



Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THE JOURNEY TOWARDS HOME

OCTOBER 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellness in the Journey Towards Home Project research project, conducted by the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society and with Urban Matters CCC, has gathered insights from Indigenous community members and service providers regarding the experience of homelessness in the Central Okanagan, with a focus on Kelowna. The project has sought to understand and address the lack of Indigenous-led shelters and limited services for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness, emphasizing the need for culturally appropriate and safe support.

We are extremely grateful for the support of our partner organizations in the development of the PAC (Project Advisory Committee), our allied organizations that continue to support our initiatives, the people with lived and living experiences that shared their stories and experiences with us as well as our Elders and Knowledge Keepers that guided and supported us in the journey. Without the collective efforts of our Indigenous community, and allies, this project would not have been possible.

The What We Heard Report, provided as **Appendix B** of this report, provides a comprehensive summary of the extensive engagement conducted with various groups, including Indigenous individuals with lived experience of homelessness, service providers, and community partners. The report highlights the key findings from these engagements, including the challenges faced by Indigenous individuals in accessing housing and support services, the impact of historical trauma, and the need for culturally relevant and trauma-informed care. The report also

includes recommendations for action based on the feedback received from participants.

The Historical Context & Data Analysis, provided as **Appendix C** of this report, delves into the historical roots of Indigenous homelessness, tracing its origins to colonialism and examining its enduring impacts on Indigenous communities. The report provides an overview of the historical events that have contributed to the current state of Indigenous housing precarity, including the Indian Residential School System, the Sixties Scoop, and ongoing systemic discrimination. The data analysis offers insights into the demographic trends and housing conditions of Indigenous populations in the Central Okanagan, highlighting the disproportionate rates of homelessness and housing insecurity among Indigenous individuals.

The key components of the project are interconnected through a focus on understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. The engagement findings in **Appendix B** provide a foundation for the historical context and data analysis in **Appendix C**, illustrating how historical and systemic factors continue to impact Indigenous housing outcomes. The recommendations for action in **Appendix A** are informed by the historical context and data analysis, ensuring that proposed solutions are grounded in an understanding of the root causes of Indigenous homelessness.

RÉSUMÉ EXÉCUTIF

Le projet de recherche Soutenir la santé et le mieux-être des Autochtones dans leur parcours vers le logement, mené par la Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society et Urban Matters CCC, a recueilli des renseignements auprès de membres de communautés autochtones et de fournisseurs de services sur l'expérience de l'itinérance dans le centre de l'Okanagan, en particulier à Kelowna. Le but de ce projet était de comprendre le manque de maisons d'hébergement dirigées par des Autochtones et les services limités pour les Autochtones en situation d'itinérance et d'y remédier, en mettant l'accent sur le besoin d'un soutien sûr et adapté à la culture.

Nous sommes extrêmement reconnaissants du soutien de nos organisations partenaires dans l'élaboration du Comité consultatif de projet, de nos organisations alliées qui continuent d'appuyer nos initiatives, des personnes ayant une expérience vécue actuelle ou passée qui nous ont fait part de leurs histoires et de leurs expériences, ainsi que de nos aînés et gardiens du savoir qui nous ont guidés et soutenus dans le parcours. Sans les efforts collectifs de notre communauté autochtone et de nos alliés, il n'aurait pas été possible de réaliser ce projet.

Le rapport *Ce que nous avons entendu*, fourni à l'**annexe B** du présent rapport, offre un résumé complet des nombreuses activités de mobilisation menées auprès de divers groupes, y compris les Autochtones ayant une expérience vécue de l'itinérance, les fournisseurs de services et les

partenaires communautaires. Ce rapport met en évidence les principales constatations découlant de ces activités de mobilisation, notamment les défis auxquels font face les Autochtones en matière d'accès au logement et aux services de soutien, l'incidence des traumatismes historiques et le besoin

de soins adaptés à la culture et tenant compte des traumatismes. Il comprend également des recommandations de mesures à prendre en fonction des commentaires reçus des participants.

L'analyse du contexte historique et des données, fournie à l'**annexe C** du présent rapport, examine les causes historiques de l'itinérance chez les Autochtones, en remontant à ses origines au colonialisme et en examinant ses répercussions durables sur les communautés autochtones. Le rapport donne un aperçu des événements historiques qui ont contribué à l'état actuel de la précarité du logement chez les Autochtones, notamment le système des pensionnats autochtones, la rafle des années 1960 et la discrimination systémique continue. L'analyse des données donne un aperçu des tendances démographiques et des conditions de logement des populations autochtones du centre de l'Okanagan, en soulignant les taux disproportionnés d'itinérance et d'insécurité en matière de logement chez les Autochtones.

