live there due to no other affordable housing options. Participants shared experiences with predatory, intrusive and controlling landlords who try to take advantage of single Indigenous women leaving many feeling unsafe in their housing units. Another participant argued that it seems easier to stay in a treatment center rather than looking for housing and that all the hassle of trying to get housing was enough to want to go back to using drugs. She further shared that, *"I do have a criminal record. So, what now? I paid all this money to sit on this waiting list for two years and they decide,*

'hey you have criminal past we're not going to give it to you.' After you paid all this money and went out of the way to trying to change your life around." This is a reality that Indigenous peoples looking for housing and employment must face.

Other issues that were brought up by one client demonstrate how oppressive forces related to colonial society and the systems she must navigate are present in all aspects of her life. These issues include feeling forced into situations of unemployment and dependency on social assistance, being vulnerable to predatory landlords, living in places that are not her choice at all, being forced to live with men just so she could have a place to stay and couch-surfing. Another participant felt as if she was forced to have to teach landlords about smudging and even then, some landlords are still not accepting of it. Data from the client focus groups supports the finding that abuse against Indigenous women is a pattern in supportive and affordable housing contexts.

TRAUMA AND ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN

Some of the women in the focus groups described being forced to remain in domestic violence situations because there was no other place to go. Income support is not enough to live on and finding employment is difficult due to multiple barriers that are related to systemic racism, poverty or having a criminal record. One participant described having received support from the RCMP to leave her husband because he was sexually abusing her daughter. She recounted how Victims Services paid for her damage deposit and a friend paid for her rent and she was worried about how she would pay back her friend.

Client participants expressed that support workers need to be more knowledgeable about other resources in the community instead of just immediately putting women in emergency shelters. There needs to be other options. Another participant described how she spent most of her life on the reserve but was fleeing violence and ended up in a shelter in the city. Violence, predatory landlords and systemic racism and discrimination seemed to be regular occurrences in the lives of Indigenous women. Indeed, experiences with racism and discrimination constituted another major finding throughout the research.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Nearly all of the participants, either as witnesses or victims, shared how racism and discrimination were common in the affordable housing system and negatively affected Indigenous peoples in many aspects of their journey toward obtaining safe and affordable housing. Frontline workers described instances where racism was a major obstacle and contributed to multiple existing barriers. Even though clients have money for rent, even first and last month's rent, landlords are still reticent to rent to them due to overt racism.

Participants described attempting to house Indigenous families together, but the main barrier was racist/discriminatory landlords. It is common for Indigenous people to get turned away on their own and have better luck when an advocate is with them leaving many clients afraid or insecure to search for housing on their own. One frontline participant explained, *"We've had families as soon as they show up the landlords take a look at them and say, oh it's rented, even though it isn't rented."* Another felt that it was part of their role to *"protect"* Indigenous families from discriminatory landlords.

Racism becomes a safety issue for Indigenous families right from the start. Other frontline participants observed that many Indigenous people already have a lack of confidence, and the trauma of racism aggravates existing insecurities. There is no recourse for Indigenous people who encounter racial violence in the housing system. One participant expressed that pushing back against racist and discriminatory landlords seems futile, *"How can we possibly ask people to fight when they are in so much … in such an experience of stress and trauma and acute crisis. Even though we will always advocate and have peoples' backs to do that. I feel like we often give people impossible choices."* There is a need for developing other strategies for addressing issues of discrimination and racism because current processes are ineffective in supporting Indigenous people who are accessing housing forcing far too many to endure situations because of their desperate need for housing.

Racism and discrimination are not isolated to landlords, but it was noted that Indigenous housing clients also experienced racism from other residents in buildings where they resided. Systemic discrimination was a factor in addressing safety and support for Indigenous people residing in affordable housing. In the context of supportive housing for chronically homeless peoples, it was implied that Indigenous residents are experiencing violence and calls to police are useless because staff are met with unsympathetic and uncaring officers.

Empathy, the ability to put themselves in clients' shoes, to advocate and support them in their 'dreams,' is necessary for those supporting Indigenous peoples. Supporting clients often meant going to view rental units with them or preparing them to meet landlords as if they were attending a job interview. Validating people's experiences was seen as important. When Indigenous people are facing racism, it does not help to minimize the negative impacts of those experiences or tell them that it is not racism. Participants also referred to the racism that Indigenous people are subject to in public spaces with one feeling that some areas of the city, such as southwest Calgary, are more discriminatory than others. Other frontline participants were interested in trying to build capacity with their clients to prepare them to cope and manage in a healthy way when they do face racism.

One non-Indigenous frontline focus group participant who worked with Indigenous youth shared how, *"giving our youth an opportunity and a space to talk about how they're feeling, so that we can approach things differently with them, so that they can also build those tools....when they are independent that if they do face that discrimination, unfortunately again, that they would have the confidence to move forward and advocate."*

Another frontline participant was critical of their organization's one-size-fits all approach when it comes to addressing the racism that Indigenous peoples face despite the unique experiences of Indigenous people. They described Indigenous clients as being more discriminated against than other clients, and indicated that this was not taken into consideration in how their agency addressed the needs of Indigenous clients. They expressed how the cumulative and the negative effects of racism were not on the radar of the agency nor the staff.

Others pointed to how society only sees Indigenous peoples struggles rather than successes and the negative portrayal of Indigenous peoples in the media fuels stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes. Youth workers also spoke to how Indigenous youth were even more vulnerable to the deleterious effects of racism and those working with youth had witnessed first-hand the discrimination that Indigenous youth face in housing.

Other frontline participants spoke about how regardless of social standing, Indigenous people face discrimination in the housing system and that racism and discrimination are consistent barriers in accessing affordable housing. Indigenous workers described their own experiences of being discriminated against because of their last name and being forced to use their father's last name on job applications because it is more *'white sounding.'* Another participant perceived lack

of awareness and education as a problem that contributes to discrimination and stereotyping of Indigenous people.

Overall, the findings from the focus groups highlighted that racism and discrimination are tremendous barriers in the housing systems and while organizations try to make housing more accessible, efforts are thwarted by racist attitudes that work against all Indigenous people. However, non-Indigenous organizations also need to be more supportive of Indigenous workers and clients especially around smudging. One participant argued that there is an unrealistic belief that smudging will start a huge fire or generate copious amounts of smoke which is inaccurate. Many organizations also use air purifiers which only defeats the purpose of smudge as a cleansing agent. Stereotyping of Indigenous renters, being unsupportive or blatantly intolerant of cultural practices of wellness and healing such as smudging and drumming lead not only to lack of stable, affordable housing for Indigenous peoples but also erodes self-esteem and hurts the spirit – as one client participant noted, *"when you're treated badly, it hurts."* Another facet of racism relates to the concept of NIMBY, an acronym referring to 'not in my back yard.'

NIMBY

The phenomenon of NIMBY was present in the perspectives shared by both frontline workers and Indigenous clients. Participants shared how neighbors were quick to complain to landlords about Indigenous renters, would stereotype Indigenous renters as criminals, drug dealers or blame them for anything that goes wrong. Racism did not always come from the landlord but also the surrounding community. One frontline worker shared how, *"I have had clients housed in a community that's safe and surrounded by everything that they need, but then could be living in the same building as a neighbour who is pushing those stereotypes on clients."*

A client participant described how Indigenous renters were experiencing discrimination from other non-Indigenous residents who lived in a large affordable housing complex, especially around smudging. In attempting to mitigate this, the participant shared that they, *"put out this communication, what is smudging? If you've never heard of this here is what it is, here is what you might notice. Instead of coming in complaining of a funky smell, ask your neighbour, hey what is smudging, what is your perspective on this and try to get to know them. It's really about increasing knowledge, increasing awareness and trying to promote friendly neighbours, so that everyone has a positive experience when they're living at there."*

The focus group with clients also provided evidence that NIMBY was a problem with nearly all of them describing negative incidents with neighbors by which they felt either they or their family members were targeted because they were Indigenous and made to feel as if they did not belong in the neighborhood.

While power, oppression and racism and discrimination are major barriers to Indigenous people's participation in Western society in general, the following section outlines barriers and challenges that are more specific to housing.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING

This section offers a discussion of findings that include challenges and barriers to affordable and stable housing from both the perspective of frontline workers and clients. The discussion begins with a general overview of barriers and then outlines more granular findings that relate to addictions, poverty, Indigeneity as a barrier to stable housing, uncaring landlords, risks of ghettoization and finally, systemic factors. Others felt that the most profound challenges related to low income and uncaring landlords, poor credit or *"guest management,"* which is a notion that essentially equates to an inability for Indigenous renters to conform to Western societal housing norms.

ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Addictions or experiencing mental health challenges was seen as a barrier to stable housing. One participant in the frontline workers' and managers focus groups felt that low-cost housing units put families at risk because they are forced to live in situations where they are around crime and substance abuse. This is particularly concerning in situations *"When we're trying to support individuals in getting out of that lifestyle or even with harm reduction, that exposure sometimes doesn't really align with the goals that individual is trying to achieve."*

A frontline participant who worked in providing wrap-around supportive housing for Indigenous clients shared *"I see a lot of addictions and mental health and stuff, so people want to go to treatment, we get them set up with that, just a lot of basic needs"* however, trying to house clients in dwellings that would support their sober living was seen as a major challenge.

Many supportive housing organizations will go through the same landlords regardless of the condition of rental units simply because they've built a relationship with them, and they are the only landlords that will rent to their clients. One worker put it this way, *"Trying to house clients outside of the landlords that we use has been pretty much impossible, I have had no luck."*

Another challenge comes from the attitudes of individual income support workers who expect Indigenous clients to find employment despite having profound addictions and that many workers don't consider addictions to be a *'disease'* preventing Indigenous people from working. Moreover, access to ceremony and smudging is a necessary component for Indigenous people to heal from addictions yet far too many housing units don't allow smudging or for reasons cited above, Indigenous peoples are prevented from practicing culture. Harm reduction subsidized housing models aren't always appropriate for those who are on their healing and sobriety journeys because they are much too triggering. One client in the focus group shared her story of coping with her son's mental illness and how there were no supports at all for him, in any of the systems. Another client shared some her personal history of the drug abuse in her family and how that motivated her to avoid using hard drugs for fear of turning out like some of her family members. She stated, *"My dad is a crackhead and I stopped doing drugs when I was 18 because I didn't want to live like him. I quit drinking when I was 26."* Another barrier to maintaining or securing affordable housing was poverty.

POVERTY

Frontline focus group participants shared how their clients were limited in choice by affordability and that what they want is usually out of their income level. The affordable housing reality is a *"take what you can get"* situation where safety and access to resources are often impossible to prioritize. Accessing low-income supports is challenging because many of the resources require renters to have done their taxes and many Indigenous clients haven't always had the means to comply. Location was seen as a key determinant in terms of meeting the needs of Indigenous renters who are recovering from addictions, but affordability pushes people into low income, and locations where high crime rates and a risk of relapse is more likely.

Transit, access to resources and schools were important considerations based on family needs, but Indigenous families are often forced to take what they could get, to settle for housing whereas, from the perspectives of frontline workers, non-Indigenous people wouldn't have to. Indigenous families are often forced into substandard housing because income support isn't

sufficient to support affordable housing or offer choice. One client shared how she lives with her mother (essentially, couch-surfing) because she cannot afford to pay rent, is unemployed and lives on a $220/month budget provided by Income Support. Another client shared how it's important to have your own rent – cash on-hand – rather than waiting for organizations to assist with rent but being on income assistance and unemployed makes it difficult to have extra cash on-hand. For the clients in the focus group, paying rent usually means sacrificing gas, groceries or some other expense and many were stuck in a cycle of poor housing where they are forced to wait years for subsidy to stay in a *"shitty neighborhood."* Overall, the experience of poverty reduces options, places Indigenous people into neighbourhoods without resources, which is dangerous or in housing of unscrupulous landlords.

UNCARING LANDLORDS

The data from the focus groups with both frontline workers and Indigenous women accessing or in need of affordable housing demonstrated the key role that landlords have in either supporting positive housing outcomes or contributing to Indigenous homelessness. Some frontline workers described encounters with landlords who did not want big families staying in their units because it was a *'bothersome'* burden in terms of guest management. Others expressed how many landlords couldn't be bothered to support harm reduction. Some participants shared how there appeared to be more discrimination against Indigenous peoples with the bigger housing companies.

Another theme identified, was having to deal with abusive landlords who sexually harassed Indigenous women or were slum lords who allowed their rental units to fall into extreme disrepair were common experiences described by participants. One participant even described how some landlords terrorize clients and describe, *"the unsafe behaviour from landlords, usually if they're like hitting on me or trying to date me, run my life, something like that because I have had that happened in the past. Especially when they have access to your home. You don't want to be sexually assaulted by them either, so that's a big thing."*

There was an acknowledgement of the power landlords have over Indigenous people and how Indigenous people rarely challenge that power lest they risk being evicted. Some landlords preferred not to deal with agencies at all. Other frontline participants working with youth shared how they often had to ensure that the youth are not being housed in illegal suites or substandard housing with slum landlords. Frontline workers consider the condition of homes as a factor in

assessment processes and have seen rental units that have no smoke alarms, no furnace cleaning, or units that have mold or bed bugs.

Clients in the focus groups shared various experiences that included being unfairly charged for damages or unpaid rent, being intimidated by landlords or being in housing situations where the landlords refused to fix things in the house. Other barriers to accessible housing were those related to systemic factors which are briefly discussed below.

SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Clients shared experiences related to the rigid nature of the social systems that they are required to engage with, such as the justice system, or those they rely on, such as income supports and AISH. One focus group participant shared how she is forced to depend on supportive resources in order to honor the guardianship agreements she has with regard to being the caregiver for her grandkids. She further commented that the systems needed to be more supportive of her situation, *"The systems are so inflexible, especially when it comes to housing. A lot of our needs as Indigenous people, the systems can't meet those needs because they are so inflexible, and they treat everybody the same. They don't make these kinds of special allowances or think that in the long run they could be saving more money if they would build in a little bit more flexibility into their system."*

Forced dependency is a by-product of colonial policies aimed at eradicating Indigenous autonomy, self-determination, and rights dignity and freedom. That Indigenous peoples must rely on systems that also erect barriers to independence is evidenced in the findings. Moreover, the barriers described above are interlaced with gaps in services that make the road to securing affordable housing even more difficult for Indigenous peoples. The section below outlines the gaps as they emerged from the focus group data.

CURRENT GAPS IN SERVICES

This section offers an overview of findings that encompass gaps in services as described by the frontline focus group participants in relation to how the systems are ineffective in responding to the realities of Indigenous people, realities which have been shaped by colonial forces. There was

an urgency attached to getting Indigenous people into housing because of their situation such as chronic homelessness or fleeing violence, but also because of a dearth of affordable housing. One frontline worker stated, *"We are rushing through all the things that matter and the work that needs to be done."* Indeed, the focus groups point to how there is a real lack of affordable housing specifically geared to Indigenous peoples in general.

A frontline support staff working with FASD clients described how supportive housing and access to affordable housing for FASD clients was a major gap as was cultural supports to help Indigenous clients with FASD connect with culture. While some clients were able access organizations that offered drumming and language classes, there is no structured housing for FASD clients that was culturally appropriate. Indeed, other frontline workers shared how in general, there was a lack of cultural supports for Indigenous peoples living in supportive group home contexts.

Another gap identified by both clients and frontline participants related to challenges associated with trying to find housing for women fleeing abuse or violence. There is a lack of shelters specific to Indigenous women fleeing violence or transitioning from the justice system. One program was identified for short-term housing for women had a long wait list and is not Indigenous-specific. There are a lot of Indigenous single mothers fleeing violence from reserve and the current gaps in services make it hard to find affordable housing for them. Focus groups with clients also highlighted that in general, there are very little housing supports for Indigenous single adults especially for those transitioning from the reserve to the city.

It was identified that organizations and government leaders need to be developing policies and programs that would assist Indigenous people to start a better life off of the reserve. Increasingly, single Indigenous mothers are making a transition from the reserve and do not feel supported in the city. One participant stated how she needed support as a single mother and also for her daughter who has mental health issues. Another client stated that her son had a brain injury and needed special housing requirements that are challenging to secure.

Lack of knowledge around resources and their rights as tenants was seen as an area that needed further development. Although one focus group participant felt that *"Indigenous clients have the rights to get safe housing in the community,"* most Indigenous people coming from reserves are not aware of their rights as renters and most often success in housing can depend on empathetic landlords. Moreover, frontline workers don't always have a lot of knowledge around then Landlord

Tenancy Act and could use support in developing their knowledge capacity around that in order to be responsive to the needs of their Indigenous clients.

Lack of affordable housing and housing support services for single men of all ages, in particularly single fathers and those who are 65 years or older was also identified as a gap. There is less funding allocated to elderly men and when they turn 65, AISH and income supports are cut off and replaced with government pensions. Cognitive deterioration sometimes occurs earlier due to harsh lifestyles that catch up to them so supportive housing strategies must consider that many younger Indigenous clients are requiring palliative care with a focus on harm reduction. One participant in the frontline focus groups shared, *"There are a lot of people who want to choose to live their life the way that they want to, and they're not always given that chance when they end up in long term care facilities, when they're really sick and about to pass away in hospital. So, we kind of step in and offer them a home where they can do what they want to do and meet their end-of-life goals and just meet them where they're at until they pass away."* Those working with elderly Indigenous men asserted that there is no subsidized housing for special needs Indigenous seniors and transitioning from a supportive housing program to a long-term care facility is not feasible due to high cost. Often, these men fall through the cracks and are at risk of simply living their last years on the street or shelters. Currently, the only affordable housing units for Indigenous seniors is through Alpha House.

Moreover, some frontline participants felt that single fathers faced way more barriers and had fewer access to resources than single mothers. Additional supports and resources around community integration to assist Indigenous men exiting the justice were also identified as a need.

There is a lack of resources in the non-profit housing support sector to allocate resources that would contribute to building Indigenous cultural capacity within housing programs. It was noted by several frontline participants that many affordable housing buildings do not have spaces for Indigenous people to practice their culture. They indicate that there isa need for a separate room where clients can go to smudge or just to connect. There is also a need for greater education and promoting awareness of culture and how to support Indigenous peoples with FASD diagnosis. Client participants also identified how access to smudging and drumming are essential as well as having a space for a sweat lodge. One woman stated that, *"It's really hard getting rides to go out to the Reserve to do any sweats."* In addition to the gaps identified above, focus group participants shared how a lack of subsidies and subsidized housing programs only aggravates existing service and resource gaps.

NEED FOR SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Supportive housing and outreach workers are helping families and assessing their needs based on their knowledge of what options and subsidy programs are out there. Supportive housing that provides rental subsidies allows for a more flexible approach in accommodating Indigenous renters but because there is such a dearth of affordable housing units and rent subsidy programs, Indigenous specific support organizations and workers are limited in terms of meeting the distinct needs of Indigenous peoples. One focus group of frontline participants stated that they would like to see big rental companies offering supports for low income and Indigenous renters as a *'corporate social response'.* Additionally, they noted while many organizations make referrals to Métis and Treaty 7 Housing, they always encounter a long wait list. Subsidizing Indigenous families to help pay rent is an option that not many supportive housing programs can afford. The participants agreed that programs that support Indigenous clients financially and then transition them to more independence is what's needed in Calgary. Currently, Albertaworks social benefits are not sufficient enough to secure safe and quality housing. Not having access to rental subsidy is a tremendous need amongst low-income Indigenous peoples, however, to obtain a subsidy can be difficult to access.

Subsidies for rent mean that families can live in a safer environment because they have more flexibility to choose housing situations that meet their needs. One client shared how adequate space was needed to ensure that children have their own rooms. Crowded housing situations with multiple children in one bedroom creates a number of risks for families, including lack of personal space, privacy concerns of older children, and safety concerns for younger children.

Currently, many clients felt it was impossible to find affordable housing that will accommodate a large family. Overall, obtaining subsidized housing is a huge barrier due to long waitlists, documentation and paperwork requirements that cost money to obtain and process such as background checks, etc. Being forced to move from subsidized to public housing is a hard hit for clients and one that often forces people into unstable housing situations when they are no longer eligible for subsidy support. Indeed, the focus group data highlighted the circumstances of high housing turnover rates and unstable housing that Indigenous people experience, Additionally, frontline participants identified the issue of many Indigenous youth who have never experienced stable housing. Stable housing and getting away from the chaos on the street are important for those healing from addictions. One 25-year-old participant in the client focus groups disclosed

that she has never had affordable housing. Being in a current homeless situation, she was worried about what she'll do when she gets out of treatment.

This section and previous sections focused on some of the challenges and barriers, both conceptual and practical, that prevent Indigenous peoples from obtaining and maintaining affordable housing. The following sections will outline perspectives, practices, approaches, as well as program designs that are either currently being used or were proposed as being useful for building systemic capacity for responding to Indigenous peoples distinct housing needs or mitigating barriers to accessing affordable housing. The sections are foregrounded by a discussion of the findings as they relate to clients' perspectives surrounding their conceptualization of what the concept of *'home'* means to them.