Les principales composantes du projet sont interreliées dans le but de comprendre et de relever les défis uniques auxquels font face les Autochtones en situation d'itinérance. Les résultats des activités de mobilisation présentés à l'**annexe B** servent de base à l'analyse du contexte historique et des données présentée à l'**annexe C**, qui illustre la façon dont les facteurs historiques et systémiques continuent d'avoir une incidence sur les résultats en matière de logement des Autochtones. Les mesures recommandées à l'**annexe A** reposent sur le contexte historique et l'analyse des données, ce qui permet de s'assurer que les solutions proposées sont fondées sur une compréhension des causes fondamentales de l'itinérance chez les Autochtones.

MISSION STATEMENT



The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society will provide for the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing of all peoples through the development of community-based services, while encouraging the community to preserve, share and promote Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our work takes place on the traditional territories of the Okanagan Sylix peoples. We have stewarded these lands since time immemorial. Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island call these lands home, and regardless of their legal status or cultural heritage, we seek to grow connections across communities and improve our quality of life.

We express our appreciation to the members of the Project Advisory Committee for their contributions, insights, and dedication throughout the development and execution of this project. Their expertise, commitment, and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in shaping the direction and success of our endeavors.

We extend our appreciation to all community members, organizations, and key community partners who have contributed their time, expertise, and resources to this project. Your collective efforts have been integral to our mission of fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive community for all.

We also gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and Urban Matters for their assistance in developing this report.

This research was led by the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society and received funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the National Housing Strategy (NHS) Research and Planning Fund. The views, analysis, interpretation and recommendations expressed in this study are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of CMHC. CMHC's financial contribution to this report does not constitute an endorsement of its contents



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MESSAGE FROM KFS

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society is dedicated to supporting the Indigenous community of the Central Okanagan by providing comprehensive services aimed at addressing housing and homelessness. Our organization works tirelessly to offer emergency shelter, transitional housing, and long-term housing solutions tailored to the specific needs of Indigenous individuals and families. In addition to housing support, we provide culturally relevant programs and services, including access to healthcare, employment resources, education, and cultural reconnection initiatives. By collaborating with local governments, other Indigenous organizations, and community service providers, we strive to create a supportive network that empowers Indigenous people to overcome homelessness and achieve stability and well-being in the Central Okanagan.

Homelessness extends beyond the absence of a physical shelter; it embodies a profound sense of disconnection. In Indigenous cultures, it represents the severing of connections to ancestral lands, water, food, medicine, teachings, languages, traditions, and family relations—initially caused by colonization and perpetuated by its ongoing legacy.

Through the course of extensive engagement activities, historical research, and data analysis we recognize the increasingly complicated homelessness crisis in the Central Okanagan and the limitations of our work due funding challenges. This report represents our firm commitment to understanding the challenges of homelessness and housing precarity in the Central Okanagan's Indigenous community, and the provision of realistic actionable items that will improve lives.

The prioritized list of actionable items outlined in this report have been developed by key community partners and form a timeline of tasks that outline a regional approach to providing culturally-safe Indigenous focused housing to those who need it most in the Central Okanagan.

This research was made possible through funding received from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the National Housing Strategy Research and Planning Fund. We are deeply grateful to our Indigenous participants with lived and living experience who bravely shared their stories, as well as the dedicated service providers who are eager to collaborate with one another to create lasting positive changes. We appreciate the time that First Nations communities offered to listen and provide insightful thoughts. We also benefited from our Project Advisory Committee, who have guided work throughout the project to, and will continue to play an integral part in realizing the actions that they brought forward. Each of those mentioned has motivated us to continue our work with hope. We would also like to acknowledge Urban Matters for support provided during this project.

CALL TO ACTION

The recent data from Kelowna highlights a significant disparity in homelessness rates among Indigenous individuals compared to their representation in the general population. According to the 2020 Point in Time count conducted by the Central Okanagan Foundation, 21% of the homeless population in Kelowna is Indigenous. This is notably disproportionate given that Indigenous people constitute approximately 6% of the Central Okanagan population, as reported by the 2021 Statistics Canada Census.

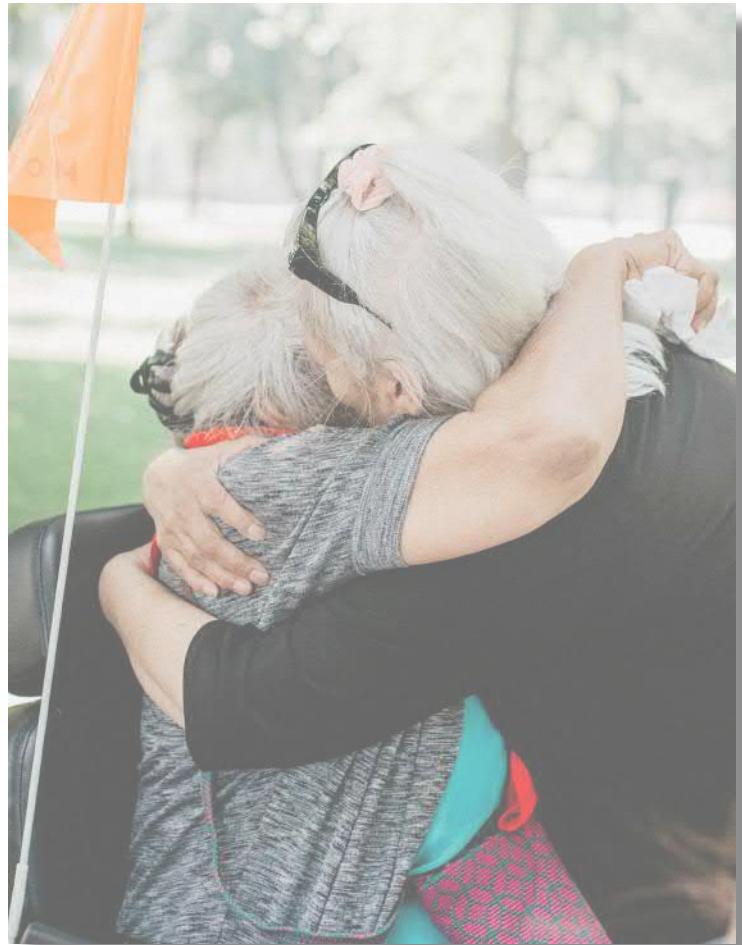
This discrepancy indicates systemic issues and underlying factors contributing to higher rates of homelessness among Indigenous communities. The data is also likely to be underrepresented due to challenges in accurately capturing the full extent of homelessness including factors such as transient populations, reluctance to participate in counts, and the lack of a Central Okanagan initiative to develop a culturally safe enumeration project. As of October 2023, the region's vacancy rate is a relatively low 1.3%, while rental costs have surged by 10.2% over the past year. This tight housing market significantly limits the availability of affordable housing, intensifying housing precarity and homelessness.

Racial discrimination further exacerbates the issue of housing precarity. Indigenous individuals often face systemic racism in various forms, including in housing, employment, healthcare, and social services.

Discriminatory practices by landlords, biases in the rental market, and a lack of culturally sensitive support services contribute to the higher rates of homelessness among

Indigenous people. These barriers not only limit access to housing but also perpetuate cycles of poverty and instability, making it more challenging for Indigenous individuals to find and maintain secure housing.





Urgent and intentional action is imperative to address this critical housing issue. Developing more deeply affordable non-market units is a crucial step in the path towards regional housing stability for Indigenous peoples. These efforts should be led by and in collaboration with Indigenous organizations to ensure that solutions are culturally appropriate and effectively meet the needs of Indigenous people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. By creating exit pathways for those experiencing homelessness, such as transitional housing and permanent supportive housing, the region can help individuals achieve stability and prevent the further escalation of homelessness. Without adequate housing alternatives, Indigenous peoples will continue to be at heightened risk of homelessness. The lack of exit pathways for those currently homeless will result in more severe and long-term deterioration in their health, weakening of social ties, and a decline in their confidence in supportive systems. Therefore, comprehensive and culturally sensitive strategies are essential to provide the necessary support and housing solutions to mitigate this crisis.

Addressing the root causes of homelessness among Indigenous communities requires a multifaceted approach that includes combating racial discrimination, increasing affordable housing options, and providing culturally appropriate support services. Only through such comprehensive efforts can we begin to rectify the systemic inequities and support Indigenous individuals in achieving stable, secure housing.

An Overview of the Central Okanagan's Indigenous Population

These statistics, drawn from the 2021 Census, paint a broad stroke of the Central Okanagan's Indigenous population, which includes persons who are First Nations, Métis, or Inuk (Inuit).