MEANING OF HOME

For the women in the focus groups, home meant family, security, stability and safety and that without family, a house is empty. Moreover, when the home is safe, the family bonds through eating meals together and just spending time together. For one participant, home meant being with her children and her animals. Home symbolized security, not *"worrying about being kicked out"* because family are visiting and having the freedom to be yourself. For another participant home was about the community and knowing her community, feeling connected to it so she feels like she can trust community members to help care for her kids. The women were motivated by their children to find a place they could call home and to improve their lives so they could be better individuals for their children. Home meant being able to hang on to treasured items and inviting family to come over and feel like it is home for them too. Home meant having the space and freedom to heal, overcome addictions, and to express oneself. One participant shared *"I need that place to be able to express myself to feel safe and comfortable, and to make good choices, and know at the end of the day when I come home, it's one I've created, because I'm starting from scratch."* For others, home meant having access to a natural environment, to nature and to water.

ROLE OF INDIGENOUS FRONTLINE STAFF AND MANAGERS IN HOUSING SUPPORTS

This section provides an overview of the findings from the frontline focus group data in the context of whether participants saw the need for Indigenous peoples to be working both on the frontline and in management positions within the supportive housing system. All participants agreed that it was important to have Indigenous support workers with first-hand knowledge and lived-experience of the kinds of struggles that Indigenous peoples go through. Organizations such as Alpha House acknowledged the need for more frontline Indigenous workers because they know the population. Indigenous youth could also relate better to Indigenous frontline workers and can better connect with those who experience the same things. Youth can feel more comfortable to use their voice when they see Indigenous workers and they are also role-models for youth to aspire to get out of their situation. Indigenous workers as role-models and sources of inspiration were also seen as relevant for all Indigenous people and not just youth. Indigenous people working in the frontlines contribute to relational safety. One participant stated, *"when you think about, that 65% of the people we are working with are Indigenous, I think at a minimum we should have that many people working in the frontline who identify as Indigenous."*

Some participants were also quick to point out that it is good to have non-Indigenous allies as well, to have a mix of intercultural workers. Having Indigenous staff was also seen as important in terms of educating their non-Indigenous co-workers. One non-Indigenous participant shared, *"I learn from them and I am able to go out and teach other people."* Another participant shared that Indigenous people need to be on the frontlines, but they don't always apply. In one participant's organization, only one Indigenous person was responsible for allocating Indigenous resources and referrals to support cultural needs. They acknowledged that this isn't enough and more needs to be done with regard to recruitment and retention. With 65% Indigenous clients and only one Indigenous resource person who can make referrals, things need to change to improve access and services.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING BARRIERS

Frontline focus group participants offered specific strategies that could be effective in minimizing or eliminating barriers to affordable housing. One participant suggested creating a web of housing locators and other service providers. Here, in Calgary, the need for collaboration is vital to ensure a network of services and resources are available. Another participant described how they worked with other agencies to try to minimize negative exits meaning people who leave or who are evicted yet are still in need of affordable housing.

Locating a good housing provider that is supportive and being able to provide wrap-around services to support individuals with substance abuse issues were noted as effective strategies for successful housing outcomes with regard to the *'hard to house'* population. Indeed, wrap-around, scaffolded housing support systems were seen as effective approaches in ensuring successful housing outcomes in general. Another participant described that success meant never denying clients funding to live in their building. Being able to offer subsidized housing topples affordable housing barriers.

Other strategies that were shared by participants included being able to act as a bridge between landlord and tenant to assist in cultivating a more accurate understanding of Indigenous culture which can lead to better relationships between landlords and Indigenous renters. In addition to this, acknowledging settler positioning and adopting a role of learner, essentially fostering one's humility, were seen as important in working with Indigenous peoples. One participant described how a system needed to be developed that would support or protect both landlords in the event of property damage and prepare Indigenous families with knowledge and tools that would prevent property damage. Another participant shared how they maintained a bulletin board in plain sight to let clients know of community resources they could access. The success of affordable housing initiatives was also dependent on the presence of, and access to community resources.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CAPACITY

When asked how they assessed the housing needs of clients, many frontline participants shared how they considered location and access to schools, cultural supports, employment, childcare, counseling and treatment options, transit and whether the housing option was close to other family members. One participant shared how they would take a tour of the neighborhoods and even ask local community members to show them around, *"I'll connect with the community, whether it's community centers or anywhere, even looking at the Safeway, where the pharmacies are, where the trendy places are to eat."*

Preparing a *'welcome package'* for Indigenous clients that includes ways to connect with the local community was seen as important. Clearly, the effectiveness of this approach is dependent on the community, how welcoming and inclusive its members are, and the types of resources that are available. It was also important to frontline participants to ensure continuity of services and for interagency supports to be in place so Indigenous clients could expect a pattern of continuity amongst support agencies. One participant stated that access to affordable furniture and household resources was vital since some families have nothing when coming out of shelters. Access to affordable grocery stores such Wal-Mart or Superstore was seen as preferable. It made no sense to workers to look for housing in communities where the nearest grocery store was Sunterra Market or a high-end organic food store that many clients simply could not afford. In this sense, support agencies need to be mindful of where they are purchasing gift cards to assure affordable access to food such as for affordable grocers who are accessible to the client.

Assessment of housing needs included access to resources that were all within walking distance. Some programs assisted with bus tickets and some workers will transport clients if needed but close proximity to a range of community resources was seen as a priority. Suburbs were not seen as ideal as it is too easy for people to get lost. One participant suggested a need for a resource list for support agencies that outlines organizations and professional with specialized knowledge and training that could assist Indigenous clients and respond to their complex needs. There is also a need for a place like the SORCe, or a 'one stop shop' with multiple services that is available to people 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The focus groups highlighted the role of support and advocacy in ensuring that Indigenous clients are successful in obtaining and maintaining affordable housing.

ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Frontline participants shared how important it was for Indigenous youth to have advocates because most often, they are afraid to speak up for themselves. However, many also recognized how important it was to encourage them to use their voice. Others shared that the experience of discrimination and racism that the clients faced also meant that workers would sometime act as a bridge between landlords and families. It was also seen as important to advocate for clients who don't feel comfortable advocating for themselves when talking to landlords regarding smudging or practicing other cultural ceremonies.

Clients in the focus groups also described the positive role of advocacy and support and many shared that they had to access support in order to obtain current housing. They expressed gratitude for the help with one participant describing that, *"the help that I received was immaculate, it was amazing, I felt completely blessed."* In terms of areas to further develop, one participant suggested there was a need for accessing a lawyer who could offer Indigenous renters' advice and guidance around the Landlord Tenant Act, their rights as a tenant, and what to do if they get sued by landlords. A few clients felt that support and guidance on how to deal with harsh and abusive landlords was required especially in situations where they are being evicted for reasons they could not justify.

FEATURES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT HOUSING

This section outlines the findings in relation to what culturally appropriate Indigenous Housing looks like from the perspective of the focus group participants. The focus group findings highlight how current housing designs and buildings are not conducive to support Indigenous cultural capacity building or enabling Indigenous families and singles to readily practice their culture or connect with their relatives in meaningful ways. One frontline participant stated that their supportive housing buildings do have community rooms but admitted that as an organization, they could do more to open these spaces up to support cultural connections. One participant stated that affordable multitenant buildings should focus on creating a multicultural room where everyone regardless of background can go and pray, a *'spiritual space.'*

Another frontline participant stated that in permanent housing structures it is easier to have a multicultural room but more difficult for scattered site housing where practicing culture is limited to what the landlord will allow. Having a separate space dedicated to ceremony and cultural gatherings was seen as important. Current practices that support a culturally relevant affordable housing environment included ensuring group housing, as with Alpha house, has a common space, offering beading, Bannock making classes in designated areas, and trying to be accommodating and supportive when it comes to cultural gatherings was another suggestion. One participant shared how their program has an education space for others to learn more about Indigenous culture. Another shared how Horizon has a community room, however acknowledged that it was not intentionally designed for Indigenous peoples nor were these rooms available in all of their buildings.

Suggestions, from the participants, overall, in regard to housing design identified the importance of having space that would support Indigenous culture. They expressed the importance of ensuring that newer buildings have ventilation systems to allow for smudge and spaces for ceremony, access to a natural environment and food sources, and design that supports access to cultural reconnection. All frontline participants expressed how Indigenous presence/identity/culture needed to be incorporated into housing design although many didn't have concrete examples of specific designs, beyond having a dedicated space and adequate ventilation systems. Some clients pointed to how they would like to see a spiritual support program where Elders do a proper spiritual cleansing of new units *"to bring in the good energy and protection from the ancestors."* One participant from the client focus groups noted how her children can feel bad energy in rental units and as a mother, she felt helpless and shared, *"I don't know what to do or who to turn to, to help me in this situation."*

The findings support the notion that housing design should incorporate and accommodate Indigenous notions of family, culture, ceremony, and access to natural surroundings. Space for growing medicines such as sage and sweetgrass and a dedicated space for ceremony and for Elders to provide spiritual support to Indigenous residents was seen as an important feature in supportive, and permanent affordable housing. While the question around housing design evoked some discussion around the physical structure, it highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces in affordable rental units. The section below offers a discussion of those findings as they relate to the aspects of safety that include both physical and beyond.

SAFETY

For frontline workers, safety was more about providing information to clients, so they were aware of their rights and responsibilities as renters, although clients focused more on the physical aspects of safety. Frontline participants made several references to the notion of 'guest management' and how safety was an aspect of it. Safety was also associated with assisting clients with understanding the importance of location and whether it was right for them as well as providing deeper perspectives around things like triggers, proximity to schools and transit and community resources. Frontline participants shared how they worked hard to ensure Indigenous people were in locations where they were not easily triggered if recovering from addiction.

Safety was also about healthy relational connections and offering space and opportunity for cultivating relational safety. Because many of the Indigenous clients experienced violence in some way, ensuring relational safety and security were key in affordable housing supports. Being connected to natural supports such as family and being within proximity of their reserve community contributed to a sense of belonging and was seen as important which again highlights how relationships and community are the most important aspect of culturally appropriate housing and not necessarily the physical structure.

Strategies used by workers for building relational capacity included using a trauma-informed lens to ensure clients were not in an environment that will trigger relapse or addiction. In addition, providing options which allow clients to have their family members visit or stay for extended periods of time, ensuring clients understood their rights, as well as *'putting out fires'* and helping clients build a positive relationship with their landlord were all seen as important roles of support workers.

Access to culture was seen as crucial, especially for those trying to overcome additions. One frontline participant felt, *"Addiction is disconnection and spirituality is connection."* Frontline participants identified that while relational safety is important, relationships can also compromise it. Safety issues came up in terms of clients feeling unsafe with uninvited guests, or having landlords show up unexpectedly, as well as experiencing interference by their neighbours.

For frontline workers, physical safety was talked about in the context of accessibility for Elders which can be a real challenge. Ensuring there weren't too many stairs or other mobility barriers were deemed important. Clients, however, shared their perspectives on physical safety in the context of keeping their children safe and needing to feel safe from landlords. Client participants shared multiple incidents of unsafe conditions, such as a broken door that wasn't fixed properly,

smoke alarms that aren't working, no locks on windows, problems with vermin, public loitering in front of their building and landlords entering units unannounced. One participant shared, *"I have kids and our windows are on the main level for some of the rooms, so I'm always telling them to make sure and lock your windows, make sure you put the stick in the window. I don't like to have to say that, but it is what it is."*

The clients felt that landlords needed to be aware of their responsibilities in fixing their units to help tenants feel safe. Another conceptual aspect of the findings relates to building knowledge capacity through informal and formal educational processes that are aimed at frontline workers, clients, landlords and the non-Indigenous neighbors and community members.

KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION

In regard to improving Indigenous clients' knowledge, participants in the frontline focus groups all felt that increasing transparency around tenants' rights and ensuring that programs like "Rent-Smart" and other tenant rights education programs were more accessible to Indigenous renters. Nuanced information such as the difference between the Landlord and Inn-Keepers Act and knowing that their rights as tenants are also connected to their rights as human-beings to live in a safe environment free of discrimination and coercion from landlords.

Workers from McMan noted that the main challenge for them wasn't about finding housing, but more focused around clients maintaining their housing. The participants identified a need for more advocacy programs for Indigenous renters that would provide the knowledge clients seek through workshops and renters' education initiatives. Another participant felt that workers should educate on a general assessment of needs, which should include building knowledge capacity around lease agreements and providing families with information about what it means to be locked into a lease agreement.

Additionally, Indigenous renters needed to be prepared to consider the cost of utilities. A major challenge in terms of building knowledge was that many low-income families often don't have knowledge about the resources in the community that would help them. Many of the frontline participants strategized on how to get the information out to families and individuals. Low literacy levels can be a factor in Indigenous clients' uptake of knowledge with regard to print information. Moreover, it was felt by some participants that Indigenous peoples needed more education

around Western social norms and about what to expect from non-Indigenous workers. As Indigenous peoples' experiences with discrimination is unique, non-Indigenous workers are often deemed as discriminatory regardless of whether or not they are. Therefore, it is so important that non-Indigenous workers develop trusting and caring relationships with Indigenous people. In further comments, the frontline workers recognized the overall lack of information available for Indigenous people transitioning from the reserve to the city.

Other frontline participants, through their on-site housing organizations, offered knowledge support to their Indigenous tenants by educating them on basic housing maintenance, cleanliness, passing inspections, goal setting supports, community resources, and rights as tenant to avoid unfair landlord practices or evictions. One participant shared how they are working on a simple one-page document that included basic but essential information such as rights and responsibilities, outlining what tenants should do if something is broken, as well as other prevention-oriented knowledge.

In a quarterly newsletter, Horizon Housing indicated they provide essential information for all of their tenants that *"highlights a different element of their lease or a different element of the building rules."* Another participant shared how their organization prepared a *'Welcome home package'* which was purposed to reduce paperwork and provide essential information around cultural supports to Indigenous clients. As well as tenant information, workers expressed the importance of educating families on how to use transit. In particular living in an urban area can be a new experience for Indigenous people coming from the reserve. In addition to building knowledge capacity for Indigenous renters, perspectives around increasing knowledge for landlords were also shared as vital strategies.

WHAT LANDLORDS NEED TO KNOW

Frontline workers with Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary shared how their strategy for advocating for clients involved becoming familiar with a number of landlords and educating them cultural practices such as smudging. Youth workers also preferred to work with private landlords in order to build relationships. Often times youth will accompany them to meet landlords and explain their story. This is also an opportunity for youth to ask for clarification around smudging and whether that was allowed in the units. According to frontline participants, Indigenous youth have been educators for landlords and non-Indigenous staff. This has been achieved by workers

by being transparent with landlords and by preparing them with information around what they can expect. One agency has their youth share their story about who they are and this was viewed as an essential approach in ensuring positive outcomes. Additionally, frontline workers found by educating landlords and surrounding people in the neighborhood and more about Indigenous people can make a difference. One participant shared, *"We have information cards that we hand out to our community members that explain what our program is, how to call, who to call, we encourage them to call every time there is an issue. Even if it has nothing to do with our agency or our building, just to accommodate and understand the population we serve and give some education around why it's extremely important to have these housing programs."*

It was also identified as important for landlords to know that when family emergencies come up such as deaths, the rental fees may be required elsewhere and may be late. Having the ability to negotiate around rental fees in these times allows tenants to address the crisis, while being able to ensure their rent is paid to avoid eviction. It was felt that landlords need support to accommodate larger sized families and understand the importance of family relationships. One of the major findings from the study was identifying what landlords needed to know specifically and this included educating them on the history on Indigenous peoples so they could become more understanding towards Indigenous renters. Further the participants identified the importance of educating landlords on the role of ceremony and smudging, and clarifying upon the differences in how Indigenous people view family, as well as asserting how Indigenous people have a right to practice culture in their units, as critical information to increase successful outcomes in housing situations.

The women in the client focus groups shared that some landlords needed to have accurate knowledge around their responsibilities in order to be transparent and fair, and to keep units maintained. They felt landlords need to be more understanding and supportive of the complex family issues of Indigenous peoples, especially those dealing with family members who are traumatized and/or experiencing addictions. In addition, the role of smudging also came up in the focus groups with clients and many confirmed that it was a part of spiritual wellness and spiritual security. One participant described smudging as assurance *"that the home is blessed … No things moving or seeing shadows or stuff like that."*

The women additionally identified that landlords needed to understand the role of family and the network of supports that Indigenous women draw upon to deal with events such as death, grieving, or postpartum depression. They also want the landlords to know that they must give

advance notice when arriving on their properties to make renters feel safe so that they don't feel intruded upon.

Clients shared a keen interest in learning about basic house repair and not surprisingly, more information around the Landlord and Tenant Act. One client stated, *"With five kids running up and down the stairs, things were bound to be broken, marks on the wall and such. I don't know how to go about fixing myself, or if they're going to take my whole damage deposit over nicks in the wall."* Another shared how her landlord was charging her $100/hole to repair holes from hanging picture on walls. She further suggested, *"I think if we could get some sort of class together, to be able to provide the daycare, provide the supplies and show people how to learn how to do it … you can get your damage deposit back."* The participant demonstrates agency and a willingness to build a network of supports for education on the repair and upkeep of homes, but this requires policy shifts in government jurisdiction. As Bruhn (Lindstrom, et al., 2020) notes, the jurisdictional divide is an enduring remnant of colonial nation-making and one that impacts Indigenous people most keenly. Currently, federal jurisdiction surrounds services and resources allocated to Indigenous peoples, thus leaving municipal governments with little to no responsibility to Indigenous peoples living within urban areas. In order to implement programs, there is a need for more accountability on the part of local governments because this may allow service organizations access to municipally funded resources that would support home maintenance programs.

Another area that appears to require more capacity building is related to professional training and education initiatives that are geared to mitigating ignorance and racist attitudes and behaviors aimed at Indigenous peoples.

EDUCATION TO MITIGATE RACISM

When asked about whether they believed they or their organization could benefit from antiracism training, all participants supported the idea and shared some of the learning that they were currently involved in. One participant described how they mitigated discrimination by learning and participating in committee work and also helping them to educate others. Another shared how they took part in the Blanket Exercise as part of their organization's Indigenous awareness training and that helped to open their eyes to misconception. The participant who identified as an immigrant, identified this experience helps them to educate others about who Indigenous people

are. The participant also emphasized that Indigenous awareness needs to be offered to immigrant associations.

It was seen as vital that non-Indigenous support workers to always be in a place of learning and adopt humility. Other participants in management roles focused on trying to empower staff to educate non-Indigenous tenants. It was believed that mitigating racism in the housing system involved educating landlords and non-Indigenous support workers about Indigenous people and their unique history and needs. Participants working at one organization which worked with complex singles shared that while more Indigenous education is required, the pandemic has slowed down or stopped cultural awareness at their agency, but that they also felt that the pandemic shouldn't be used as an excuse.

Others shared how their organization offered mandatory indigenous awareness for all their workers. One youth organization delivers 6 hours of mandatory Indigenous Awareness Training. Other accredited organizations in the sector also indicate they are required to take the training annually. Another participant pointed out that while Indigenous awareness/education is crucial, it is also necessary to provide a deeper entry point to learning about Indigenous peoples through participating in ceremonies and engaging with Elders. While one participant shared that currently in their organization, mandatory Indigenous awareness was the protocol, but they would like to see the knowledge taken up as something people are interested in rather than something that has to be mandatory.

Frontline staff felt that antiracism training in addition to Indigenous awareness must also be made mandatory. The value in antiracism training is that it offers the opportunity to reflect on positionality. One participant shared, *"I think working with the homeless population it's very important to take these trainings because Indigenous peoples are overly represented in homelessness. Part of that is understanding the history, understanding that this may be the repercussions of systemic underpinning and intergenerational trauma. Recognizing why things are the way they are and not pointing the finger at the person."*

While Indigenous Awareness Training seemed the norm, there currently was not any antiracism training being offered to frontline focus group participants. Another aspect noted was that there should be required knowledge capacity developed around the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and Calls to Action (TRC, 2015).

TRUTH AND RECONCILATION COMMISSION(TRC)

In reviewing the focus group data in relation to whether frontline focus group participants' work was influenced or informed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), it became clear that one of the challenges in affordable housing supports was how to embed the TRC's Calls to Action into housing programs. Some frontline participants thought that working towards incorporating the TRC findings might have offered more funding and resources like increasing access to Elders and cultural supports. One participant stated that they like to think the TRC influences their organization and their role, but they did not confirm whether this was actually the case. Another participant who worked with youth felt their organization could do better to support Indigenous clients and while they support the TRC, they didn't expand on whether it influences or directs how they work with clients.

Overall, participants were aware of the TRC and acknowledged that it was important but offered little to no examples of how the findings informed their role or how the TRC was shaping programming. They questioned their organizations commitment to the TRC and felt more could be done at the leadership level to support its implementation. While diversity training seemed to be the approach of organizations, more education is needed around the TRC and other aspects of the systemic impacts of colonization such as lateral violence. Despite the bleak outlook with regard to how the TRC is being taken up, some participants were aware that housing and access to good housing were part of meeting the TRC Calls to Action and that housing providers, planners and support organizations had a responsibility to learn about and implement the Calls to Action. Incorporating the TRC into strategic planning and having the Calls to Action guide priorities was offered as a possible route yet participants pointed out how difficult this was particularly when funders like the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF) and multilevel government do not appear to prioritize the TRC. A shift in leadership direction was viewed as vital in improving the funding strategies for addressing Indigenous homeless and housing with and for community.

The findings outlined above included the importance of maintaining Indigenous clients' rights to autonomy and agency in housing and provided significant evidence for why considerations of identity and culture matter in regard to supportive approaches in affordable housing services. The findings also highlighted how power, oppression, racism and discrimination functioned to further marginalize Indigenous peoples and erode their sense of identity and access to sustainable affordable housing.

Findings related to access barriers and gaps in services provide insight for programming initiatives and policy makers to strategize appropriate approaches to minimize housing barriers and address these gaps. Most importantly, current and proposed successful practices and perspectives provide pathways toward envisioning innovative and collaborative methods for redressing the legacy of poor-quality housing that far too many Indigenous peoples living in the urban areas are experiencing.

DATA OUTLIERS

This summary of data outliers concludes the discussion of the findings that are representative of those outliers within the focus group data. While not commonly spoken about, they were deemed important factors for the study to highlight. One client participant, when asked what made her safe or unsafe in housing, indicated that she felt safer in housing where she had not been exposed to negative experiences that would make her feel unsafe. This was a significant deviation in comparison to the rest of the participants who all shared unsafe housing experiences as related to individuals or quality of housing. Another client said that she had not experienced discrimination possibly because she considered herself to be *"the white kind of native."* Suggesting that the Indigenous experience in housing is more negatively profound to Indigenous people who visibly represent as Indigenous.

In terms of the front-line workers, one participant stated that they had not directly encountered discrimination with landlords. While other participants were working directly to educate landlords to try to ensure their practices were not discriminatory. Reference was made to one main housing provider as the organization which approves rental applications for the homeless sector. The frontline participant indicated uncertainty that their practices were utilized and stated *"I actually don't know if they are Indigenous or not."* Some frontline participant stated that the landlords working for this agency were not discriminatory. For the Indigenous participants themselves, they were concerned with how their unique last names reveal that they are Indigenous and wondered how this might affect access to housing even with an agency who might not appear discriminatory.

While these nuances in the findings are minor, they are important to highlight nonetheless in terms of transparency in representing the range of participant perspectives. Caution must be

taken in interpreting these outliers as representative of the broader patterns in the findings that are outlined above.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

The research offers an anticolonial analysis of the findings which are further organized into themes that are relevant to both the research questions central to this study and the participants perceptions. In the following sections and using the central research questions as a guiding framework, the findings have been interpreted and analyzed into a series of themes. These research questions include:

1. How do cultural perspectives of Indigenous Peoples inform the housing design and opportunities across the housing continuum to better meet the needs and preferences of a diverse urban Indigenous population?

2. What are the implications for the National Housing Strategy and non-market housing providers in planning, designing, delivering and reporting on housing for Indigenous Peoples?

In accordance with Indigenous research methodologies, the analysis, informed by anticolonial theory, was interpreted through a relational lens as conceptualized by Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr.'s (1998) relationality method of analysis. Deloria posits that from an Indigenous paradigm, obtaining knowledge occurs within a set of relationships and through the identification of patterns in relationships. These patterns are represented through the themes discussed below. Indigenous approaches to data synthesis involve illuminating the tensions that have led to power imbalances in relationships as well as interpreting the implicit meanings embedded in the data in order to offer solutions that are meant to minimize and/or eliminate imbalances. The themes are unpacked by first critically discussing how the legacy of colonialism continues to impact policy, relationships and the experiences of Indigenous people within the affordable housing system. Dr. Lindstrom explores the nature and relevancy of Indigenous self-determination as a framework for service provision and advocacy, a discussion around reframing approaches and definitions to encourage movement towards a paradigm shift – a requirement if mitigating Indigenous homelessness and providing access avenues to affordable housing are ever to occur – and finally, advancing a revisioning of Indigenous Awareness Training to address racism and discrimination as described by participants.

COLONIAL LEGACIES

Analysis of the findings reveal that settler colonialism remains a force in constructing Indigenous peoples' experiences in housing both in how they are expected to conform to Eurocentric ideals of market housing and how their experiences in mainstream affordable housing continue to force them into unsafe living, or homeless living conditions. As within any socio-economic system in Canada, the role of colonialism and racism is minimized (Van Sant, Milligan & Mollett, 2021) or rendered as irrelevant within the affordable housing system yet frontline workers taking part in this study shared, many times over, how they witnessed racism against Indigenous peoples from landlords and neighbors.

Racism, discrimination and NIMBYist attitudes were mentioned multiple times as barriers to accessing affordable housing, as well as systemic racism in regard to Indigenous people's experiences with social services, both through child welfare and income support. Racism functions as a foundational, albeit invisible ideology within settler colonial processes in ways that have advanced Euro-settler society and normalized the marginalization of Indigenous peoples (Denis, 2020) but it is also a broad and complex concept. Unpacking the complexity of racism is beyond the scope of this study but it is useful to think about racism as existing along a spectrum that is defined within the context of both its functional aspects as well as the impacts it has on individuals. Because settler colonialism is driven by the pursuit of resources, material wealth and access to land, laissez-faire racism offers a conceptual lens through which the findings have been interpreted and analyzed in accordance with the anticolonial theoretical framework of this study.

Within the affordable housing system, neoliberal, capitalist aims are intermingled with socio-cultural relationships resulting in "laissez-faire racism" (Bobo, Kluegel & Smith, 1996) which in the context of Canadian Indigenous-settler relationships can be observed through the persistent and constant stereotyping of Indigenous peoples, blaming Indigenous people for a perceived inability to advance along Euro-settler defined socio-economic hierarchies and an unwillingness to work towards meaningful and impactful policy changes that would transform the racist social conditions and institutions that structure our society (Bobo, Kluegel & Smith, 1996). The socio-economic gap between Indigenous and White settler populations is reduced to an issue of race wherein Indigenous peoples are seen as purveyors of their own poverty and homelessness (Lindstrom, Pomeroy, Falvo & Bruhn, 2020; Weasel Head, 2011). The findings from the focus groups demonstrate how Indigenous families and individuals are labeled immediately by landlords as unwanted tenants and by neighbors as unwanted community members. There were numerous

references to the negative perceptions of income support workers towards Indigenous clients and how these influenced the ability for Indigenous people to get financial assistance. Moreover, the amount of financial support offered through income assistance is never enough to afford rent, utilities, food and other expenses. Justification for this shortfall is found in neoliberal rationale that income support clients will be more motivated to work if they are provided with only the absolute minimum of financial assistance. Uncaring landlords or, as many clients referred to them as *'slumlords'* who are motivated by financial gain above the well-being of Indigenous families, youth and single adults resulting in Indigenous people being forced into unsafe housing conditions or into the homeless-serving system of care.

Often times the term *'guest management'* was used by participants who managed affordable housing units and it is one that epitomizes settler colonialism with its focus on materialism and economics. From an Indigenous perspective, guest management is an inappropriate and misaligned approach within a relational paradigm and one that is at odds with Indigenous-centered housing supports. Firstly, Indigenous people don't *'manage'* others since many Indigenous people have been taught to respect the autonomy of others. Secondly, as Indigenous people, we don't have *'guests,'* rather, we have relatives. For Indigenous people, when we invite people into our home, the goal is to ensure they are comfortable and feel welcomed. We might change our behaviors and even rearrange our furniture to suit their comfort. We are not looking to *'manage'* our relatives in order that they conform to how we want them to behave, sleep or eat. Indeed, we strive for self-control so we can respectfully accommodate our relatives.

Definitions frame our strategies and approaches and in order for housing supports to be culturally sensitive, then definitions that are aligned with Indigenous lifeways and experiences must be advanced in both conceptual and pragmatic ways. However, as frontline workers pointed out that the housing system is resistant to unlearning and transforming approaches which again is consistent with laissez-faire racism which is the heartbeat of settler colonialism. Deeper analysis from an Indigenous perspective using anticolonial theory reveals additional nuances that evidences the legacy of setter colonialism in the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the context of housing and homelessness.

ABUSE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The findings from the focus groups with both frontline workers and Indigenous clients confirmed many of the findings of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report

(2020). These include the persistent violence, racism and poverty that Indigenous women contend with in their everyday lives. The client focus groups offered a picture of the reality of many Indigenous women which included homelessness, addictions, sexual violence and fleeing abusive relationships. Some of the participants also spoke of being forced to commit crimes due to either poverty or to support addictions which resulted in a criminal record thereby making it difficult to obtain employments. They also spoke of having to deal with abusive and predatory landlords many of whom see Indigenous women as easy targets for manipulation and abuse because settler colonial forces have constructed an image of Indigenous women that increases their vulnerability to abuse, poverty and systemic racism and discrimination. Drug use was cited by one participant as a hurdle to overcome in obtaining housing. The high level of substance abuse is reflective of the legacy of colonization that includes the Indian Residential School experience yet is seen as an individual shortcoming.

There is a well-established link between childhood abuse and the development of subsequent addictions, such as substance use disorders and alcoholism. In fact, it has been suggested that a significant number of women seeking treatment for substance use disorders have experienced childhood trauma, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Clark et al., 2001; Fiorentine, Pilati & Hillhouse, 1999; Gil-Rivas, Fiorentine & Anglin, 1996; Ouimette, Kimerling, Shaw & Moos, 2000; Rice et al., 2001; Trifflemanm et al., 1995). Residential school survivors and their descendants disproportionately share this burden, although exceptionally little literature examines this relationship, particularly in Canada.

Ross et al. (2015) looked at the impact of residential schooling and of child abuse on substance use and found that 43.5% of participants had an alcohol problem, while 27.2% had a drug use problem. The frontline workers in the focus groups as well as the Indigenous clients were aware of the connections between colonization, substance use, and lack of housing and homelessness. Housing and colonial legislation guides the formation of policy approaches and affordable housing solutions and supports yet many of the participants in the focus groups felt that these systemic factors only served to exacerbate Indigenous women's marginalization and exposure to violence. The Indigenous clients placed little faith in the system to protect them from the violence they encountered. For the First Nations women, fleeing the violence on the reserve often meant entering an unfamiliar urban environment wherein the only safe option for them was in a temporary emergency shelter.

FRACTURING INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

Another example of the legacy of colonization is found in the continued fracturing of Indigenous families. The Indigenous women as well as the frontline workers in the focus groups all shared a recognition and acknowledgement that for Indigenous peoples, family holds a different meaning than Eurocentric notions of family. Indigenous perspectives of family transcend blood kinship ties and immediate kinship relations, relations that typify the Eurocentric notion of the nuclear family. Lindstrom and Choate (2016) have written about how Indigenous kinship networks conceptualize aunts to be the same as a mother and uncles are seen as fathers. Rather than a cousin, Indigenous kinship networks define this relationship as the same as a sibling. There are also families formed through ceremony as well as street families. Frontline workers in the focus groups spoke of how family preservation was priority in their role and for their organizations but that it was not seen as important by the big funder priorities. Moreover, the Indigenous women in the focus groups also spoke of how the housing system is not accommodating to families and that individual landlords often do not provide the living conditions that are conducive to healthy family development both in the context of physical and spiritual health. Despite the ongoing legacy of colonization, the perspectives of Indigenous frontline workers and clients as well as the approaches of the non-Indigenous workers demonstrate how self-determination, a fundamental principle in traditional governance, social and educational structures of Indigenous nations remain as a central feature of culturally appropriate approaches in housing supports and advocacy.

CENTERING SELF-DETERMINATION AND ROLE OF AUTONOMY

The oppressive and destructive nature of colonization has stripped Indigenous people of their self-determination and autonomy as independent nations. The violent removal of Indigenous autonomy has been and continues to be a necessary component of settler colonial processes. Analysis of the focus group data present paradox in terms of how individual frontline workers attempt to place choice and autonomy into hands of Indigenous clients within a context of ongoing colonization wherein the success of the Western state is reliant on the powerlessness and forced dependence of Indigenous nations. Indigenous people have always held the knowledge to maintain a balance within their ecological and social contexts. As previously written elsewhere (Lindstrom, Pomeroy, Falvo and Bruhn, 2020), identified that solutions to problems that

beset Indigenous peoples must emerge from within Indigenous perspectives and be supported by organizations and government leaders.

While allowing Indigenous families, youth and singles to exercise some measure of autonomy by giving them a degree of choice in terms of location and type of housing is an important feature of culturally responsive approaches to support, the fact remains that these choices are limited by factors such as poverty, violence, and systemic racism and discrimination which are beyond the control of individual workers and Indigenous peoples. These factors have been shaped by colonial forces and are maintained through settler colonial processes of containment and the elimination of Indigenous nationhood. Moreover, choice in housing design and housing support and advocacy approaches must be considered in the context of paralleling Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing with Western practices if the housing needs of Indigenous people are to be met in meaningful and impactful ways.

REFRAMING APPROACHES

Indigenous knowledge keepers, scholars and professionals understand that co-existence within a Euro-settler social context wherein experiences of racism, discrimination and marginalization form the status quo of Indigenous and White settler relations and require that we adopt a conceptual lens that better allows us to integrate Western knowledge and practices in ways that ensure we are successful in mainstream society whist maintaining our identities and cultural practices as Indigenous peoples. Reframing current Eurocentric approaches must first begin with an acknowledgement that Eurocentrism is not a universally relevant paradigm and that there are other ways of problem-solving that are equally valid, other ways of knowing that can contribute to creating sustainable housing and urban communities. The current Eurocentric paradigm is neither flexible nor are its adherents willing to transfer power and resources back into the hands of Indigenous nations. However, if we are to see an end to homelessness and address the shortage of affordable housing, our housing system and the leaders that maintain its current structure must reframe the definitions and approaches that shape how services and resources are allocated.

During the focus groups with frontline workers, it was clear that the approaches still need further implementation to address and prepare Indigenous people with adequate information to be successful in obtaining and maintaining affordable housing and navigating the urban landscape

is through a parallel document. The following discussion represented the traditional values of Indigenous people and the value of home and connection to the land as a vital concept.

"We are translating that information into a format that is more culturally appropriate. Thinking about responsibilities as a tenant but trying to translate that so it's more culturally specific. So, that would be encapsulating values. Indigenous people … we have different values. In the past, the land sustained us. We didn't pay rent to the land. But we reciprocated by taking care of the land and giving offerings and making sure we didn't take more than we needed. That we didn't overstay in one area where it's going to kill the topsoil, or the grasses. A lot of us Indigenous people, we still think that way." (Lindstrom, Frontline Focus Group)

Traditional values and cultural principles and protocols are relevant in the lives of Indigenous people. As the focus group findings demonstrate, in order to make housing design culturally appropriate, housing and urban planners need to look beyond the physical structure, learn though Indigenous community consultations and consider how Indigenous values and practices can coexist within a Western urban context. From the Indigenous participants perspectives, three key features of culturally relevant housing encompass: 1) **space for ceremony and smudging**; 2) **environmentally sustainable housing that incorporates aspects of the natural world**; and 3) **large enough to accommodate family, relatives and passing visitors.**

While many of the participants identified the concepts of ceremonial space and the importance of spaces to accommodate their kinship ties, they could not articulate specifically the distinct design or structures related to an environmental connection to the culture. Many were aware of the significance of the land and how this shaped their cultural values, their connection to their people, and the meaning of home. This did not, however, articulate directly into the concept of environmentally sustainable housing which was framed around the local environment and culture.

It is important to note that in Southern Alberta, the wind is a prominent feature which has traditionally informed the Blackfoot people around how to adapt to seasonal changes and informed them of how to plan their daily activities. Cowboy Smithx a filmmaker from the Piikani and Kainai First Nations, identifies, *"when the Chinook (winds) would come through and melt certain parts of the snow, the Blackfoot had drive lanes to push these buffalo into certain coulees where the snow was deeply drifted, where the buffalo would actually get trapped."* He further identifies the strong relationship between the southern Nations' peoples of the Blackfoot territory and the wind, which traditionally supported and guided movement from the winter camps.

Additionally, he advises there is often a story related to Blackfoot lineage and the wind, which is expressed culturally in the ceremonies and ways of the people from the area (Valleau, 2021). Lindstrom (Lindstrom, et al., 2020) notes that *"the structure of Indigenous peoples' dwellings emerged from landscapes and were not only a response to the environmental conditions, but also reflected the principles and beliefs of the nation"* (p. 30). Tipis were traditional shelters for Blackfoot people and evolved in response to environmental conditions.

The environment of Southern Alberta provides a unique opportunity towards the development of sustainable housing, which incorporates the connection of the wind to the traditional values of the Blackfoot people. While housing structures are more modernized, housing needs to be built to reflect the environmental conditions related to the territory. Additionally, the wind as an element may locally shape sustainable housing as a power source, supporting Indigenous housing models with reliable energy sources related to the land. While also incorporating the traditional context of the wind through a cultural perspective which embraces the local territory and traditional lifestyle.

For the Indigenous women in the focus groups, what made a house a home was having family close, feeling safe and accepted by the surroundings and having the freedom to be Indigenous. Reframing notions of home as a physical structure is crucial to one wherein Indigenous people are provided the freedom to heal through ceremony and relational connections, the space to grow medicines and to have family members visit, access to spiritual supports so the space can be cleansed of negative energies, information and knowledge around their roles and responsibilities as homemakers and how to maintain the physical structure is a way to meet the housing needs of urban Indigenous peoples as well as enable them to create a relational investment to their living space. One participant in the client focus group asked, *"Why would you protect your space, that you don't feel connected to?"*

In the context of housing design, it was also mentioned that creating affordable housing specifically geared toward Indigenous people would risk ghettoizing the housing complex. Ghettoization as a state of enclosure simply reflects colonial approaches of isolation where Indigenous people are further isolated from mainstream society. Again, ghettoization is a function of settler colonialism and is not one that Indigenous people should be responsible for addressing or mitigating.

Moreover, approaches and strategies for supporting Indigenous peoples must be paralleled with how Indigenous peoples conceptualize these approaches. For example, many non-Indigenous

frontline workers referred to how their approach in providing supports to and advocating on behalf of Indigenous people was informed by trauma-informed approaches. However, these approaches must be considered in the context of how Indigenous people also conceptualize trauma. Too often Indigenous people are perceived through a deficit lens which is neither a helpful nor hopeful method for supporting autonomy and providing the space for Indigenous people to cultivate their identity in meaningful and self-empowering ways. It is also important to remember that non-Indigenous support workers are filtering their approaches and understandings of Indigenous people through a Western paradigm which is underlain with culturally determined assumptions, judgements and biases that must be illuminated, acknowledged and mitigated through critical knowledge uptake and training around the colonial legacy. Approaches and definitions must be reframed in ways that accommodate Indigenous-centric conceptualizations and practices lest supportive housing systems continue to contribute to the forced cycle of dependency that is central to settler colonial processes.

Reframing can be an entry point to transforming perspectives and practices. In the context of affordable housing, reframing means understanding that Indigenous people are not the problem. Rather, it is the systemic constructs and Western perspectives of tenancy which impede upon the success of Indigenous people being housed in the urban setting. Within the focus groups, addictions, mental health, Indigenous cultural practices such as smudging and even poor behavior were seen as barriers to retaining housing. These same barriers have been identified in the housing and homeless literature yet what is less understood and critically confronted, except by Indigenous researchers and Indigenous-led organizations is that these issues are symptomatic of colonial genocidal policies that have been orchestrated to destroy Indigenous nationhood and identity. The problem is the settler colonial system and not the Indigenous people.

In addition, the focus group with frontline workers highlighted the need for increased recruitment and retention of Indigenous frontline workers. However, it was brought up by one non-Indigenous frontline participant that Indigenous people don't apply for these frontline positions, particularly in non-Indigenous organizations. Again, the onus for the absence of Indigenous workers rests on the shoulders of Indigenous people rather than the colonial structure of the organizations. While this is a consistent theme that comes up in other employment contexts, it is not always a lack of Indigenous applicants but is more related to the need for an improved recruitment and applicant screening system.