First Nations

First Nations is a broad category, including many Nations with territories throughout much of Canada and the United States. While they may share some similarities, Nations are unique in their history, culture, and language.

Métis

The Métis (michif) are an Indigenous group with connections to various First Nations including Cree, Dene, as well as European settlers. The Métis traditional territory is typically the prairie provinces, but in some cases is expanded to include other regions.

Inuk

Inuk (Inuit) are those Indigenous peoples who have traditionally, and largely continue to, inhabit the northern parts of Canada. They are distinct from both First Nations and Métis peoples.

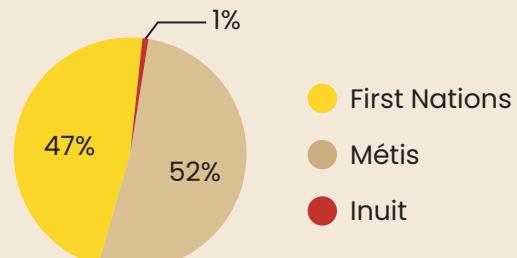
The Land We're On

The Central Okanagan includes the municipalities of Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, and Peachland, which are built on the traditional territories of the slylix Okanagan peoples.

13,420 Indigenous people call the Central Okanagan home.

Who We Are

People identifying as Indigenous in the Central Okanagan are diverse in their history, culture, and language.



We Are A Growing Community

The Central Okanagan's Indigenous population grew by 18% between 2016 and 2021.