What the focus groups have demonstrated is that systems must change their approaches in order to adapt to other realities, other ways of knowing, being and doing. For example, policies

and practices can no longer be structured in ways that force or expect Indigenous families to conform to the system but must be revamped so the system can adapt to the needs of Indigenous families. According to frontline workers, Indigenous families were a hindrance to effective *'guest management'* because they were large. However, one participant in the client focus group asserted that *"it takes a community to raise a child"* and for all of the clients, home meant family, but family as conceptualized, experienced and understood from an Indigenous perspective which cannot simply be interchanged with Eurocentric definitions of family.

Moreover, Indigenous identity cannot be considered as a barrier to accessing or maintaining affordable housing. Clients in the focus groups highlighted how trying to prove Indigenous identity was a barrier because of how difficult it was to obtain an Indian status card which is required for subsidy programs specifically targeted to Indigenous renters. One participant stated, *"Just to get your status card you already need ID. Especially your birth certificate and that costs money to start sending away for your birth certificate, all of that. And then you have to do it all over again in seven years when your status card expires."* Clients were also concerned about trying to present themselves and their Indigenous nation *'in a good way'* in order to get housing.

REVISIONING INDIGENOUS AWARENESS TRAINING

Another major theme gleaned from the focus group findings is around the need for increased education and critical knowledge development for non-Indigenous frontline workers and managers. It was stressed throughout the focus groups with both frontline workers and clients the importance surrounding Indigenous knowledge constructs. In particular non-Indigenous peoples needed to know about Indigenous peoples in the hopes the information would mitigate the ignorance, racism and discrimination that Indigenous people encounter from landlords, non-Indigenous workers and community members. Many frontline participants saw this as an important aspect of their professional development, that it enhanced their knowledge and that it helped them respond to the needs of their clients in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way.

Those who are were working with youth, talked of how youth would also educate them on Indigenous culture and Indigenous people. The training participants referred to was mandatorily imposed by their organizations and usually occurred once a year at best, what was required to

take during their job tenure. Some participants recognized how meagre the training opportunities were in light of the large population of Indigenous people they were serving. The premise underlying Indigenous Awareness Training is that through learning about Indigenous people, non-Indigenous – primarily Euro-settler – people will be more tolerant and less prone to expressing racist behaviors. While this is not always the case despite the intention, it does support increased capacity of those willing to learn and prepared to adapt perspectives in attitude and behaviour.

Kowal, Franklin and Paradies' (2013) examined the diversity training scholarship and highlighted its weaknesses primarily in terms of the negative emotions such training evokes and the essentializing approaches its proponents and facilitators take in conceptualizing differences. Diversity and Indigenous Awareness Training are preferred education frameworks commonly used by government and a variety of non-government organizations and businesses for increasing *"awareness of racial, ethnic and cultural differences and build skills to promote diversity and reduce racism"* (Kowal, et al. 2013, p. 317). Kowal, et al. (2013) further argued that diversity training *"can range from web-based programmes to brief lectures and workshops to field trips and excursions to cultural immersion activities. Many courses take place in one day, whilst others may be conducted across several weeks or months"* (p. 319). This range of delivery model poses difficulties for evaluating whether participants' attitudes around racism are actually changed as well as the overall effectiveness. Thus, assessment often focuses on the number of participants who attend as opposed to the changed attitudes, which would be difficult to measure. In drawing on empirical studies, Kowal, et al. (2013) demonstrate that while many participants may show a diminishment in racist attitudes, others actually show an increase (Paradies, et al., 2009; Paradies, et al. 2013). Importantly, the authors highlight how stereotypes of Indigenous people are reinforced because *"Not only are cultural groups in danger of being portrayed in simplistic ways but, in attempting to understand 'them' better, their 'otherness' is accentuated"* (Kowal, et al. 2103, p. 320).

Indigenous Awareness Training as described by focus group participants appeared to encompass many of the pitfalls described by Kowal and colleagues (2013). Current organizational approaches provide the bare minimum of training to fulfill accreditation requirements. It is unrealistic to expect participants to retain information about Indigenous peoples and histories in meaningful and enduring ways, let alone in ways that would provide discernable impacts on the experiences of Indigenous people in seeking affordable housing Moreover, looking to Indigenous clients to fill in Euro-settler knowledge gaps is also problematic since it shifts the onus of responsibility in self-directed learning from non-Indigenous people and places that burden on Indigenous clients to

teach about who they are, many of whom are already overwhelmed and overburdened with the barriers of navigating a very oppressive and unfriendly system.

In terms of opportunities to educate landlords, that burden is left to Indigenous renters which is not only unjust in the sense that they are expected to convince others of why Indigenous people have a right to practice their culture but is also unrealistic because many do not have the language or critical anti-oppressive knowledge to provide transformative teachings, which is precisely what is required to shift racist and ignorant attitudes.

Frontline workers indicated that despite the ubiquitous nature of racism that Indigenous peoples, both clients and Indigenous frontline workers experience, none of their organizations offered professional development around antiracism or anti-oppression knowledge and practices.

The above themes offer substantial insight into the perspectives, issues, barriers and needs surrounding Indigenous peoples' experiences within the affordable housing system. By utilizing an anticolonial theoretical framework, the analysis highlights how factors, policies and practices that flow from colonial ideologies continue to shape access to housing and services. Additionally, this study identifies how affordable housing strongly correlated with compromising the basic human dignity of Indigenous people and diminishes their right to housing and home. Taken together, the findings and themes demonstrate that significant revamping, revising, reframing and revisioning of our housing system is required to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples. Outlined below is a series of recommendations that have been synthesized from survey and focus group findings, the themes discussed above as well as the results gleaned from the environmental scan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As identified in the project proposal, the aim of this project has been to contribute NHS's vision of reducing chronic homelessness by 50% by identifying gaps and offering recommendations to inform solutions that would benefit Indigenous populations. What follows below are recommendations, or pathways forward, that are advanced in order to assist relevant stakeholders in better understanding the contexts of Indigenous housing in order to strategize approaches that would integrate Indigenous perspectives into affordable and non-market housing delivery.

- ***Supporting Reserve to Urban Migration*:** The focus group findings demonstrate that Indigenous peoples moving from the reserves to the urban environment is increasing for a variety of reasons ranging from lack of opportunity on reserves to those fleeing from violence. Clients shared experiences of feeling lost in the city, being unfamiliar with how to navigate it effectively and uncertainty in how to access even basic services like city transit. Frontline workers pointed to how additional supports were required to transition Indigenous people from reserves into city living. Development of support programs in partnership with surrounding reserves is necessary. This could occur through community engagement and consultation processes to develop a reserve-to-city transition strategy that could mitigate the access and information barriers that many First Nations people face when moving to the city. One client mentioned how moving to the city *"is all learning for us because like I said, we grew up on the Reserve. We lived in a Band house. So, it's really different here in the white man's world compared to where we come from."* With additional financial support, current subsidy programs can work with on-reserve postsecondary funding bodies to develop subsidy agreements aimed at supplementing band funding for education which can assist Indigenous peoples in achieving increased financial freedom to access safe and affordable housing.

- ***Developing culturally relevant assessment methods:*** During the focus groups, it was pointed out that some of the more formal current assessment approaches only reviewed the history of homelessness. Frontline workers often broaden their assessment methods and survey results showed a lack of assessment criteria that were distinctly tailored to better serve the unique needs of Indigenous peoples. There is a need to need to develop appropriate assessment methods and criteria that consider the cultural contexts of housing needs. Assessment must also consider the strengths of Indigenous families,

individuals and opportunities for growth rather than assessing them based on the degree of deficit and destitution. One participant stated that the system needs changes to support women fleeing abuse so *"they can leave these situations with some sort of integrity, and I guess not be as much of a victim."* Another participant in one of the frontline workers focus group pointed to the problematic nature of the housing system's approach to assessing need and stated, *"I don't understand the philosophy that someone has to be at rock bottom before they get help."* These statements highlight the situation of many Indigenous people entering into the affordable housing system. Unfortunately, the assessment of individuals will utilize these kinds of extreme situations against which to determine level of need.

- ***Affordable and safe housing must be seen as a guiding principle in the development of housing design, programs and support services:*** Indigenous housing design must be developed in the context of optimizing access to services and resources. Feedback from focus group participants as well as the survey results highlighted how culturally appropriate and responsive housing design is less about the physical aspects and more about access to community support mechanism, programs and resources. Supporting frontline workers to ensure they have adequate knowledge of relevant community resources is key to ensuring that Indigenous people are supported in their housing situation. Mapping out a community capacity pathway for Indigenous clients must be considered in housing design. Meaningful Indigenous community consultation and engagement processes must also be included in housing design.

- ***Implementing cultural security*:** The focus groups and survey data as well as policy perspectives highlighted in the environmental scan emphasize that safe and affordable housing for Indigenous people must be seen as a right that is embedded in policy and intentionally interpreted in all housing support and advocacy practices. The right to housing should not be seen as something that some Indigenous people deserve while others do not. Housing as a right can be fortified through the process of cultural security. Cultural security is understood as a philosophy of that guides organizational operations to ensure cultural differences are regarded with respect and that individuals *"are treated with regard to their unique cultural needs and differences. It assumes the right to difference and calls for interactions that do not diminish, demean or disempower individuals on the basis of any perceived or actual difference"* (www.notredame.edu.au, para. 1). Cultural security is also understood within a practice-based framework that respects the rights to self-determination and cultural

values and beliefs of Indigenous people (Gubhaju, 2020; Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum, n.d.) It is referred to as security because it is embedded in policies and practices and used to inform professional development initiatives, workplace culture, and strategic processes.

Given that cultural security is conceptualized as both a philosophy and way of being, it resists a templated, check-list approach. Instead, what is needed in implementing cultural security is a set of guidelines that are unique to the distinct culture of an organization and co-created with Indigenous peoples. Gubhaju, et al., (2020) have noted that cultural security is about creating the conditions for ensuring that Indigenous people have a right to their culture and to practice it in all its forms. Service organizations might begin an implementation process by first undertaking a needs assessment and or gaps analysis in parallel with more Indigenous-based approaches such as seeking guidance from Elders and ensuring the participation of Indigenous community members for whom the services are targeted toward. This would provide clarity on practices that require revamping to ensure the conditions for cultural security are optimized. The Australia Department of Health and Community Services (2002) outlines their process for creating and implementing cultural security. In the Canadian context, we might look at emerging practices and approaches such the Urban, Rural and Northern Housing Renewal Strategy's For Indigenous by Indigenous Housing (Canadian Housing & Renewal Association, 2021) as contributing to cultural security.

- ***Increasing relational capacity:*** Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing are shaped through a relational paradigm. The relational worldview of Indigenous people is expressed through the familiar axiom of 'all my relations.' A central question for any housing strategy is to ask how a housing system will be able to provide a space where meaningful connection and cultural freedom are added to Indigenous peoples lives – space wherein they can feel connected both to culture and to each other. Feeling connected to each other is often centered around cultural practices. Hence, a central consideration needs to focus on how those meaningful experiences are being integrated into affordable housing situations and affordable housing design. Relational capacity is understood here as the ability to relate in ways that foster trust, safety, and respect. Increasing relational capacity can be achieved through processes that deliberately connect interlocking practices, approaches and theoretical models into a framework that supports a system's wide approach for housing design. Drawing in landlords and other key stakeholders is necessary especially in light of client perspectives many of whom felt that landlords need

to see Indigenous people as humans and not dollar signs. According to clients, being good landlords, and treating people with dignity saves landlords money in the long run because that motivates renters to want to be good tenants, to take care of the place and be respectful.

- ***Identifying, supporting and creating a community network of supports to enhance community relational capacity*:** Building relational capacity occurs at both individual and collective levels. At the individual level, organization support for mentoring programs will offer opportunities for Indigenous people to feel connected to a community, increase confidence, and exchange practical information. During the focus group with clients, participants reached out to each other to offer support to one another. Older people and those who have lived in the city their entire lives know the system and the existing resources that are supportive of Indigenous people. One participant knew her rights as a renter and felt confident enough to share her information with the younger women in the focus group. Creating a resource package for Indigenous people ensures that a community's relational capacity is enhanced through a supports network mapping approach that is shared amongst organization. Building collective relational capacity requires a concerted, systems wide approach.

- ***Supporting the hiring and retention of Indigenous frontline workers:*** Having frontline workers was identified as an important element in culturally responsive service provision because Indigenous people have direct lived experience with the issues Indigenous clients are facing, are better able to connect, communicate and empathize with them because of shared cultural understanding and can often interpret and respond to situations that White and other non-Indigenous workers cannot. However, results from the survey highlighted how having Indigenous frontline workers was not a priority or not seen as important. Data for this project illuminate the need for non-Indigenous managers to engage in professional development opportunities geared at providing evidence-based information surrounding the centrality of an Indigenous workforce to serve Indigenous people. Hiring and screening modalities must be culturally appropriate to ensure that employment opportunities reach Indigenous candidates. Indigenous welcoming ceremonies led by Elders or knowledge keepers ensure that new Indigenous employees are respectfully invited into the organization. Lifelong learning is an important feature of Indigenous epistemology. Supporting ongoing learning opportunities for Indigenous

workers that foster personal development and enhance professional skills will improve retention and by including non-Indigenous staff, relational capacity is increased.

- ***Anticolonial, antiracism training/professional development framework:*** Addressing the colonial legacy within our social systems must be seen as a key priority in all levels of government, business, education and not-for-profit sectors. Building critical anticolonial knowledge capacity can be achieved through antiracism training modalities that integrate Indigenous philosophy and elements of Indigenous pedagogy. Indigenous awareness training was identified in the focus groups as a common learning modality for non-Indigenous workers to improve their ability to work with Indigenous people. The role of ongoing professional development was identified as a significant factor in promoting good intercultural relations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. However, for this to happen, individual workers and managers need to be critically aware of how they're using their power in their role. Delivering knowledge about the aims of settler colonial power must be brought into any professional development program that focuses on Indigenous people. Moreover, the punitive nature surrounding mistakes is part of the reason why many Euro-settler peoples are afraid to learn from Indigenous peoples. Mistakes must be reframed as gifts of learning rather than a source of shame. However, when mistakes are made in terms of building new relationships with Indigenous peoples, members of Euro-settler society must be accountable to their mistakes and learn from them. In terms of Indigenous cultural competency initiatives, it must be accepted that these approaches are not enough to build and strengthen intercultural relational capacity within mainstream society in ways that would enable the integration of other ways of knowing without overwhelming or appropriating them. Currently, the settler colonial worldview does not allow for paradigm shifts that would reframe and reorganize social and cultural hierarchies. Current diversity, Indigenous awareness and inclusion initiatives are not enough to build the kind of capacity needed to transform relationships since they appear to cater to the comfort levels of White peoples often leading to reinforcement of stereotypes and encouraging continued objectification of Indigenous cultures. Professional development and educational programming require a conceptual overhaul which relies on Indigenous perspectives towards righting power imbalances as opposed to Western approaches that tend to focus on filling in the knowledge gaps of individuals rather than critically reflecting on the broader patterns of oppression that lead to the enduring marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Current Indigenous awareness training needs rigorous evaluation to monitor its effectiveness. There must also be a movement

away from surface-level acts of reconciliation that tend to tokenize Indigenous history in order to meet diversity and accreditation policies.

The recommendations outlined above offer a starting point for stakeholders within the housing system to strategize approaches and frameworks that are aimed at informing policy development models across the housing continuum in areas that encompass those identified in the objective of this project. These areas include cultural conceptions of accessibility, safety, community, cultural identity and needs, and affordability.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study informs several key areas as conceptual sites for future research:

- Exploring how Indigenous foster parents are constrained by the current housing system and prevented from caring for Indigenous children. Kinship care and keeping Indigenous children within culture is vital in maintaining identity and healthy future outcomes. Indigenous foster parents providing care to Indigenous children so they don't go into non-Indigenous homes must be supported through housing. The fact that a client had to move out of an affordable unit in order to accommodate being a foster parent and then was forced to pay triple the amount of rent highlights how the housing system is complicit in the ongoing fracturing of Indigenous families.

- Conducting a longitudinal study on the long-term efficacy of Indigenous Awareness Training. With too much emphasis placed on this type of professional development with little evidence of its long-term impact in reducing racism and discrimination against Indigenous people, the approach needs to be reviewed and reconstructed.

- Developing a collaborative participatory research project that explores a revamp of application and screening methods to attract Indigenous workers into supportive housing and housing navigation roles.

- Designing a housing assessment/intake model that is responsive to the realities of Indigenous peoples and is informed by definitions that are consistent with Indigenous people's understandings and conceptualizations of family, home, community and reflective of Indigenous people's values. This assessment model must be co-created with Indigenous peoples through consultation and engagement processes.

While this is not an exhaustive list, the above research pathways will not only contribute to improving housing systems' approaches in responding to the needs of Indigenous people but will also offer opportunities to create collaborative partnerships and a coordinated community effort in the development of new policy and practices.

CONCLUSION

This project has offered significant insight into the context of Indigenous housing including the perceptions of Indigenous peoples toward housing, specific needs as well as the approaches taken in affordable housing supports. The focus group findings supported previous studies yet presented additional depth of information in relation to family, unique perspectives on the meaning of home, the need for antiracism professional development and the legacy of colonialism within the housing systems' policies and practices. The data analysis approach was developed at the conceptual intersection of Indigenous relationality and anticolonial theorizing which illuminated how the housing system was underlain shaped by colonization and settler colonial ideological forces and have led to the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous peoples.

An Indigenous paradigm grounded in relationality also assisted in conceptualizing the interconnected experiences of oppression, social exclusion and forced dependency described by many of the focus group participants. The recommendations highlight the need for alternate approaches as well emphasizing the legacy of colonization as one that must be acknowledged and appropriately confronted and redressed in planning and implementation of policies. By demonstrating how our current housing system is a reflection of societal priorities and values which function to privilege the ongoing success of Euro-settler population at the expense of Indigenous people's wellness, this study offers a starting point for reframing approaches and shifting the Eurocentric paradigm in order to plan for a more equitable housing system.

IDENTIFYING THE FOUNDATIONS

APPENDIX A

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Aboriginal Standing Committee
on Housing and Homelessness

ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETY OF CALAGARY: ERIN RAMPSERGER, CALLA SAVARY, AMBER (BUFFY) BROMLEY-GRIER, KATELYN LUCAS, AND KATELYN STEINWAND

APPENDIX A

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

1. OVERVIEW

Indigenous peoples in Canada have adapted to the upheavals of their culture and environmental contexts and while these adaptations do not always align with Western notions of social normalcy and stability, they signify an enduring resilience that has sustained Indigenous cultural continuity for millenia. To understand Indigenous cultures, one must first recognize their perseverance in order to better contextualize the overwhelming experiences of forced subjugation and ongoing oppression. Colonization has negatively impacted the welfare of Indigenous peoples in Canada, resulting in a loss of cultural identity, enduring patterns of abuse, intergenerational trauma and disproportionate rates of depression, suicidality, substance use, and homelessness (Patrick, 2014; Kirmayer, et al., 2003; Bellamy & Hardy, 2015). Absence of awareness and understanding of the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples perpetuates stereotypes, discrimination, and racism, resulting in Indigenous homelessness and a lack of culturally responsive affordable housing (Duran, 2006; Kirmayer et. al, 2014; Mental Health Commission of Canada [MHCC], 2016; O'Hagan, 2004; Stewart, 2008; Patrick, 2014; Thistle, 2017; Thurston, et al., 2013). In response, this environmental scan aims to explore how affordable housing can be more responsive in supporting the Indigenous population by 1) briefly exploring the state of Canadian housing policy as it relates to Indigenous homelessness, 2) defining affordable housing and Indigenous homelessness and exploring the demographics of Indigenous homelessness; 3) exploring culturally responsive approaches to structural design; and 4) exploring culturally responsive approaches to program delivery.

2. TERMINOLOGY

The following section will situate key definitions/terms that are central to the practices and discourses that are identified in this scan.

2.1 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) defines affordable housing as a dwelling that costs less than 30% of the occupants' overall income calculated before-tax (CMHC, 2018a). Housing must be in suitable condition meaning it should not require any major repairs and should provide enough bedrooms to sufficiently support all family members. The goal of affordable housing is to meet the needs of Canadians while accommodating family household incomes.

2.2 INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is often understood through an individual lens. However, due to the overrepresentation of the Indigenous population in homelessness and their experiences of marginalization, power inequities, racism, and discrimination, Indigenous homelessness must be viewed through a collective lens by acknowledging the historic and systemic factors impacting the Indigenous population (Oelke, et al., 2016; Patrick, 2014). Further, Indigenous homelessness is more complex than the mere absence of a structural home. Indeed, an Indigenous worldview of homelessness includes "individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to the land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities" (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness [ASCHH], 2012 as cited in Thistle, 2017, p. 6). Indigenous peoples across Canada have articulated 12 dimensions of homelessness:

1. Historical displacement - displacement from pre-colonial Indigenous lands;
2. Contemporary geographic separation - separation from land after colonial control;
3. Spiritual disconnection - separation from Indigenous worldviews;

4. Mental disruption and imbalance - mental imbalance caused by colonization and marginalization;

5. Cultural disintegration and loss - alienation from Indigenous individuals, communities, culture and the family web;

6. Overcrowding - number of people per dwelling exceeds the national average, contributing to unsafe, unhealthy and overcrowded living spaces, resulting in homelessness;

7. Relocation and mobility - travelling over geographic distances between urban and rural spaces for access to work, health, education, recreation, legal and childcare services, to attend spiritual events and ceremonies, have access to affordable housing, and to see family, friends and community members;

8. Going home - grew up or lived outside home community for a period of time, and on returning "home," are often seen as outsiders, making them unable to secure a physical structure in which to live, due to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal bureaucratic barriers, uncooperative band or community councils, hostile community and kin members, lateral violence and cultural dislocation;

9. Nowhere to go - lack of access to stable shelter, housing, accommodation, services and relationships;

10. Escaping or avoiding harm - fleeing, leaving or vacating unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or overcrowded households or homes to obtain a measure of safety or to survive;

11. Emergency crisis - natural disasters, large-scale environmental manipulation and acts of human mischief and destruction, along with bureaucratic red tape, combining to cause Indigenous people to lose their homes because the system is not ready or willing to cope with an immediate demand for housing; and

12. Climate refugee - lifestyle, subsistence patterns and food sources, relationship to animals, and connection to land and water have been greatly altered by drastic and cumulative weather shifts due to climate change. (Thistle, 2017, pp. 10-12).

Not only is homelessness more complex for Indigenous populations, studies have shown that Indigenous peoples who are homeless are younger, have lower education, and are more likely to be unemployed, victimized and to utilize health services compared to the non-Indigenous

homeless population (Thurston, et. al., 2013). Indigenous homelessness is multifaceted and requires a multidimensional approach to design and deliver housing programs that are culturally responsive to the unique needs of the Indigenous population.

3. DEMOGRAPHICS

Indigenous populations are growing at much faster rates than non-Indigenous populations in Canada. In 2016, nearly 1.7 million Indigenous people were residing in Canada and represented approximately 4.9% of Canada's overall population (Statistics Canada, 2017). Indigenous populations grew by 42.5% between 2006 and 2016, nearly four times the rate of non-Indigenous populations (Statistics Canada, 2017). The Indigenous population is projected to reach 2.5 million people within the next twenty years (Statistics Canada, 2017). Suggested factors contributing to higher growth rates of Indigenous populations in Canada are higher fertility rates, improved life expectancy, and amendments to self-reported studies (Statistics Canada, 2017). Indigenous self-identification has increased by 59% over a 10-year span among Indigenous people residing in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2017). Further, Indigenous households have an average of 3.7 people living in a home, whereas the non-Indigenous household has an average of 2.5 occupants (Canadian Institute of Child Health, n.d.). This number reflects the concern of overcrowding in Indigenous homes, with multiple generations and extended family members residing under one roof.

4. CANADIAN HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

THE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

In 1993, the federal government funded The National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA) to improve housing opportunities for Indigenous people in Canada. The NAHA was created to connect current housing providers to offer support and direction in policy development. There are over 110 current urban housing providers serving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis populations in Canada. (NAHA, 2009). In a 2009 report, the NAHA stated that "the current focus of NAHA is on advocating for predictable and sustainable funding from the federal government to preserve the existing urban Native housing stock and add sufficient additional dedicated stock to respond to unmet and growing housing need among Aboriginal households living off reserve" (p. 1). The

NAHA recognizes that budget costs and program decisions are often allocated for on-reserve populations causing urban Indigenous populations to be overlooked in Canada:

The housing conditions in Aboriginal communities have been well documented and compared to third world conditions. This focuses almost exclusively on Aboriginal housing on Reserve; less well known is the reality that almost three-quarters (73%) of the Aboriginal population do not live on Reserve, and this non-reserve population is increasing. Moreover, the non-reserve Aboriginal population experiences a much larger rate of housing need than non-Aboriginal population in the same urban centres. Yet in most budget and program decisions this population and need is overlooked – there is no dedicated funding or strategy to address these issues, which as a consequence have continued to increase. (NAHA, 2009, p. 1)

NAHA consulted with its members to develop guiding principles for a National Non-Reserve Housing Strategy. The principles argue that the Federal government has a fiduciary responsibility in ensuring that housing programs incorporate an Indigenous component. Non-reserve housing programs must promote self-determination and self-governance through community-based and non-profit ownership. Housing programs must be culturally sensitive in deliverance and management styles; programs must recognize and respect the different needs of the Indigenous group they are serving. Future housing initiatives must deliver assistance to non-Reserve Indigenous populations to ensure suitable and affordable housing. Affordability should be maintained with housing payments that are under 30% of minimum wage within the program's jurisdiction (Pomeroy, 2013, p. 236).

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a non-binding declaration that affirms the human rights and equality of all Indigenous peoples. It affirms the right to self-determination, autonomy, and self-government. Crucially, it affirms the right to improved economic and social conditions including housing and health (UN General Assembly, 2007). Unfortunately, Canada opposed the declaration when it was introduced in 2007 (along with Australia, New Zealand, and the US) and only ratified it years later, calling it an "aspirational document" and emphasizing that it is non-legally binding (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2012; United Nations, n.d.). UNDRIP can not be relied upon to enforce housing strategies.

HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT AND THE NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Canada ratified the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1976 (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights [OHCHR], n.d.). Part III, Article 11 of the ICESCR affirms the international human right to adequate housing:

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent. (OHCHR, 1976).

In an effort to fulfill its obligations under ICESCR, Canada developed the National Housing Strategy (NHS). On November 22, 2017, the federal government announced the NHS, including a 10-year plan and a $40 billion budget to improve adequate and affordable housing for Canadians:

Canada's National Housing Strategy sets ambitious targets to ensure that unprecedented investments and new programming deliver results. This will include a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness, and as many as 530,000 households being taken out of housing need. The National Housing Strategy will result in up to 100,000 new housing units and 300,000 repaired or renewed housing units (Government of Canada, 2017, p. 4).

Further, the government committed to funding and co-developing a "distinctions-based" housing strategy to address the "Indigenous housing crisis in Canada" affecting both on and off reserve populations. (Government of Canada, 2017, p. 19). However, nearly four years after the introduction of the NHS, and despite the allocation of funds, the promised distinctions-based strategy remains non-existent. In its most recent update, the federal government maintains that "the co-development of distinctions-based Indigenous housing strategies is a priority for the Government" (Government of Canada, n.d.).

Following the introduction of the NHS, the Canadian government implemented the ICESCR in domestic legislation through the *National Housing Strategy Act* (*NHSA*) which came into force on July 9, 2019 (Statutes of Canada, 2019). The *NHSA* reaffirms the domestic and international human right to adequate housing:

4. It is declared to be the housing policy of the Government of Canada to:

1. recognize that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law;

2. recognize that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities;

3. support improved housing outcomes for the people of Canada; and

4. further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. (Statutes of Canada, 2019).

The introduction of the NHS and the enactment of the *NHSA* provides a sense of hope for the future of Canada's approach to housing as a human right, but it is unclear how the *Act* may impact communities moving forward. The *NHSA* is a federal statute, and therefore does not impact provincial, territorial, Indigenous, or municipal jurisdiction. It is also unclear how courts will interpret the document, with no mechanism for individual redress built into the law (Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2019).

The *NHSA* aspires to address housing and homelessness issues to improve Canadian quality of life, "particularly persons in greatest need" (Statutes of Canada, 2019, preamble). Current Canadian housing policies further exacerbate the Indigenous housing crisis by neglecting Indigenous peoples' housing needs. Further, the Government of Canada denies it's responsibility in providing appropriate and affordable housing for Indigenous people in Canada (NAHA, 2009). Indigenous people continue to live in extreme substandard conditions in Canada and this issue needs to be prioritized in policy decisions.

5. BEST PRACTICES FOR CULTURALLY INFORMED HOUSING DESIGN

"Indigenous culture is a living culture. This is a living organism of which you become part of that experience."

– Jefa Greenaway on designing culturally relevant buildings for Indigenous people (Tunstall, 2015)

5.1 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATED CO-DESIGN

Integrated co-design refers to the power and importance of Indigenous consultation, partnerships, co-creation and high-level collaboration between numerous groups and community members when designing and delivering housing. This ensures meaningful engagement occurs at every step of the process to establish housing that effectively aligns with the needs of the Indigenous community (Hayes, 2019).

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT BEGINS BEFORE YOU SET FOOT IN A COMMUNITY

Ermine has provided an expansion upon the philosophical framework of "ethical space" to define the ethical space of engagement between Indigenous peoples and Western institutions coming together in dialogue (2007). Ethical space represents the distance created between entities by distinct worldviews, experiences, positions of power, etc. Ermine visualizes the space as a type of neutral meeting place where these distinctions can be reconciled - "Engagement at the ethical space triggers a dialogue that begins to set the parameters for an agreement to interact modeled on appropriate, ethical and human principles" (Ermine, 2007, p. 202). Non-Indigenous planners should consider this ethical space and their position within it before coming to the meeting place. What are their unique perspectives and worldviews? Where will these perspectives converge or diverge with Indigenous worldviews? Where is conflict or disagreement most likely to arise?

There are hundreds of Indigenous communities throughout Canada with diverse cultural perspectives, ways of life, and languages. Planners need to start by researching the specific community that will be consulted and develop an understanding of their cultural protocols. They should learn some basic words in the community's language, understand the culturally appropriate methods for engaging with the community, and plan adequate time and flexibility for community members to deliberate (Butler et al., 2017, p. 2). Planners should participate in the Indigenous community with which they are working to develop a relationship with the people and understand requirements for the project to be successful.

PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY

Understanding the specific needs of the community requires planners to build relationships with the community members and foster an ongoing dialogue. Planners should consider attending community events and engaging with people in the places they are most comfortable. Alain Fournier, an architect that works with northern Indigenous communities, commented that his architecture firm "always meets and dialogues with small groups where they normally gather - the youth centre, Elders' homes, women's groups. We want to understand what they want, both practically and culturally, and support their way of life" (Atkins, 2016, p. 4). Meeting people in their regular gathering spots can further inform design by providing planners with an observational understanding of how people physically move through their home and community spaces and connect with one another.

When they were consulting with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations in Northern Vancouver Island, community planners Erfan and Hemphill found that organizing family dinners and making informal visits to community gatherings were the most effective strategies to engage community members (2013, p. 20). Ultimately, building trust and relationships with the community will require multiple strategies. It is important to ensure proper time is budgeted in the project to create an authentic and flexible engagement process. The financial budget is also an essential consideration. The "provision of funding can be critical to successful engagement: it enables communities to obtain the capacity necessary to effectively and meaningfully engage, including fully participating in regulatory processes. The amount of funding provided should be reflective of the work to be undertaken and the capacity needs of the community, and should be determined through discussion with the community's leaders or designated representatives" (Canadian Wind Energy Association, 2017, p. 20). Community planners' participation in Indigenous communities is required from the beginning of the project to the end to ensure respectful partnerships are achieved and maintained.

INCORPORATE INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

Indigenous staff, consultants, and designers engaged with the relevant communities should be employed for the project whenever possible (Kennedy, et al., 2018). Planners should consider hiring an Indigenous architect to design the project, involving local Indigenous artists in the design, partnering with an Indigenous employment agency, or hiring local community members

to consult on cultural protocols and foster in-roads into the community. Embedding Indigenous supervision and representation throughout the project is integral to effective co-design.

Hemphill and Erfan emphasize that hiring a local community planner was key to their successful consultations with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. They stated:

> Non-Indigenous people cannot indigenize planning. Each Indigenous community has unique traditions and a web of relationships, and to do Indigenous planning means to be in tune with these and sensitive to their nuanced local differences. It is therefore essential that the 'indigenizing role' is filled by the local community planner who carries the local culture in his or her bones. (Erfan & Hemphill, 2013, p. 19)

The local planner they hired connected them to community events, set-up family dinners with community members, and provided them access to the most common channels of communication throughout the nations. For example, through the local planner they learned that Facebook was a primary mode of communication for Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations members. As a result, they were able to effectively use that platform for discussions and consultation (Erfan & Hemphill, 2013, p. 20).

THE ORAL TRADITION

Planners should be prepared to engage with community members through oral methodologies including storytelling and talking circles. As with any other type of data collection, participants engaged in these methodologies must be informed of the ways in which their story will be used, the format it will take, and the audience that will have access. Planners should also consider giving participants the choice between anonymity or identification and credit for insights, rather than choosing blanket anonymity without consultation.

Indigenous methods such as storytelling and talking circles should be incorporated with an understanding and respect of the culture they invoke. The listener should ensure that the speaker does not feel compelled to say the right thing. The speaker controls the narrative and the listener must "simply listen and trust that meaning will be made" (Hendry, 2007, p. 494). The listener must also resist the temptation to fragment and restructure stories in a manner that may allow non-Indigenous planners to "say what they want to say in a particular context, rather than really

listening to what is being said" (Willox, et al., 2012, p. 129). A speaker's story should always be preserved with its intended meaning.

COMMIT TO CAPACITY-BUILDING

Employing Indigenous community members not only provides the project with valuable insights, but also creates opportunities to build transferable skills that can benefit the community in the long-term. The collaborating teams of designers and builders bring a repertoire of skills that can be taught to the community members throughout the planning and construction phases. In the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations case study, planners Erfan and Hemphill taught community members skills in computer proficiency, budgeting, scheduling, interviewing, and facilitation (2013, p. 21).

Notably, there are several recent capacity building projects for Indigenous housing that have incorporated teaching construction skills to Indigenous peoples. For example, the Kikekyelc project in Kamloops, BC houses Indigenous youth who have been in the child welfare system along with Elders that can help mentor them into adulthood. The project allotted funds to hire ten prospective youth tenants to work with the developer in building the 31-unit condo complex that they would eventually call "home". As a result of their experience building Kikekyelc, some of the youth were able to get full-time jobs with other developers and construction firms (Klassen, 2019).

Ermineskin Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan partnered with Your Choice Homes to develop a curriculum-based project that teaches high school students hands-on construction skills while building homes for Elders. Thirty-six students from local high schools gained course credits and apprenticeship hours for their work on three new homes in what would become the Elders Village (Copley, 2019).

The same curriculum was used in Piikani Nation in Southern Alberta where 12 high school students built a tiny home for an Elder. The project was designed so that students were exposed to every ticketed and non-ticketed trade as they built the tiny home, providing them with insights on which trade may be the best career path for them (Rieger, 2018).

Similarly, a tiny homes project was implemented on the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta in 2016 (Southwick, 2016). Students at Kainai Highschool underwent a formal application process to enrol in the program, and were offered academic credit, work experience, and industry tickets. The

program aimed to prepare students for employment after graduation, and planned to sell the tiny homes after completion.

Finally, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Company (CMHC) offers a Housing Internship Initiative for First Nation and Inuit Youth program (2018b). The program offers wage subsidies to Inuit and First Nations organizations to support them in hiring Inuit and First Nations youth interested in a career in the housing industry, including roles in administration, construction, renovation, client counselling, and maintenance. A graduate of this program has successfully spearheaded a tiny homes project in Bella Coola, building small, solar-powered units to support single men who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (National Housing Strategy, 2018).

ENSURE EVERYONE HAS A VOICE

Consultation strategies must seek out a variety of viewpoints to achieve functional designs for multigenerational communities. Certain groups such as youth and Elders may require unique engagement strategies (Turner, 2017, p.116).

Urban planners consulting with the Nibinamik First Nations in Northern Ontario sought youth input in the project. They partnered with the local school to develop a project where youth designed their dream homes and worked together to build a 3-D model of their envisioned community. Planners assisted youth throughout the project, allowing the planners to build relationships and hear comments youth made about their desired housing (CBC News, 2017).

When engaging with Elders, it is important to use proper protocols to honour the knowledge they are providing. Planners should seek to learn about the unique gifts that each Elder in a community may be able to provide to the project. Elders in the community may possess sacred knowledge and hold ceremonial rites, while others may possess specific cultural knowledge related to governance, commerce, housing, or other technical aspects of the project (Council on Aboriginal Initiatives, 2012). It is essential that the project engages both sacred and technical Elders to ensure a rounded representation of these unique cultural perspectives. Sacred Elders need time to develop a sacred space and therefore planners need to understand that relationship building is on the Elders' time. Fry (2017) declares "it is a concern for the Elders that there be enough time for them to teach the younger generation properly. This is a form of Indigenous professional development that should be developed. This would require sacred spaces for that to occur but also sacred time to enable an authentic transfer of knowledge" (p. 9). When Planners

intend on working with Indigenous communities, it is pertinent that they enter a partnership with intentions to learn from the Indigenous community they plan to work with and be willing to listen to the Indigenous peoples' needs.

LISTEN

Approaching the consultation process with a flexible, open mind and an authentic desire to listen and learn from the Indigenous community is key to successful engagement. The Indigenous community members are the experts on what they need. A non-Indigenous planner who enters the community telling people what they need may simply reinforce the Western paternalistic approach to planning which has suppressed Indigenous communities for centuries. Hence, it is essential that planners focus on deep listening rather than offering advice. Deep listening requires patient, courteous, active listening that prioritizes the insights of the Indigenous community members (Kennedy, et al., 2018, p. 32). Displaying a genuine desire to learn from the community means planners need to take actions that humbly put the needs of the community first. Erfan and Hemphill elaborate:

Some have suggested that professional planners cannot 'simply present as observers to write down and record ideas on flip chart paper and to facilitate a meeting.' We believe instead that no task is beneath the professional planner—he or she may only get to set up chairs and cook dinner if that is what the community needs. Someone committed to a decolonizing agenda lets go of his or her own agendas (2013, p. 21).

INCORPORATE CULTURAL PRACTICES AND TRADITIONS

Incorporating ceremony throughout each stage of the process can be really important for aligning the project with the identity of the community and maintaining engagement. Several Indigenous housing developments have initiated projects with ceremonial blessings, ground-breaking ceremonies, and naming ceremonies conducted by the spiritual leaders in the community (Kyser, 2012p. p. 89-101). Other cultural practices such as gift-giving and using a talking stick may be relevant to the consultation process depending on the protocols of the community (Butler et al., 2017, p. 2).

COMMUNICATION & PLANNING

Community members and relevant Indigenous rights holders should be kept apprised of new information and be able to provide input on each development phase (Butler et al., 2017, p. 2). This requires that the information on the project be clear and accessible. Time and effort should be allotted to properly explain more complex aspects of the project so that the community can confidently advise if it is the right direction for them. Where possible, community members should be active agents in leading consultation and shaping agenda items. Time should also be allowed to ensure all stakeholders are able to express themselves fully. Speakers should not be cut off due to strict time limits, but rather schedules should be flexible to accommodate all voices.

A long term case study of a housing development for the Seabird Island First Nation in British Columbia provides an example of the pitfalls of inadequate planning and communication (Kyser, 2012). The study found that some of the green technologies implemented in the project, such as wind turbines and specialized water tanks, fell into disrepair prior to their projected life expectancy and became an unexpected expense to the community. A contributing issue was the lack of adequate training provided to community members about how to maintain these technologies. Further, there did not appear to be sufficient explanation during the planning process about what it would mean for the community to take on these technologies (Kyser, 2012, p. 94). These missed opportunities illustrate why consultation needs to be an ongoing process that shows the community how their initial requests could physically materialize and discusses how these decisions would work for their lifestyle in the long term.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

To establish constant communication, consider developing a protocol agreement with the community that clearly outlines the expectations and responsibilities of the project and the associated roles. Outline how the data will be collected, used, and shared and include guidance on cultural competencies. This will provide a helpful framework to ensure all involved parties remain accountable and act in accordance with the project goals and the community needs (Finebilt, 2015, p. 9). Further, it is essential to ensure that the protocol agreement is reached in compliance with the doctrine of informed consent. Informed consent requires that participants are provided with all of the relevant information in an accessible and comprehensible manner such that they acquire the information they need to make a meaningful decision about whether to participate. It

is the responsibility of the information gatherer to ensure comprehension of the terms to which a participant consent. A simple “yes” is insufficient to obtain consent, and the informed element will help to protect vulnerable and marginalized community members from exploitation.