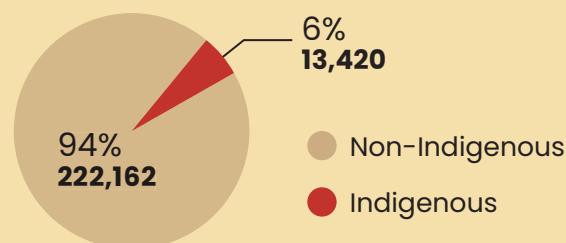


Figure 1. An Overview of the Central Okanagan's Indigenous Population

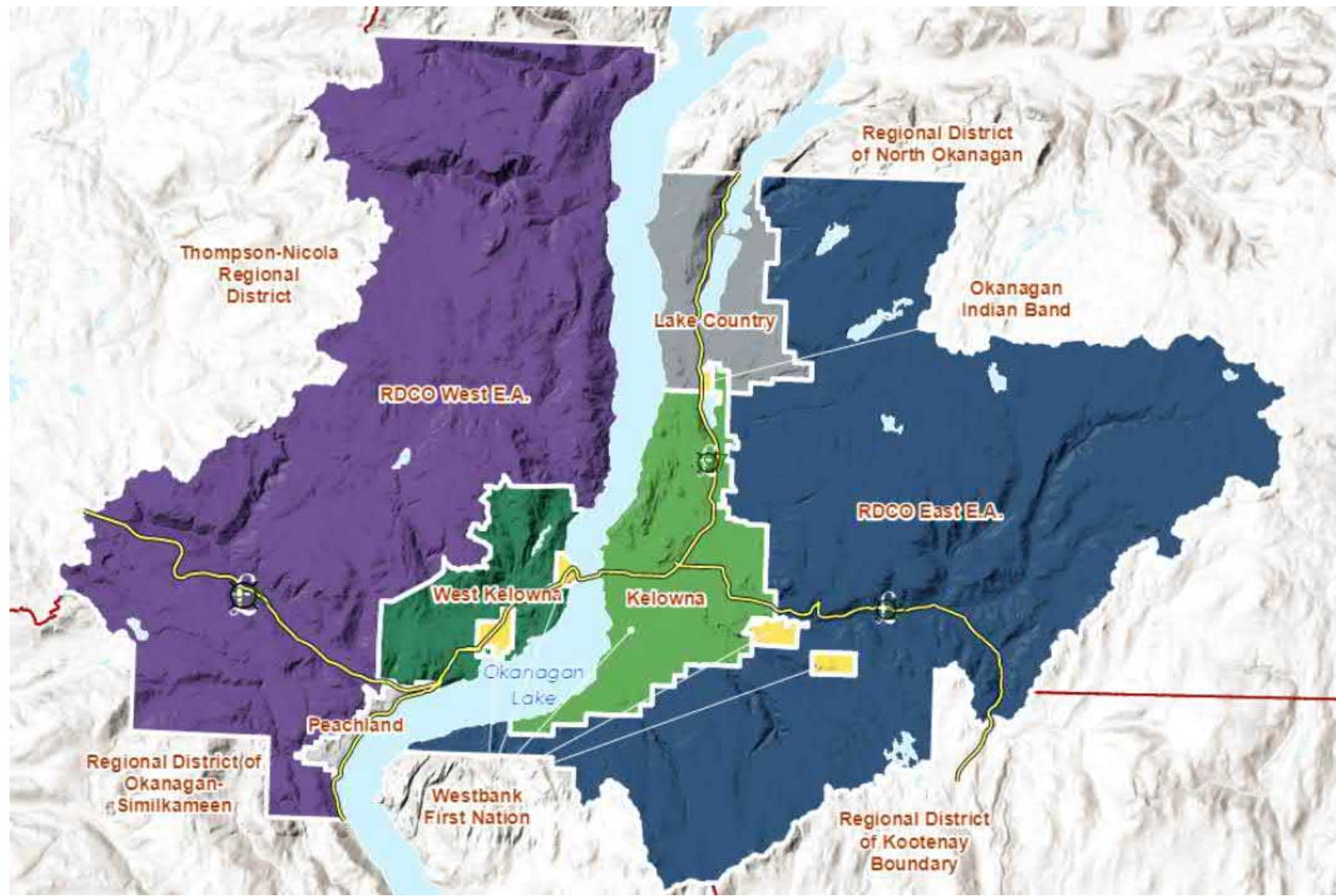


Figure 2. Map of Regional District of Central Okanagan (rdco.com)

The Land We're On

The findings of this report focuses on the Central Okanagan region of British Columbia, Canada. This area encompasses the municipal boundaries of Peachland, West Kelowna, Kelowna, and Lake Country. The Central Okanagan is situated on the unceded, traditional, and ancestral territory of the Syilx Okanagan People, whose culture and ways of knowing have been shaped by the land and passed down generationally since time immemorial. The region is characterized by its diverse landscapes, including lakes, mountains, and valleys, which have historically supported the Syilx Okanagan People in their traditional practices and ways of life.

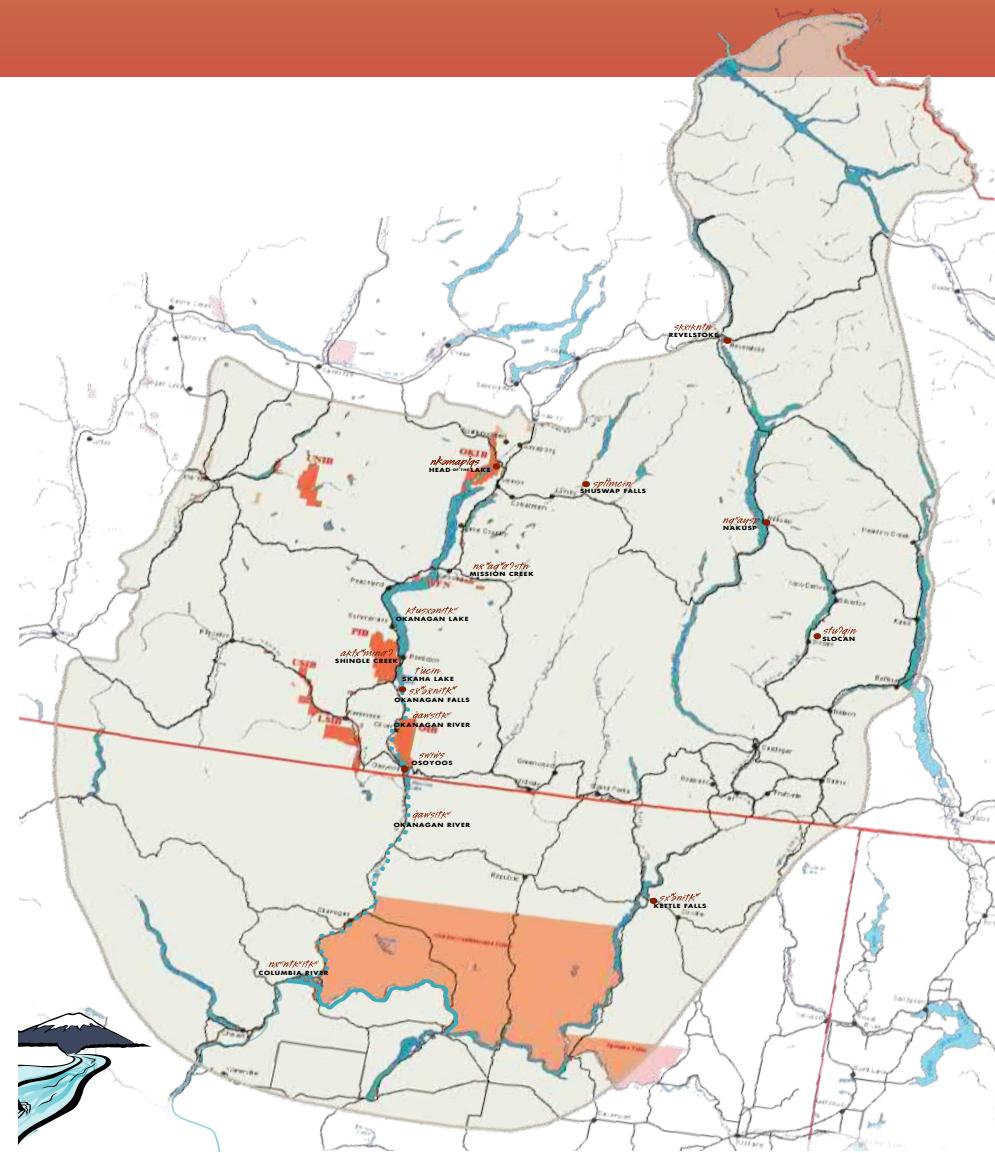


Figure 3. Syilx Okanagan Territory Map (sylix.org)

Priority Considerations for Action

Through the intensive engagement that has been undertaken in the development of this report, a key result is the development of a list of considerations for action that echo the wants, needs, and priorities of individuals involved across the spectrum of Indigenous housing and homelessness in the Central Okanagan. The full list of actions can be found in **Appendix A** of this report.

The considerations for action have been categorized with a decision-making matrix based on timelines categorized as "Now, Next, Later". Through deliberations with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and a Priority Setting Workshop with key community representatives seven (7) of the highest priority actions were identified from the full list of sixty-seven (67) considerations for action. While a majority of the full list of actions were identified as processes that should begin within the next 1-2 years, it was determined by key community partners that the following list should be prioritized.

PRIORITY #1

Establish Healing Centers that cater to high demand, providing a holistic approach to healing and empowerment. These centers should offer traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language and parenting classes, and empowerment programs.

PRIORITY #2

Implement trauma-informed approaches in service delivery to address underlying trauma and mental health challenges among Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Train service providers to recognize and respond to trauma with sensitivity and compassion.

PRIORITY #3

Develop long-term support networks and mentorship programs to facilitate successful transitions out of homelessness for Indigenous individuals. Foster peer support, life skills and mentorship within the Indigenous community.



PRIORITY #4

Foster partnerships and collaboration with local Indigenous organizations and leaders to co-design and implement initiatives addressing homelessness. Engage Indigenous communities in decision-making processes to ensure culturally respectful and effective

PRIORITY #5

Advocate for Indigenous housing rights and access to affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate housing options. Collaborate with policymakers and interest holders to address systemic barriers and inequities in housing.

PRIORITY #6

Establish mechanisms for ongoing data monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of interventions and ensure continuous improvement. Use data-driven insights to refine and adapt support strategies over time.

PRIORITY #7

Establish a comprehensive system for the collection and dissemination of available resources, programs, and funding to ensure consistent support for successful existing programs.

Time Sensitive Considerations for Action

The urgent and disproportionate impact of homelessness on Indigenous individuals in Kelowna demands immediate and culturally informed interventions. As the housing crisis intensifies with a vacancy rate of 1.3% and a 10.2% increase in rental costs over the past year, it is crucial to address these disparities rapidly. Building relationships with shelters and transitional housing providers to co-create solutions that enhance cultural safety within services is a time-sensitive priority. This involves creating action plans, standardizing cultural safety practices, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives in shelter management. Additionally, improving awareness of available resources and support services through effective communication and outreach is essential to ensure Indigenous individuals receive the help they need.

1. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH SHELTERS AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROVIDERS

- Co-create solutions to increase cultural safety within shelters and services
- Leveraging community relationships and education for enhanced collaboration.
- Develop action plans to implement cultural safety measures.
- Standardize cultural safety practices across shelters and transitional housing services.
- Incorporating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in shelter management.

2. RESOURCE AWARENESS

- Improve awareness of available resources and support services.
- Utilize effective communication strategies to reach Indigenous communities.
- Enhance outreach efforts to ensure individuals are informed about the help they can access.