At the completion of the project, make efforts to follow up with the community to see where they may need more support and information. Encourage them to evaluate and provide feedback on the project and the overall engagement process (Butler et al., 2017, p. 3). Lindstrom (in-press) developed an Indigenous engagement strategy to guide a privately funded research project on behalf of the Calgary Homeless Foundation that explored the flow of Indigenous peoples between the city of Calgary and surrounding Treaty 7 First Nations. The strategy identified multiple pathways, including a communication feedback loop, that may assist others in developing processes for sustaining engagement with Indigenous communities, sharing information, and managing data. In the context of research, accessing the support of the First Nations Governance Centre was seen as a key strategy in Lindstrom’s (2020) vision of community engagement. Other specific examples include:

- Identify the type of information to be shared with Indigenous communities and clearly communicate what specific kind of feedback you are requesting (i.e., policy, community needs, perspectives).
- In consultation with Indigenous representatives, plan for the most efficient communication medium.
- Consider the timelines of the project and ensure to offer drafts of documents well in advance – expecting a quick turn around is not realistic.
- Understand that the feedback may not always align with research assumptions or priorities. Rather than a barrier, this type of feedback should be expected given the needs and priorities of Indigenous communities are often vastly different from public policy directions.
- Plan for how the feedback will be implemented into subsequent analysis and report writing – ensure Indigenous communities are aware of how their feedback will be acted on.
- Plan for a closing event that reports back to Indigenous communities to update on the status of the project and any new directions or pathways. (Lindstrom, 2020)

CONSULTATION AND CO-DESIGN RESOURCES

International Indigenous Design Charter: The Charter provides foundational protocols for sharing Indigenous knowledge in professional design projects.

5.2 INDIGENIZING ARCHITECTURE: STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING COMMUNITY AND CULTURE IN BUILDING DESIGN

"We need to ask questions about what we can 'make visible' through architecture, and what sustains and supports culture."

– *Wanda Dalla Costa* (Shaw-Collinge, 2018)

DESIGN THAT EMBODIES INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Indigenous culture should be considered in the design decisions of shape, colour, symbols, materials and direction of a structure. Creativity and proper consultation can foster effective and unique designs that genuinely represent the Indigenous occupants. In some cases, permission may need to be granted for use of culturally relevant symbols, as the image may belong to a specific family, tribe, or band (Bortnowski, 2017). Urban buildings can adopt holistic designs that broadly appeal to multiple Indigenous backgrounds. In these instances, it is essential that the design maintains an authentic representation of broader Indigenous cultural artifacts and to avoid the desire to pan-Indigenize design. Drawing on fundamental principles that are congruent among Indigenous paradigms such as relational worldview, connection to nature, balance, reciprocity, and respect for differences, can add depth to the design. As well, hiring Indigenous architects, designers, artists, and planners is essential to developing design that expresses rather than appropriates Indigenous culture.

Indigenous architects' designs reveal the possibilities to authentically embed culture in the structural aesthetic. Notably, the work of veteran architect Douglas Cardinal aptly depicts the physical embodiment of Indigenous heritage in a structure. When Cardinal was commissioned to design the Indigenous student centre at the University of Saskatchewan, he used foundational

inspiration from traditional lodges in the area (Cardinal & Blaser, 2016). The final product is a stunning building constructed from limestone that artfully curves and folds into a unique standalone structure. Cardinal and Blaser (2016) describe the cultural significance of the design choices:

In addition to the timeless quality of the limestone in the design, the buff colour also tells the story of the building as a buckskin blanket. A mother protects the building from the cold north wind opening it to the warm south sun. This story is reinforced with the decorative stone beads. Natural coloured granite is used in each of the four directions, reflecting colours of the Gordon Oakes family. Purple-grey granite fills in the rest of the design, with the colour chosen to match the colour of Wampum, a shell product used for 1000 years as a gift and for belts of treaty and prophecy. Yet another story told by the stone is the contrast of buff limestone with blue glass and blue anodized aluminum frames. In story and symbol, these elements evoke grandfather stone and grandmother water, the elements of the sweat ceremony. (p. 36).

The above description encapsulates the meticulous consideration of Indigenous culture in every aspect of the design. The use of colour is a recurring design element that can make subtle and significant nods to Indigenous cultural heritage. Cardinal chose materials with colours emblematic of key cultural components. Other Indigenous architecture projects have incorporated culturally relevant colours through paint colour choices. This was the case in another project that Douglas Cardinal collaborated on, the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre in Ontario, which used the colours of the medicine wheel as the palette for the building.

Notably, The Sioux Lookout design embeds Indigenous culture in far more elaborate ways than simply the colour choice. It is another clear example of how architecture can become a physical manifestation of Indigenous culture. Head architect Bortnowski (2017) describes it as follows:

For Sioux Lookout, we created a master plan that has the medicine wheel cut in the forest. It literally marks the earth. Visitors can see it as they fly in from far north by plane. The main gathering space at the center of the medicine wheel is the first and main point of entry. Visitors have contact with symbolic elements of water, fire, skylight, and earth in the center of the circle. Outside, aligned with the main entrance, to the east, we created another circle where four large boulders found on the site are aligned with the four directions. These are the grandfather rocks. Community members brought earth from the 32 different communities and placed it between the grandfather rocks during a “gathering” rather than ground-breaking ceremony. (p. 14).

The design of Sioux Lookout additionally recognized the cultural importance of direction and aimed to lay out the interior spaces relative to the appropriate direction required for ceremonies and prayers (Bortnowski, 2017). Further, incorporating the grandfather rocks and the four elements into the design reveals the important design strategy of drawing inspiration from nature.

BIOPHILIC DESIGN

"Too often buildings are designed with little to no contact with or input from the community. The buildings often seem out of place and out of touch with the landscape. Void of the character and materials of the landscape they sit within, these buildings are essentially site-less. They could be anywhere, in any suburb or urban space. I want to see buildings that are specific to their contextual landscape and culture in a way that is not only appropriate, but rich." - Kelly Edzerza-Bapty (Shaw-Collinge, 2018)

Interior design should echo the surrounding natural environment and honour the Indigenous cultural connection to the land, using natural materials and colours that incorporate the landscape in which the building resides. This is known formally in architecture as biophilic design, which simply means to design the building in a way that enhances connectivity to nature for residents. Importantly, the premise of biophilic design is limited and does not adequately capture the deep connection that Indigenous people have with the land. Biophilic design uses nature to *enhance* design, positioning nature as an external source of inspiration. Indigenous design *integrates* nature from the standpoint of a relational worldview where people and the land are completely intertwined and cannot be separated (Shaw-Collinge, 2018).

An interesting example of Indigenous biophilic design is found in Melbourne, Australia. An existing building was redesigned to house the Koorie Heritage Trust, an organization that provides Indigenous peoples access to cultural materials. The project was led by Indigenous architect Jefa Greenaway, who was a key figure in developing the International Indigenous Design Charter.

Despite being adjacent to the Birrarung River, the face of the building pointed in the opposite direction and the back of the building did not include design elements to allow a view of the river from within the building. Greenaway knew the river needed to be the heart of the new design, commenting,

[The river] was pivotal for me finding a means—to connect to that cultural continuity of the river being the lifeblood of a community. And being close proximity to cultural sites, like the MCG, just up the road, which was a gathering place for the five Kulin Nations. This began to create a narrative where we could connect to where we were, and therefore we could acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which the site is located (Tunstall, 2015: 14).

The interior of the building was painted in shades of blue complemented by grey pebbled floors that helped invoke a sense of the Birrarung River and reinforce Wurundjeri cultural identity. Large windows and an expansive outdoor balcony overlooking the river were installed. Chevron patterns in the paint, textiles, and lighting choices all pointed towards the river, which resituated the building in a more culturally relevant and aesthetically pleasing direction (Tunstall, 2015). At the centre of the main communal room within the Trust sits an iconic seven-foot table in the shape of a canoe designed by Greenaway. The table design aligns with the river concept, and is representative of the Aboriginal Scar Tree. Scar trees have historically been used by the local Indigenous populations to build canoes. In this process the tree is never cut down, instead, only the necessary amount of bark is removed to build the canoe. Scar trees have therefore come to signify the Indigenous people's relationship to the land and the notion that one takes only what is needed (Tunstall, 2015).

Simple ways of incorporating nature can include planting local and culturally relevant plant species throughout the interior and exterior of the building, and creating a medicinal herb garden that residents can tend to. A community garden is a crucial component of healing and sustenance for many Indigenous populations. Additionally, using natural local building materials can enhance cultural connectivity. For instance, the Seabird Island First Nations used repurposed hydro poles made of yellow cedar to build their housing development. The cedar poles were reminiscent of traditional materials used to build longhouses. As well, the repurposed aspect of the poles made them inexpensive to buy and aligned with the sustainability goals of the community, providing a great example of how culturally relevant materials can be effective on multiple levels (Kyser, 2012, p. 105).

5.2.2 DESIGN THAT ENABLES INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Perhaps as architects we need to think beyond the singularity of the reservation and the city and pursue these notions as two complementary environments, forging and celebrating the linkages between the two. Can we create residential, civic, and social settings that simultaneously support yet promote movement between the two?

-*Wanda Dalla Costa* (Shaw-Collinge, 2018)

Most of my practice has been in the Arctic. The land and the climate are dominant features. People who do not live in the North have more difficulty designing for it. It becomes a thought experiment rather than a practical application. One thing I notice about southern architects designing for the north is that they often try to focus on the interior spaces while minimizing the number of windows for reasons of energy efficiency or to protect the occupant from the harsh environment. Inuit people love their land and take many daily cues from it. They don't find the climate harsh and they want to be aware of the continuous micro-changes in the weather. Windows provide that connection to the land and the ever-changing light.

-Harriet Burdett-Moulton (Shaw-Collinge, 2018)

Culturally informed architecture is not solely about aesthetics. It is about designing housing that is practical for the way Indigenous occupants use space and connect with one another. This requires the development of ceremonial and communal spaces that will effectively meet the social and spiritual needs of the Indigenous community.

CEREMONY SPACES

The specific design of a ceremonial space will be unique to the Indigenous population for whom it is intended. That being said, many ceremony spaces share certain commonalities and requirements including shape, ventilation, and acoustics.

Ceremonial rooms are generally built in a circular formation. Circles are a sacred symbol representing interconnection and wholeness. They are a foundational component of Indigenous pedagogy that informs an understanding of time and nature as cyclical. A circular room is both culturally relevant and more functional for the purposes of conducting ceremony, drumming circles, and talking circles. Ambrose Place, an Indigenous housing complex, features a circular

ceremony room at the core of the facility. The beige walls of the room slant inwards, resembling a tipi. Windows were included on the interior wall of the ceremony space to enable other residents to view the ceremony without entering the room. Because Ambrose Place is a harm reduction facility, many residents may still be struggling with addiction. In most Indigenous cultures a person cannot participate in a ceremony if they are under the influence of drugs and alcohol. The windowed ceremony room allows individuals that are under the influence of alcohol or substances to witness the ceremony and draw some healing from it without violating cultural protocols. It is a great example of how design can effectively balance culture and the specific needs of the residents (Dumais, et. al., 2017).

Another common design element of ceremony rooms is the installation of robust ventilation systems. Many Indigenous cultural practices, such as smudging and pipe ceremonies, involve burning medicinal herbs for cleansing and healing. Consequently, ceremony rooms need to be endowed with a ventilation system that can handle the presence of smoke without triggering the fire alarm system. Douglas Cardinal's architecture team addressed this issue when designing the Indigenous student centre discussed previously. The team developed an exhaust system that pulls the ceremonial smoke to the centre of the building where it rises and parts into the four directions before being released outside (Green, 2016).

Acoustics and soundproofing of the room are another important consideration for ceremony spaces in order to accommodate drumming, singing, and prayer. Notably, the Seine River First Nations in Ontario incorporated both artificial and natural soundproofing materials into the construction of their ceremony room. Their use of natural materials in multiple aspects of the ceremony space provides a strong example for Indigenous design. The floor of the ceremony space was made of soil and sand mixed with traditional medicines harvested from sacred Seine River sites, and the circular walls are punctuated by spruce pillars sourced from the four corners of their traditional territory (Cohlmeyer Architecture, n.d.). The ceremony room is part of the broader structure of the Seine First Nations Cultural Centre that effectively showcases how design can be tailored to the local Indigenous culture.

COMMUNAL SPACES

Indigenous populations require spaces for socialization that foster community and relationship building. Communal kitchens and dining spaces can provide effective spaces of engagement to enable cultural activities. For example, the Aboriginal Children's Village in Vancouver, BC uses a

communal dining space to host dinners where they invite previous residents to gather with current residents. The dinners foster mentorship and broader relationship building for Indigenous people living in Vancouver (BC Housing, 2018b, p. 3). The Aboriginal Mother Centre Society, another supportive housing unit in Vancouver, uses a communal kitchen to make nutritious meals that they sell for a minimal cost to community members. Residents receive training, meals, and work experience in a kitchen while providing affordable meals to their broader community (Aboriginal Mother Centre Society, 2018; BC Housing, 2018a). Communal kitchens further support culture by providing the space and equipment necessary to make traditional foods. Certain requirements, such as improved ventilation, ample cool storage space for dried and canned goods, and increased freezer space will need to be incorporated into the kitchen design to enable traditional cooking practices. As well, outdoor cooking space is essential for preparing traditional foods. This may include access to outdoor potable water, drying racks, smokehouses, firepit, and a design that connects outdoor cooking spaces to the kitchen for easy transport of game and dried meats.

Additional options for communal spaces can include rooms for beading, crafting, and other group activities that may require storage of materials. Storage spaces should also be allotted for outdoor equipment, such as hunting and fishing equipment. The connection to nature and outdoor activities are an important aspect of Indigenous connectivity. Hence, outdoor social spaces are a necessary aspect of the building design. Designers and housing builders can achieve this by incorporating wraparound porches, a backyard space with no fences, playgrounds, central courtyards, or gardens with communal seating areas. In situations where an existing urban building without green space needs to be adapted to Indigenous housing, a possible resolution could be the installation of a green roof.

A green roof is a system of materials that can be added to the roof of a building to foster plant growth and the development of communal areas. The Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) installed a green roof, which added a culturally responsive outdoor space to a plain concrete 1980s office tower. The NCFST green roof is decorated with lush local plants that border soft play areas and natural log benches. Large garden spaces are filled with traditional Anishinaabe medicines that are harvested for ceremonies, alongside plantings of corn, beans, and squash. These vegetables are known as “the three sisters” and were chosen due to their connection to traditional Haudenosaunee farming practices, which identified the harmonious way these specific plants grow together (Greenroofs.com, n.d.).

A gas fire pit provides a beautiful communal seating area and meets fire code requirements for the centrally located building. The pinnacle of the rooftop design culminates with the sweat lodge. The dome shaped structure is modelled after a traditional Anishinaabe sweat lodge, featuring ribbed curved brown steel lined with scented cedar that replaces the traditionally used branches and skins to meet fire code requirements (Holmes, 2013).

Installing a green roof provides additional benefits to the building. The added membranes required to support the plant life and the plants themselves absorb stormwater, consequently preventing roof leaks (Greenroofs.com, n.d.). Green roofs assist in reducing dust, debris, and pollutants in the air of the surrounding urban environment. They are also useful for reducing energy costs in the summer by keeping the building cooler, as they do not absorb and retain heat at the same high intensity of a plain concrete roof. The NCFST green roof provides a great example for how a single space can achieve the requirements of culture, community, and sustainable design.

ACCESSIBILITY

Housing design should foster intergenerational connection, allowing Elders to pass down social and spiritual teachings. This requires that housing incorporate high standards of barrier free design that ensures older residents and visitors can access and maneuver through all spaces. The designers of the Ambrose Place facility implemented various strategies for ensuring accessibility for Elders. They designed all bathrooms with accessible curbless showers. They also included 10 adjustable kitchen units with counters and cabinets that can be lowered to a height to accommodate residents in wheelchairs (Wickman, 2017). Furthermore, Ambrose Place implemented a unique room designed to exterminate pests from residents' belongings to ensure a healthy environment is maintained within the facility (Dumais et al., 2017).

The CMHC (2018, August 14) is pioneering an approach to design known as FlexHousing™, which can be used for developing accessible intergenerational housing. The overarching intention behind this method is to develop housing that can better support individuals aging in place and increase the adaptability of a home to meet the changing needs of a household. Allowing residents to live in their home longer and meet the needs of more diverse households. Through the FlexHousing™ approach, accessible upgrades are made to the house at the time of construction. Components such as wider doorways and corridors, wall reinforcements for the

potential installment of grab bars, lever door handles, height-adjustable cabinets, and ground-level entrances are examples of strategies used in FlexHousing™ design (CMHC, August 2018).

Adaptability is another key aspect of the FlexHousing™ approach, with design that allows for future changes, such as expansion or the ability to divide a space into multiple units or rooms (CMHC, August 2018). This can be a potential strategy for balancing the needs of Indigenous families who prefer more wide-open communal spaces with those that may require more bedrooms to accommodate a larger family or visitors. This is similar to the concept of a Grown Home, which is an affordable housing design strategy where individuals buy a townhome with unfinished adaptable spaces at a lower price. Buyers then renovate or expand the townhouse to meet their needs over time, accommodating a wide range of budgets (CMHC, August 2018). FlexHousing™ has been used by several Indigenous communities, and was specifically referenced as a design strategy in the housing units developed for the Seabird Island First Nation (Kyser, 2012, p. 102). However, there remains a gap in the literature about the longitudinal success of FlexHousing™ projects for Indigenous populations. Further research should be conducted that examines whether Indigenous residents did upgrade their adaptable FlexHousing™ spaces and whether the final results met their needs.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmentally sustainable building practices create a built environment that better reflects the Indigenous philosophy of connection to the land and environmental stewardship. These practices can additionally provide long term financial benefits to residents through energy savings and reduced maintenance costs.

There are countless strategies for enhancing environmental sustainability in a structure. From utilizing alternative energy sources such as solar power, to simply using more durable building materials that will last longer and reduce waste compared to more frequent replacement of less durable materials.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a widely recognized set of guidelines to establish green building practices. LEED is a green building certification used in many countries. It was developed to address climate change by encouraging energy efficient building practices (Canada Green Building Council, 2021). Structures are assessed by third party agencies on their use of green building practices in design, construction, and ongoing operation. The Canada Green

Building Council is the organization in Canada that promotes and provides LEED certification. They offer checklists of strategies to develop a building that will be successfully certified. This certification is not mandatory however, it is an increasingly common building standard and has been used by many recent Indigenous housing developments. As well, many of the requirements are conducive to Indigenous design principles, such as planting native plant species and using natural materials.

LEED is only one option for guiding the sustainable design of a building. Consultation with the Indigenous community will determine what is needed and possible in terms of environmentally conscious design elements. The following examples illustrate how some Indigenous affordable housing developments have implemented sustainable design strategies.

Yale First Nation in Hope, British Columbia

Yale First Nation used the green energy approach of Passive House design in the development of their new housing units. Passive design focuses on maximizing the energy efficiency of a house through the use of insulating materials and simple strategies that do not require reliance on complex mechanical systems. The Yale First Nation passive design techniques improved insulation through triple glazed windows, three layers of insulation materials, airtight building design, and solar orientation, which positions the houses to better absorb the sun's heat throughout the day. Additionally, indoor air quality was improved by using mold resistant materials and installing a high-efficiency heat recovery ventilator. As a result, resident's heating bills have been reduced by about 80%, saving them hundreds of dollars in energy costs each month (CMHC, August 2018).

The Puyallup Longhouse (Place of Hidden Waters) in Tacoma, Washington

The Place of Hidden Waters is a sustainable housing upgrade to the existing 27 townhomes and community buildings of the Puyallup tribe. The end result is an award winning LEED certified housing development that effectively incorporates Salish cultural design. The townhomes were adapted to have accessible single level homes for Elders running parallel to multi-level units designed for families. The multi-level townhomes were then attached to the ground level units by a slanted roof, emulating the design of traditional Pacific Northwest Salish longhouses. The partially slatted roof attachment created a linear outdoor courtyard between the units where people could gather (Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative [SNCC], 2015, pp. 2-3).

The project used several green design strategies including the passive house techniques of reinforced insulation through Structural Insulated Panels, triple glazed windows, and solar orientation (SNCC, 2015, p. 2). The Puyallup land is adjacent to a forest that slopes down to the Puget Sound. As Salmon people, the Puyallup are very protective of the water. Consequently, green design techniques for storm water retention were implemented to prevent pollutants entering the water. This included installing porous pavement and rain gardens of native plant species and soil that are highly absorbent and positioned in areas that will prevent run-off to nearby vulnerable ecosystems (Kake, 2018).

Geothermal heat pumps were installed to provide eco-friendly heating to the homes. Roofs were designed for future solar panel installation, which would complement the geothermal heating and result in a zero-energy building (SNCC, 2015, p. 2). Planning stages of green energy upgrades can be an effective method for balancing current budget constraints with long-term goals. The Saugeen First Nation used a similar strategy in their sustainable housing development. They started by setting up one unit with solar thermal technologies as a test unit, and then retrofitted all of the other units with the necessary components that would easily allow them to upgrade at a later time (Kyser, 2012, p. 131).

For more information on green building practices and examples, the following guides provides detailed information on sustainable and culturally appropriate design strategies in North America:

- Building for the Future by Ecotrust Canada
- Case Studies by Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative
- Case Studies for the Design of Affordable, Adaptable and Resilient MURBs for Indigenous Communities by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Indigenizing Housing: A Guide to Providing Culturally-Appropriate Housing for Aboriginal Communities in British Columbia by Emma Finebilt
- Interim Guide to Indigenous Housing Development and Design by BC Housing

5.3 BEYOND THE BUILDING: URBAN CONSIDERATIONS

NIMBYISM

NIMBY is an acronym for Not In My Back Yard. The Homeless Hub (2021b) defines NIMBYism as "the phenomenon in which residents of a neighbourhood designate a new development (e.g. shelter, affordable housing, group home) or change in occupancy of an existing development as inappropriate or unwanted for their local area". Neighbourhood residents may recite concerns about how affordable housing will decrease their property value and increase crime (Fiske, et al., 2010, p. 71). These fears intersect with discriminating stereotypes held about Indigenous populations. Fiske et al. (2010) describe this process:

NIMBYism exposes the processes through which Aboriginal identities are stigmatized and their subcommunities are fragmented through relations with the welfare state. Dependency disempowers and demands concession on the most intimate level of self-actualization individually and collectively. Whether seen as a threat to property values or neighborhood cohesion or as too needy to be accommodated, the subordinated carry the burden to prove themselves to their detractors and to undertake self-transformation in the process. (p. 88).

Further, Belanger, et al. (2019) explore NIMBYism as a social phenomenon characterizing the individual landlord-tenant relationship between landlords and Indigenous rental applicants. The study examined Indigenous individuals' experiences with seeking rental accommodations, as well as the perceptions and attitudes of both landlords and City of Calgary councillors. NIMBYism was framed as the "resistance to inclusion", with landlords justifying their reluctance to rent to Indigenous applicants based on appeals to their right to protect their financial investment (Belanger et al, 2019, p. 10). These attitudes were grounded in racist stereotypes of Indigenous applicants, suggesting that they are a greater risk to the landlord due to financial instability created by tenuous employment opportunities, and undesirable behaviours associated with stereotypes of the "drunken Indian", low educational attainment, and colonial attitudes reminiscent of the reserve pass system. Indigenous renters perceive a need to be "twice as good" as their non-Indigenous counterparts to secure rental housing (Belanger et al, 2019, pp. 12, 23). The authors close with a disheartening conclusion:

In all, a clear line was drawn – Indigenous renters were deemed ill-prepared for tenancy due to endemic socio-economic disadvantages that may or may not be of their own making – and the

city councillors and landlords employing dated and inaccurate stereotypes indicated that the onus was on those prospective renters to demonstrate their ability to become good tenants. (Belanger, et al., 2019, p.23).

Unfortunately, affordable housing developments are often the target of NIMBY attitudes. Obtaining community buy-in poses a unique challenge to urban Indigenous supportive housing developments (Nguyen, 2005, p.16). Community resistance can kill or delay valuable projects, as was the case for Indigenous housing developer NiGiNan Housing Ventures in Edmonton, Alberta. They are the developers behind Ambrose Place, which is currently touted as one of Edmonton's most successful supportive housing models. However, during the time of construction of Ambrose Place, the neighbourhood's community league took the project to court multiple times. They argued that there were too many supportive housing projects being built in their area and they hadn't been properly consulted about Ambrose Place. This led to several construction delays and financial constraints to the project (Kermin, 2014). Another development by NiGiNan, Mawacihitowin Otah (The Gathering Place), provided free meals to low-income individuals in the community. The project faced resistance from the local business association, which ultimately led to NiGiNan's permit being revoked and the cessation of the project (Cunningham, 2019).

NIMBYism has been an issue for countless Indigenous housing projects and several have developed creative ways to combat it. The following Indigenous developments reveal tactful strategies to respond to NIMBY-ism in urban communities.

Kikékyelc: A Place of Belonging in Kamloops, BC

The Kikékyelc project is an Indigenous housing development for Elders and youth. It is mentioned previously in this report as a successful example of capacity building. The project was initially met with immense backlash from Kamloops residents. Community members argued the development would bring gang violence, crime, and drugs. They collected over 150 signatures for a petition to oppose Kikékyelc and pushed the city to hold a public hearing (Schramm, 2018, p. 39).

Developers and supporters of Kikékyelc responded to the backlash effectively. They hosted two open houses and hand delivered invites to every person that signed the petition. At the public hearing, they packed the room with supporters. Youth residents presented about the importance of Kikékyelc and the impact it has on their lives. Supporters of Kikékyelc came to the hearing prepared to answer questions about common neighbourhood concerns and reminded the Council members that this was a land use issue about density and not about the type of person

that can live on that land (Schramm, 2018, p. 40). The project was ultimately approved and has since garnered more community support.

In response to the challenges faced in by the Kikékyelc project, M'akola Development Services outlined the following strategies for dealing with NIMBYism (Schramm, 2018, p.41):

- Conduct community outreach prior to public hearing
- Find project allies
- Educate on affordable housing
- Get input from community associations and stakeholders
- Respond to community concerns and demonstrate you are listening
- Work with the community to develop NIMBY counterpoints

Prince George Native Friendship Centre, British Columbia

Prior to seeking approval from the city for their development, Prince George Native Friendship Centre commenced an extensive community consultation plan. Staff canvassed the neighbourhood, providing each household with an information package about the project and inviting them to a public consultation event held at the Friendship Centre. Those that attended the event were provided dinner and invited to join a working group to advise on the project. Both opponents and potential tenants agreed to join. The Friendship Centre hosted monthly meetings for the working group. Elders opened the sessions with prayer followed by dinner and discussion. The feedback from the working group was incorporated into the project plan and the members were recognized for their contribution at the opening ceremony. The Friendship Centre continues to welcome community members to dinners, events, and BBQs in their courtyard (Finebilt, 2015, pp. 38-39).

Cwenengitel Aboriginal Society in Surrey, British Columbia

Cwenengitel is a culturally-based addiction treatment facility. They help residents recover from addiction through ceremony, counseling, and life skills training. Cwenengitel is an example of an organization that has built really strong ties with their community and the local political leadership by encouraging community members to attend their sweat lodges, healing circles, and feasts. The Cwenengitel's residents also conduct acts of kindness around the neighbourhood,

such as cutting a neighbour's lawn and volunteering at local organizations. These actions can assist in abating NIMBYism and may be useful for gaining support if the organization decides they want to expand to more properties (Finebilt, 2015, p.34).

6. BEST PRACTICES FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PROGRAM DELIVERY FOR INDIGENOUS HOUSING

Major themes emerging from culturally responsive program delivery are the need for Indigenous staff, Elder support, and culturally appropriate programs that provide Indigenous people the opportunity to connect or reconnect to their culture and identity. Culturally responsive programs need to consider not only the impact of colonial institutions such as residential schools but also the difference between Indigenous and Colonial Settler history. Further, service providers need to offer programs that can assist Indigenous people in healing from the trauma imposed on them from residential schools and the effects of intergenerational trauma while incorporating training to better assist staff in fully understanding colonial history.

6.1 TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

Trauma Informed care (TIC) is an approach to client service that recognizes the impact of trauma on individuals. This practice requires non-judgement, compassion, and understanding approaches from service providers. The Homeless Hub suggests that service providers working within a TIC framework require the ability to recognize trauma and its effects and to understand effective pathways to recovery and healing. (Homeless Hub, 2021b). Trauma informed care also crucially resists retraumatization of clients through repeated exposure to traumatic experiences and memories.

The Homeless Hub found that 79% of mothers who experienced homelessness had experienced traumatic events during their childhood. Further, Indigenous communities continue to experience intergenerational trauma that has been caused by colonial policies leading to extreme levels of mental, cognitive, behavioural, social, and physical challenges (Homeless Hub, 2021b). In this context, service providers must understand the crucial role they play in the lives of those affected by trauma. The Ontario Native Women's Association ([ONWA], 2018) articulates the need for TIC for Indigenous women who have experienced trauma, requiring the development of

positive coping mechanisms to avoid permanent, long-term health conditions, mental and physical impairment, addictions, and involvement with child welfare and correctional institutions (ONWA, 2018). ONWA further identified the need to provide culturally supportive and holistic approaches to service that allow Indigenous women to address their trauma in a healthy and safe space.

Many Indigenous women experiencing homelessness have experienced a variety of negative traumatic experiences that caused hindrances in their lives. However, through the integration of Western and traditional approaches to healing, Indigenous women can heal from their trauma and begin to perceive these experiences as “strengths in their stories" (ONWA, 2018). Similarly, in New Zealand, Rami Alrudaini (2018) discusses the need for trauma informed practices when working with Indigenous Māori homeless populations. Alrudaini (2018) articulates the urgent need to promote trust-building, recognizing that the effects of trauma may nurture distrust.

Further, the Indigenous Health, Housing and Homelessness Collaboration (IHHHC) in partnership with the ASCHH examined housing and case management practices by engaging Elders and Knowledge Keepers (Williams & Lucas, 2019). There was a total of six sessions conducted with seven Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The participants indicated that compassion and empathy towards Indigenous people who may have experienced trauma is an important tool in promoting TIC. It was also suggested that staff should be required to critically examine the Western colonial and Indigenous paradigms to better assist their Indigenous clients in the healing process. Understanding, awareness, and the ability to respond to trauma through an unbiased lens are essential tools to assist Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who are also survivors of Residential Schools, intergenerational trauma and the Sixty’s Scoop (Williams and Lucas, 2019). There are trauma-informed toolkits available to assist service providers and their clients in better working together.

6.2 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPROACHES

Indigenous people experiencing homelessness often feel a sense of spiritual disconnection as a result of colonialism. Throughout our review of the literature, it is observed that agencies should incorporate culturally responsive approaches to meet the needs of the Indigenous homeless population.

I'TAAMOHKANOOHSIN - EVERYONE COMES TOGETHER

I'taamohkanoohsin, which translates in English to "Everyone Comes Together", was a program based out of Lethbridge, Alberta that targeted Blackfoot people experiencing homelessness throughout the city of Lethbridge. It aimed to reconnect Blackfoot people with culture with the goal of "Bringing the Spirit Home". I'taamohkanoohsin erected a tipi in a downtown park that was occupied by many Indigenous homeless people. The program offered drumming, singing, storytelling, hand games and sacred face painting (Victor, et al., 2019). Victor (2019) described the I'taamohkanoosin as follows:

I'taamohkanoohsin offered individuals a path out of spiritual homelessness with an opportunity to develop pride and confidence in who they are as Niitsitapi'. Attending the tipi program would counteract spiritual homelessness by offering a sense of kinship, belonging, and spiritual connection. The experiences around the tipi were reminders that life can still have bright moments and inspire a sense of hope, identity, spirituality, and a return to traditional values are all implicated in recovery from addiction. This program can be a catalyst to seeking alternative ways of living by guiding people back to this path, particularly with the support of community members working together to address the negative effects from residential school. (p. 53).

The program hoped to steer people away from addictions, and it proved to assist some of the participants in "bringing their spirit home". Two of the participants transitioned into recovery during the program, while other participants made efforts to achieve sobriety while attending the program. The Blackfoot people (also known as Niitsitapi- the Real People) "believe that when you use substances it disconnects your spirit-self from your body resulting in a lost feeling. *Bringing the Spirit Home* to one's body offers strength to support healing and recovery from substance misuse" (Victor, et. al., 2019, p. 52). Victor (2019) continues this notion:

Blackfoot knowledge understands spirit as a separate entity from the body that is connected to all of creation. Spirit is the foundation for wellness and resilience. Living by daily Blackfoot values empowers the spirit to connect to the land and all that it contains and maintaining a relationship with one's spirit is vital to feeling at home in the world. Niitsitapi' participants are not so much homeless as they are displaced from their family homes and community because of their problems with substance misuse. They have homes they might return to if they could resolve the pull of alcohol or drugs. Their displacement from community, kin, and land precipitates the experience of spiritual homelessness. (p. 52).

It is understood that culture revitalization is a crucial aspect for many Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

STAFFING

Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers are held in high regard within Indigenous communities. They are well immersed in the Indigenous culture and are aware of the protocol required to assist the Indigenous homeless population while maintaining good energy and doing so with care and precision (The Wicihitowin Conference Committee, 2017). Service providers assisting Indigenous homeless populations must understand the Indigenous philosophy and their responsibility within this interconnected whole. This philosophy requires us to “treat people as you would treat your own relative" which is often reflected through kindness, respect and dignity, and to listen to the clients’ stories with open-hearts (Thistle & Smylie, 2020, p. 258). The Jimaylya Harry Centre in Australia received positive feedback from their Indigenous clientele for embodying good practices on harm minimization, accommodating housing, and cultural maintenance by incorporating Indigenous management and staff in the leading roles (Memmott & Nash, 2016, p. 7). Programs should aim to hire Indigenous staff wherever possible, but non-Indigenous staff can assist the Indigenous population with the support of Indigenous service providers. During the operation of The Kootenay Lodge in Calgary, Alberta it was observed that having Indigenous staff helped to eliminate cultural barriers to healing: “Many residents come to Kootenay Lodge with histories of abuse. Some are also unearthing past residential school abuse through the residential school settlement process. Having Aboriginal staff means one less cultural barrier to overcome in the healing process (McCallum & Isaac, 2011, p.37). Agencies working with Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness should be required to participate in cultural competency training to reduce cultural barriers.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

Non-Indigenous people who serve the Indigenous homeless population need appropriate training to better support their clients’ needs. Exposing service providers to Indigenous culture through experiential learning allows them to connect with the Indigenous homelessness population and can provide them with a better understanding of their clients’ current situations. Through cultural

training, service providers can develop a sense of awareness of the importance of incorporating Indigenous culture into Indigenous housing programs.

The Indigenous Cultural Helper Program at Homeward Trust in Edmonton, Alberta trains non-Indigenous service providers on history, traditional knowledge, and culturally-based practice. Training incorporates experiential learning through participation in culture and ceremony for service providers supporting the Indigenous homelessness populations (Slessor, 2018). In an examination of training participants' experiences with the program, Slessor (2018) reports:

Research participants [service providers] spoke about the difference between learning about culture in a book, or in a classroom, and learning from directly participating. Experientially learning about culture was seen by many research participants to provide them with a degree of comfort and credibility, and for almost all of the research participants, to give them the confidence to broach conversations about culture with the housing participants they work with. Another important outcome of participating in Indigenous Cultural Helper Program activities was that research participants were able to share experiences with people who have lived experience, including housing participants, providing an opportunity for them to learn from their stories. (p. 16).

Through an increased understanding of Indigenous culture, service providers can work from an empathetic, non-judgmental, and loving approach. Slessor (2018) continues, "many of the research participants had significant realizations or epiphanies as a result of their participation in the Indigenous Cultural Helper Program. Some alluded to 'eye-opening' moments that changed the way they see the world" (Slessor, 2018, p. 19). Current housing models that assist Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness offer promising housing supports that evidently support the needs of the Indigenous populations they are assisting.

6.3 HOUSING PROGRAM MODELS

HARM REDUCTION MODEL

Ambrose Place - Edmonton, Alberta

Ambrose Place is a housing facility that offers culturally appropriate housing to Indigenous people with histories of homelessness and addictions within the Edmonton, Alberta area. The facility

opened in November 2014 and consists of 42 suites. Residents range from 18 to 80 years of age and all have experiences of homelessness. Ambrose Place is operated by nurses, social workers, Elders, Independent Living Support workers, health care aides, and other staff and is funded through Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) resources. It offers an outdoor garden and a dining area where meals are provided to residents three times daily. Although Ambrose Place is designed specifically for Indigenous people, non-Indigenous people are welcome to apply for housing as long as they are willing to respect and embrace the services provided within an Indigenous context.

While Ambrose Place follows a harm reduction model, it does encourage sobriety, and residents are encouraged to seek sobriety through Indigenous ceremonies offered at the facility (Dumais et al., 2017). Dumais et al. (2017) discuss Ambrose Place's initiatives, stating:

Because heavy use of alcohol or drugs were not part of the way Indigenous people traditionally lived, and acknowledging the many historical and contemporary harms created by substance use, the underlying goal of Ambrose is to foster healing and, where possible, nurture a reduced dependence on all substances, including alcohol. Indigenous ceremony and Indigenous community animate Ambrose Place -unconditional love and obligation to support the well-being of their people are at the heart of this program. (p. 10).

Throughout the Ambrose Place report, Dumais et al. (2017) collaborated with the staff and residents at Ambrose Place to identify how the program is benefiting the clients. The researchers found that "residents report experiencing several positive changes after moving to Ambrose Place including, for example, improved health, less drug and alcohol consumption, and improved ability to budget their money" (Dumais et al., 2017, p. 19). Ambrose Place is staffed by Indigenous employees and many residents reported that it was extremely important to have Indigenous staff working with them. Residents expressed a feeling of safety and being better understood as the Indigenous staff understood their histories and therefore allowed them to be more open. Many residents also reported they were most proud of their connectedness to their culture at Ambrose Place, which allowed them to develop a better sense of belonging (Dumais et. al., 2017).

HOUSING FIRST MODEL

The Wongee Mia - Perth, Australia

The Wongee Mia is a pilot project located in Perth, Western Australia that was initiated by the 50 Lives 50 Homes Housing First program. The project applies a family-centred approach that focuses on providing long-term housing to Aboriginal families, focused on building relationships, and culturally appropriate responses. The Wongee Mia acknowledges strong kinship relations between extended family members, and the barriers that many Aboriginal families face when seeking appropriate housing to accommodate their extended families (Vallesi, et al., 2020).

The Wongee Mia project is centred around one person ("Robby") and his family to prevent eviction. Prior to joining the Wongee Mia project, Robby was evicted from multiple housing placements due to overcrowding. The project's main goal was to successfully house Robby's family to prevent further eviction. Wongee Mia worked with other housing providers to alter their perception that Robby's family would be "unreliable tenants". The project has been successful, noting that "as of December 2019, 29 members of Robby's family have been supported by the Wongee Mia caseworkers, and five have been housed... Additionally, Robby has sustained his property for 2.5 years, the longest period he has kept his social housing for". (Vallesi, et al., 2020, pp. 1, 6).

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODELS

Social enterprise practices promote positive changes by advancing community economic development and self-reliance (Homeless Hub, 2021). The enterprise generates revenue that is applied to services that further advantage the social good and break down barriers for those that are marginalized in society.

Skwachays Lodge

Skwachays Lodge is a social enterprise hotel developed by the Vancouver Native Housing Society that opened to travellers in June of 2012. The hotel offers 18 hotel rooms available to the public as well as a Fair Trade Gallery offering authentic Indigenous artwork for sale. The revenue generated from the Skwachays Lodge funds a monthly subsidy for 24 Indigenous artists' live/work spaces (Skwachays Lodge, 2018). The Skwachays Lodge offers cultural support to the public and to staff on the rooftop of the hotel. A sacred sweat lodge is housed on the rooftop, maintained by a sweat

lodge traditional knowledge keeper. The sweat lodge is used to cleanse and purify the participant through prayer. The lodge also offers conference rooms designed in the Coastal First Nations style that are available for booking to anyone interested.

Pemulwuy Project – Australia

The Pemulwuy Project is a housing site in Australia owned by the Aboriginal Housing Company Ltd. The project offers 62 affordable housing units for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The site includes childcare, a boxing gym, gallery, student accommodation, and commercial and retail space (Bourke, 2017). The Pemulwuy Project was designed to focus on Aboriginal culture while offering affordable housing to Aboriginal people. Student housing incorporated into the project is a viable enterprise that generates revenue overtime, allowing for future financial independence from government funds.

HOME OWNERSHIP MODELS

Home ownership fosters a sense of belonging, and represents personal stability, and prosperity in Canadian society. The reserve system and ongoing systemic discrimination have created generational barriers that prevent Indigenous peoples from accessing the housing market. Sustainable solutions to housing inequities for urban Indigenous populations require strategies that enable a transition from affordable housing to homeownership. The following programs aim to increase the representation of Indigenous home owners.

Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative Homeownership Program

The Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) Homeownership program provides down payment and closing cost assistance to low-income urban Indigenous buyers purchasing a home. The financial assistance is provided as a loan that is up to 10% of the purchase price to a maximum of $50,000. Applicants must be able to qualify for a mortgage independently. The loan is forgiven in full with no interest if the applicant maintains the property as their sole residence for 20 years (Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, 2020).

Métis Capital Housing Corporation Down Payment Assistance Program

The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) has a similar program to the OPHI. They provide down payment assistance of 5% to a maximum of $20,000 to eligible MNA citizens whose household income is below $150,000 annually. After five years of the applicant maintaining the home as their primary residence the funding amount is forgiven (Métis Housing, 2021).