METHODOLOGY

The development of this report involved a comprehensive and collaborative approach to gather insights, data, and perspectives from various stakeholders, including Indigenous community members, service providers, and researchers. The methodology was designed to ensure that the report accurately reflects the experiences and needs of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness in the Central Okanagan. The key components of the methodology are outlined below:

ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- Extensive engagement was conducted with Indigenous community members, including those with lived experience of homelessness, service providers, and community partners. This involved one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, and empathy mapping sessions to capture diverse perspectives and experiences.
- The Project Advisory Committee (PAC), consisting of Indigenous leaders and community representatives, provided guidance and oversight throughout the project. The PAC played a crucial role in shaping the research approach, validating findings, and ensuring cultural relevance and sensitivity.
- The details of the extensive engagement and consultation is summarized in Appendix B.



DATA COLLECTION

- Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to provide a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan. Qualitative data included narratives, experiences, and insights gathered through interviews and focus groups. Quantitative data were obtained from sources such as the 2021 Census and BC Housing.
- The research team adhered to the First Nations Principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) to ensure that data collection and management respected Indigenous data sovereignty and community ownership.
- The detail of the data collection is summarized in Appendix C.



ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

- The qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify key themes, patterns, and insights related to Indigenous homelessness. This involved coding and categorizing the data to uncover underlying messages and perspectives.
- Quantitative data were analyzed to provide demographic insights and highlight trends and disparities in housing and homelessness among Indigenous populations in the Central Okanagan.

VALIDATION AND FEEDBACK

- Validation sessions were conducted with participants and the PAC to ensure that the findings accurately represented the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous community members. Feedback loops were established to incorporate input and refine the report.
- The research team also engaged with external experts and stakeholders to review and validate the findings, ensuring the report's credibility and reliability.

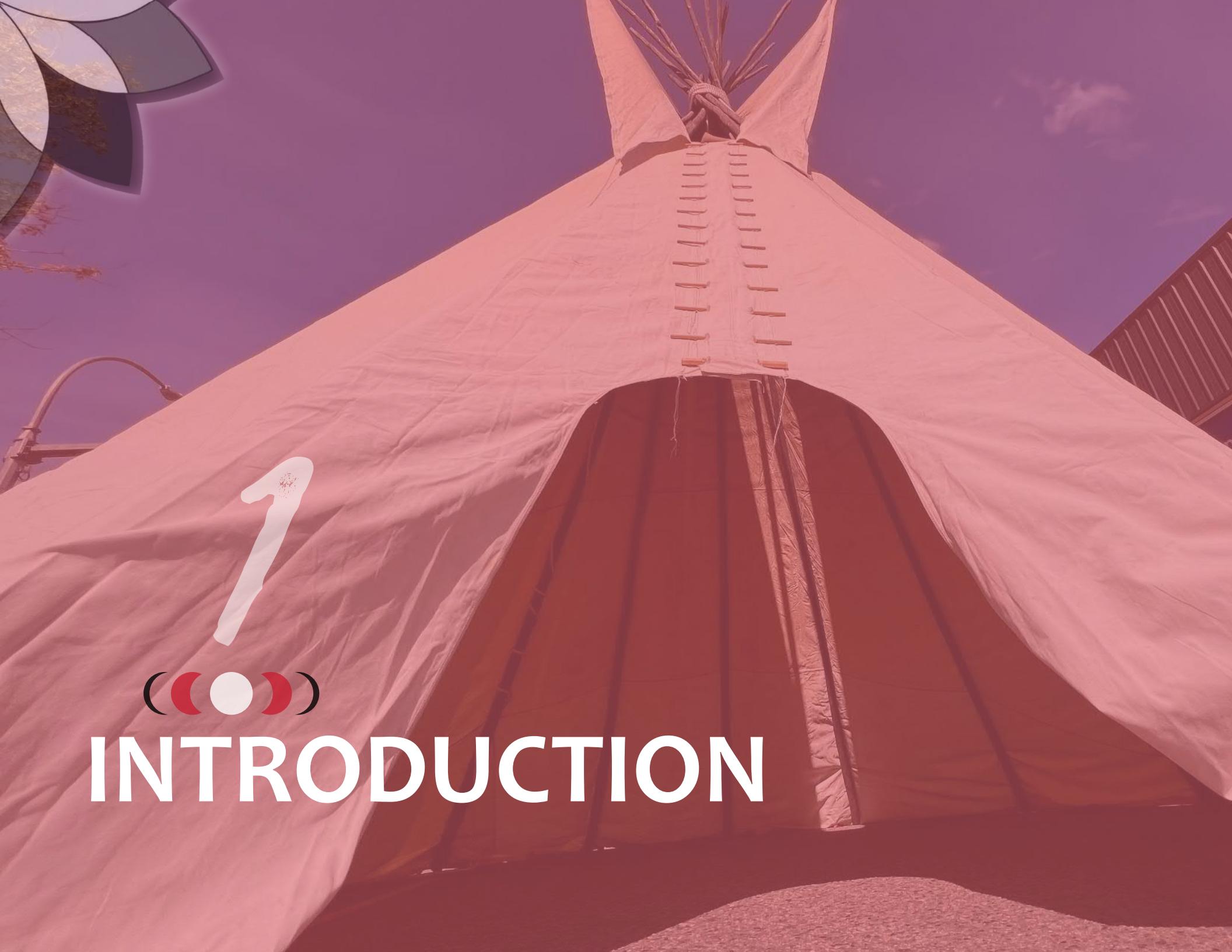
REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