Native American Youth and Family Centre Individual Development Accounts Program

The Native American Youth and Family Centre (NAYA) is an organization based in Oregon. Individual Development Accounts (IDA) are savings accounts for low-income individuals where the participating program matches individual financial contributions to support savings for education, starting a business, or buying a home. NAYA implemented this strategy to address the financial barriers that prevent Indigenous home ownership. NAYA contributes three dollars for every dollar that the participant saves in their IDA. Participants must deposit a minimum of $25 into their IDA each month and attend free financial education programs provided by NAYA. The funds are held in a third party account for the length of time stipulated in the participant's personalized savings plan, based on their financial goals and ongoing contributions. If a participant chooses to leave the program before reaching their goal they will be returned the money they deposited, however will forfeit the amount that NAYA matched (NAYA, n.d.). Another organization called Seed Winnipeg Inc. (n.d.) has also implemented an IDA initiative, however it is not an Indigenous specific program.

The Kāinga Tuatahi Home Ownership Program. The Kāinga Tuatahi is an affordable housing development in New Zealand, built on the ancestral land of the Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei (NWŌ). The development consists of 30 high quality sustainable townhomes designed for hapū families. NWŌ acts as a bank and allows the families to purchase the homes with a 5% down payment. Residents pay their mortgage, maintenance costs, and home insurance to the NWŌ Trust. Since the homes are set at an affordable housing rate and are sold exclusive of the land they occupy, they cost half that of a comparable townhome on the open market. The homes have 150 year lease terms which are reviewed every 25 years. If a resident chooses to sell their home, they must sell to other hapū members (Auckland Council, 2019).

7. CONCLUSION

In response to the ongoing Indigenous housing crisis in Canada, and in recognition of the need to respond to this crisis in a culturally responsive manner, the goals of this scan were three-fold. First, we aimed to ground the scan in the Indigenous homelessness context by defining key terms and reviewing Canadian housing policy to date. That discussion created the foundation to explore our second and third goals: to identify and report on the best practices in culturally responsive design in Indigenous housing structures, and culturally responsive delivery of Indigenous homelessness programs and services. We believe that we have achieved our goals, creating a document that is both illustrative and instructive of best practices to both address Indigenous homelessness and inform culturally appropriate affordable housing approaches moving forward. The key lessons are summarized below.

A. THE COLLECTIVE LENS

There is a tendency to view homelessness as a singular and individualistic experience, and it is crucial to reframe this understanding to accommodate Indigenous experiences of homelessness. An Indigenous person experiencing homelessness may require "housing", of sorts, in each of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions. It will generally be insufficient to simply place an Indigenous person inside a physical home and declare them housed. It is also necessary to consider the network of kinship ties between Indigenous peoples who may be experiencing varying degrees of homelessness together. A fulsome approach to addressing Indigenous homelessness will accommodate these networks and provide access to resources that aid in recovery and healing.

B. THE SCOPE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural competence may sometimes be perceived as a type of professional development activity; something that a service provider can attend and complete in a day or two, and then promptly forget those lessons in practice. It must be emphasized that this approach to cultural competency is insufficient and ultimately undermines the goal of culturally responsive service delivery. Cultural competence must be incorporated in all aspects of relations with Indigenous communities. It is central to the successful facilitation of a consultation process, which should centre the needs and wants of the Indigenous community. It is central to the design and build of Indigenous housing

structures, which must take care to Indigenize without appropriation. This is likely only possible through the deliberate foregrounding of Indigenous perspectives, values, and labour. Cultural competence is, of course, also central to effective service delivery, where an understanding of the impacts of historic and ongoing colonialism is essential to developing positive supportive connections with Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. Exploring the ideologies that have created and sustained colonization must also be a priority within any training framework. Cultural competence must be embedded in every level of work for and with Indigenous peoples.

C. PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

The element of practicality may sometimes be obscured by the perception of complexity of a problem. Examples of success throughout this document all point to strategists who identified a problem and responded with practical solutions. From the installation of robust ventilation systems to safely evacuate ceremonial smoke from a building, to resisting NIMBY-ism through direct engagement with community members, and to a housing program focused on resolving the chronic eviction history of one person by identifying and supporting the members of his kinship network, we see numerous examples of practicality as the winning formula. The value of practicality should not be understated, but centred at attempts to solve every problem along the way.

D. FOR INDIGENOUS, BY INDIGENOUS

There are myriad lessons to be learned from the approaches and practices uncovered in this scan, but there is a paramountcy to the lesson embodied in the phrase “for Indigenous, by Indigenous”, or perhaps “nothing about us without us”. The importance of establishing and maintaining the primacy of Indigenous perspectives in all aspects of addressing Indigenous homelessness cannot be understated. It is also essential to assign fair value to each the physical, intellectual, and emotional labour of Indigenous peoples. None of this is to devalue the significant efforts of Indigenous allies in fighting the Indigenous homelessness crisis, but only to serve as a reminder of who we are serving and why we are doing it. Good intentions can easily slip into the realm of paternalistic or colonial actions that reinforce generations of harm done. If there are no Indigenous people available in an organization to do the work required, hire them.

Indigenous homelessness is a crisis of mass proportion in Canada, a country that has recognized adequate shelter as an international human right. Promises of distinction-based housing strategies to reduce and eventually eliminate the inequitable disparity have, so far, gone unfulfilled. This document illuminates a path of best practices to begin to resolve these concerns, and to create the tools needed to realize an Indigenous National Housing Strategy.

IDENTIFYING THE FOUNDATIONS

APPENDIX B

HOUSING PROVIDER SURVERY SUMMARY

ABORIGINAL STANDING COMMITTEE
on Housing and Homelessness

Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary, Lisa Zaretsky, Amber (Buffy) Bromley-Grier, and Katelyn Lucas; Calgary Housing Company – Meaghan Bell; University of Calgary – Cummings School of Medicine – Dr. Katrina Milaney

APPENDIX B

HOUSING PROVIDER SURVEY SUMMARY

Utilizing the Calgary Affordable Housing Guide and the contacts provided by Tim Patterson, below is a summary of the survey results received in November and December 2019:

- In total, 54 agencies were contacted by phone, email or both.
    - 31 agencies completed the survey (62% completion rate).
    - 4 agencies did not want to complete the survey (too busy, not applicable).
    - 19 agencies did not respond to initial contact and/or follow up phone calls, emails.

QUESTION 1: DOES YOUR AGENCY HAVE UNITS SPECIFICALLY ALLOCATED FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

- Of the 31 agencies that responded:
    - 8 agencies (31%) have units specifically allocated for Indigenous peoples.
    - Of these 8 agencies:
        - 52 units are allocated to singles.
        - 399 units are allocated to families.
        - 64 units are allocated to seniors.
        - 0 units are allocated to couples, youth, Elders, or Two-Spirited.
        - 26 units available to clients with special needs

QUESTION 2: DOES YOUR AGENCY SUPPORT (FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY) INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILIES?

	Count	Percent
Yes	19	62%
No	9	29%
Unknown	1	3%
Prefer not to answer	1	3%
Missing/didn't answer	1	3%

QUESTION 3: DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION ESTABLISH TARGETS FOR PERCENTAGES/NUMBER OF UNITS FOR INDIGENOUS TENANTS?

	Count	Percent
Yes	6	19%
No	20	64.5%
Unknown	4	13%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	1	6%

- Of the 6 agencies that responded Yes:
    - One responded they only work with Indigenous populations; therefore, 100% of their units are for Indigenous peoples.
    - One responded they establish targets through self reported data.
    - One responded they have a sister program; the units are not subsidized but the rents are 20% less than market rent; targeted specifically for Indigenous people.
    - One responded that all units are designed for Indigenous specifically Siksika Nation members.
    - One responded it is Indigenous focused but allows non-Indigenous peoples

QUESTION 4: RESULTS FROM THE 2017 ONE WINDOW SURVEY REVEALED 92% OF AGENCIES BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO HIRE INDIGENOUS STAFF TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING. DOES YOUR AGENCY ESTABLISH TARGETS FOR THE NUMBER OF STAFF THAT ARE INDIGENOUS?

	Count	Percent
Yes	3	9.5%
No	20	64.5%
Unknown	7	22.5%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	1	3%

- Of the 3 agencies that responded Yes, targets are monitored as follows:
    - One responded their agency works towards ensuring that all staff are familiar with and adept in working with an Indigenous population. As an Indigenous agency, the agency prioritizes the hiring and retention of appropriately skilled Indigenous staff.
    - One responded they establish targets through annual assessments.
- Of the 2 agencies that responded Yes, Indigenous staff are hired in the following capacity:
    - One responded their agency is 100% Indigenous including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Peer Support, Frontline, Management and Leadership. As an Indigenous agency, Indigenous persons are included within all levels of service provision, administration, management, leadership, and governance (Board).
    - Two responded Indigenous peoples are hired as Elders and Knowledge Keepers and Peer Support.

QUESTION 5: DOES YOUR AGENCY HAVE SPECIFIC RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES FOR HIRING INDIGENOUS STAFF?

	Count	Percent
Yes	6	19%
No	15	48%
Unknown	9	29%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	1	3%

- Of the 6 agencies that responded Yes, 4 did not identify a specific recruitment strategy.
- One responded that their recruitment strategies involved advertising in Indigenous networks and where possible.
- One responded that they reach out to different Indigenous organizations for recruitment of Indigenous people. Also, identify if people hired within their agency know of an Indigenous person that can fulfill job description.

QUESTION 6: RESULTS FROM INDIGENOUS SERVICE USERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 2017 ONE WINDOW SURVEY REVEALED THEY RELATE BEST TO STAFF WHO HAVE AN AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR EXPERIENCES. DOES YOUR AGENCY PROVIDE TRAINING TO STAFF WHO WORK DIRECTLY WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ACCESSING AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

	Count	Percent
Yes	21	67.5%
No	8	26%
Unknown	2	6.5%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	0	0%

- Of the 21 agencies that responded Yes, training was specified as follows:

	Count
Trauma informed care training	14
Cultural awareness training (cultural competency, cultural safety)	14
Staff have access to Elders and Knowledge Keepers	9
Staff have access to ceremony	8
Staff have access to cultural protocols/info relevant to their work	9
Other (please specify): Indigenous counselling	1

- Of the 8 agencies that responded No, barriers to training were specified as follows:

	Count
Cost of training	2
Limited time for training	4
Staff turnover	1
Training sustainability	2
Unaware of where to secure facilitators and/or Knowledge Keepers to support training	3
Unsure of how to build ongoing and relevant training for the agency	3
Resistance of Staff to take training	1
Unaware that training was available	4

Question 7: Has your agency identified training gaps for staff who work with Indigenous peoples?

	Count	Percent
Yes	10	32%
No	11	35.5%
Unknown	9	29%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	1	3%

- Of the 10 agencies that responded Yes, training gaps were identified as follows:
    - Trauma, cultural competence, awareness of other agencies to refer to for support.
    - Would like to have basic-level training around successfully housing Indigenous people. We see a number of Indigenous households losing housing due to a variety of reasons including guest management.
    - General cultural understanding, how to better serve a population we currently under-serve who may struggle with leasing and tenancy as we understand it now.
    - Cultural Awareness Training.
    - Education re: supporting Indigenous Elders/seniors in continuing care settings.
    - Access to quality training, timing based on staffing needs.
    - Incorporating Indigenous worldview and values; incorporating Indigenous principles in counselling; incorporating spirituality with mental health

QUESTION 8: INDIGENOUS SERVICE USERS AND AGENCIES WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 2017 ONE WINDOW SURVEY SUGGESTED CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD BE INCLUDED WITHIN APPLICATIONS TO ENSURE HOUSING IS RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. DOES YOUR AGENCY HAVE SPECIFIC POLICIES TO MEET ANY OF THE FOLLOWING NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

	Count
Number of family members to be housed	7
Allowance of accommodating extended family or unique family structures	5
Allowance of ceremonies such as smudging	14
Access to communal, shared spaces to conduct cultural activities	8

- Of the agencies who responded, they specified the following regarding specific policies:
    - Within our housing program, residency issues from guest management, overcrowding, involvement with Children's Services (apprehension of children), and non-payment of rent, is handled on a case-by-case basis to ensure that families remain supported as best as possible. Each scenario is assessed by its own merits and challenges to ensure the most positive outcome for the family.
    - We do not have specific policies regarding Indigenous people - we do consider issues such as overcrowding when it comes to family size and do allow extended families or unique family structure. We do allow smudging and access to community spaces in buildings where they exist.

- It's not implemented in these areas however slowly coming along with smudging in our housing buildings not our office space there could be more implemented though.
- We are a membership association that does not own or manage any housing units. We do have several members who provide Indigenous housing and I believe they have specific policies to address all the above.

QUESTION 9: DOES YOUR AGENCY PROVIDE ANY SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS FOR INDIGENOUS TENANTS?

	Count	Percent
Yes	17	55%
No	12	38.5%
Unknown	2	6.5%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	0	0%

QUESTION 10: A REVIEW OF THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF INDIGENOUS HOUSING IN NORTH AMERICA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND REVEALS CO-DESIGN AND ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IS VITAL IN DELIVERING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INDIGENOUS HOUSING. DOES YOUR AGENCY CONSULT AND COLLABORATE WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN DELIVERING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

	Count	Percent
Yes	14	45%
No	12	38.5%
Unknown	4	13%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	1	3%

- Of the 14 agencies that responded Yes, how and with whom was specified as follows:
    - Our program utilizes an Indigenous residency committee to ensure that appropriate programs and services are provided that are applicable and sensitive to the needs of our Indigenous client population
    - With Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness
    - With Awo'taan Healing Lodge

QUESTION 11: DOES YOUR AGENCY CONSULT OR COLLABORATE WITH OTHER PARTNERS TO DELIVER CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

	Count	Percent
Yes	16	51.1%
No	11	35.5%
Unknown	3	9.5%
Prefer not to answer	0	0
Missing/didn't answer	1	3%

- Of the 16 agencies that responded Yes, the following collaborations were identified:

	Count
Architects	1
Housing Developers	4
Government	2
Funding Agencies	7
Non-Profit Organizations	9

QUESTION 12: IN THE FUTURE, WOULD YOUR AGENCY BE WILLING TO PROVIDE ON-SITE CULTURAL SUPPORTS THAT NURTURE PHYSICAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL WELLNESS?

	Count	Percent
Yes	28	90%
No	1	3%
Unknown	2	6.5%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Missing/didn't answer	0	0%

- Of the 28 agencies that responded Yes, the following supports were specified:

	Count
Access to Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers	22
Communal spaces for ceremonies, cultural teachings and activities	22
Access to culturally relevant resources supporting the well-being of tenants	23

OVERVIEW

INDIGENOUS SPECIFIC HOUSING UNITS

The survey had a 62% return rate, which supported a fairly robust review of the existing housing stock available, specifically for Indigenous peoples, and identifying the gaps, and the opportunities for Calgary. While not all housing providers responded to the survey, in most cases those who were not included were not Indigenous specific housing providers and would reflect only a minimal increase in Indigenous specific housing units as noted in the above results.

The majority of Indigenous housing units are owned and operated by Treaty 7 Housing, Métis Urban Housing, Métis Calgary Family Services, and Siksika Off Reserve Affordable Housing. While Calgary has been focused on increasing affordable housing units to work towards meeting the needs of the overall housing sector, Indigenous specific housing buildings and units continue to be a glaring gap within Calgary.

In most cases, the organizations which provide housing for Indigenous families took into consideration the potential of extended family or larger sized families in their housing units. While for single and senior populations, family was not typically a consideration for the size of the unit. In most cases, these units are built physically smaller to meet the needs of a single occupant.

Overall, the survey identified that most non-Indigenous housing providers do not necessarily prioritize Indigenous tenants, although all were willing to rent to Indigenous peoples. When housing units have not been allocated as Indigenous specific units, agencies could not always specify the percentage of units rented to Indigenous peoples and typically did not collect this demographic data or set targets to understand the percentages of Indigenous tenants for their housing units.

RECRUITMENT OF INDIGENOUS STAFF

Only 3 agencies of the 31 indicated that they prioritized hiring of Indigenous staff. In most cases non-Indigenous organizations are more likely to ensure that their non-Indigenous staff are trained to meet the needs of Indigenous clients rather than prioritizing Indigenous hiring. Non-Indigenous agencies indicated that they did contract Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous Resource Persons to address their cultural needs as an organization. Six agencies did implement

strategies towards hiring Indigenous employees, however these were often not policy-based strategies. While one agency used Indigenous networks to hire, the other had a more informal strategy such as advertising with other Indigenous organizations, or to ask their existing staff for recruitment possibilities.

INDIGENOUS AWARENESS TRAINING

Indigenous Awareness Training (IAT) was considered an annual commitment of 21 of the agencies that responded. This commitment was primarily based on accreditation requirements. Of the 8 organizations who did not conduct IAT, they cited limited time availability for training and/or being unaware of where to receive training as the main reasons they did not pursue annual training for their staff.

Responders identified that a 'housing provider specific' Indigenous Awareness Training would be valuable to support their staff in becoming more culturally aware. They identified the importance of building their competency around the needs and issues of their Indigenous tenants to prevent evictions and increase the potential of successful residencies. Responders identified that Indigenous Awareness Training should incorporate Indigenous worldview and values, as well as Indigenous principles in counselling with a focus on spirituality.

COLLABORATIONS WITHIN INDIGENOUS HOUSING PROJECTS

While 14 organizations identified working in collaboration or consulting with Indigenous peoples for their design and housing program needs, the majority cited their connection to the Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness as their main connection to information, support and collaboration. Additionally, 16 respondents expressed collaboration and partnerships with Indigenous agencies to provide culturally responsive affordable housing. Along with support from other organizations, respondents identified funding agencies and government as other primary collaborators for their needs.

INDIGENOUS AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS

While other cities in Canada, have prioritized capital projects for Indigenous populations, Calgary's Indigenous specific housing projects have been limited to individual agencies advancing their own housing stock. The City of Calgary is focused on increasing affordable housing units towards the goal of 15,000 units within a unified housing strategy with community. Although Indigenous specific affordable housing continues to be notably absent from the initial recommendations made in 2020.

The City of Calgary initiated the Is kitsii gome, 7 Brothers Housing Circle in response to the global pandemic, of which ASCHH and Indigenous housing stakeholders contributed to engagements and collaborative development upon an Indigenous housing strategy to address the needs of affordable housing for urban Indigenous populations in the city.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Non-Indigenous Housing Providers should establish specific targets around Indigenous tenancy, as well as allocate a certain percentage of their units to Indigenous tenants.
- In collaboration with the City of Calgary's Is kitsii gome, 7 Brothers Housing Circle advance the urban Indigenous Housing Strategy towards the development of Indigenous specific housing projects to increase Indigenous housing stock in the city of Calgary.
- Development of a Housing Provider Indigenous Awareness Teachings (IAT) curriculum to support stronger awareness of the needs of Indigenous tenants and increase the potential of stable housing outcomes.
- Support strategies and policy development of non-Indigenous and Indigenous organizations to incorporate recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff.

Comments and Notes of Interest

Four agencies relayed their support for this valuable research and provided input at the completion of the survey:

Agency	Comments
Affordable Housing Provider	I am very interested in identifying ways to better serve Indigenous populations in the affordable housing sector. This is an area we, as an organization had not given much focus to in the past but are recognizing the importance of doing so and are slowly getting more involved with other agencies who are making this an area of focus. We as an organization need to identify the areas of highest priority when it comes policies and admissions in order to take the steps to better accommodate Indigenous peoples.
Health System -Supportive Housing and Residential Living	I need to specify that the Indigenous-specific residential care services are not located or funded in Calgary. We fund care in 25 long-term care (nursing home) spaces operated by Kainai First Nation at Stand Off, and 17 designated supportive living spaces operated by Alexander First Nation near Edmonton. We also fund mental health support services for the 28 supportive housing spaces at the Indigenous-led Ambrose Place in Edmonton. In and around Calgary, we don't yet fund Indigenous-specific housing or continuing care services.

Indigenous Organization – Scattered Site/Market Housing Program	While we do not have or own our housing units, we provide support to market housing options. Our Housing is actually a Singles Housing Program funded through the Calgary Homeless Foundation in which we in turn subsidize housing in the community. We have a caseload of 40 client's that are acquired at a weekly meeting as needed to keep our caseload at 40. These clients have completed a Needs and Services questionnaire which assesses the need of the person and if they just need referrals to wrap around services or are in need of actual housing. We only serve homeless singles with addiction issues and who are high shelter users. These assessments are done through a Housing Strategist with our organization or through partner agencies.
Non-Indigenous Organization-Permanent Support Housing Provider	*While we don't have dedicated units for Indigenous clients, we do house a large number of Indigenous individuals. We have a total of 119 units, and approximately 53 units are specifically housing Indigenous peoples.*

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