- The final report was structured to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the research findings, historical context, and contemporary efforts toward addressing Indigenous homelessness. The report includes an executive summary, detailed analysis, and considerations for action.
- Efforts were made to ensure that the report is accessible and useful to a wide range of audiences, including policymakers, service providers, and Indigenous communities. The report aims to inform and guide future initiatives and policies to address Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan.



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The “Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellness in the Journey Towards Home” project is an initiative of the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (KFS), funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) National Housing Strategy Research and Planning Fund, to examine the following questions within the context of the Central Okanagan context:

- How can Indigenous serving (and non-Indigenous serving) organizations in Kelowna best support our Indigenous community in moving toward healthy housing outcomes?
- To what extent is Indigenous supportive housing required in Kelowna to support Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness?
- What other wraparound services would strengthen housing outcomes?
- What supports or cultural resource needs do Indigenous residents of non-profit (not supportive) housing need to improve long-term housing outcomes and ensure cultural safety?

This research project is designed to listen to the voice of Indigenous peoples in the Central Okanagan who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The work done throughout the course of the project was able to be completed in large part due to the support of service providers who helped to fill critical gaps in knowledge by identifying:

- The scope of housing challenges Indigenous peoples experience;
- Their needs;
- The needs of those moving from supportive housing to independent housing.



This report is informed by the findings from the engagement sessions detailed in **Appendix B** and the historical context provided in **Appendix C**, summarized below:

1. A What We Heard Report that provides a summary of the extensive engagement conducted with various groups, and the recommendations for action based on what we heard. Over 100 individuals were interviewed during the engagement period from all sectors of the Indigenous housing sector in the Central Okanagan, from those experiencing homelessness to service providers. We endeavoured to have conversations that help paint a picture of the state of the challenges and opportunities for Indigenous housing in the Central Okanagan.
2. A Historical Context & Data Summary Report that includes an overview of historical and current Indigenous housing precarity in the Okanagan that delves into the historical roots of Indigenous homelessness, tracing its origins to colonialism and examining its enduring impacts on Indigenous communities. A demographic analysis offers insights into Indigenous population and household demographics in the Central Okanagan, providing crucial context for understanding the scope of the issue. Due to the scope of the data available, the report clearly states that only a small portion of the story is being told. As shown in the recommended actions of this report, advocacy for data access is a major hurdle to overcome for the Central Okanagan's Indigenous community.



1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In the Central Okanagan, despite the substantial Indigenous population and their disproportionate representation within the homelessness sector, there is a notable absence of Indigenous-led shelters and limited services tailored to Indigenous community members experiencing homelessness. The lack of comprehensive information, resources, and understanding of the needs of this community underscores the urgent need for culturally appropriate and safe support services. Insufficient resources and funding frequently hinder the engagement of communities in crucial discussions concerning Indigenous well-being and the advancement of health initiatives with diverse partners, people with lived and living experiences of homelessness, and across various sectors through reconciliation efforts. Indigenous communities face concurrent crises with constrained time and resources to implement preventative approaches effectively.

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (KFS) has been at the forefront of addressing Indigenous housing needs since 1974, pioneering initiatives such as the Aboriginal Housing Outreach Program in partnership with BC Housing and Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA). Over time, KFS has expanded its scope, assembling a multidisciplinary team of housing support and outreach workers who have spearheaded various affordable housing projects, resulting in the creation of numerous residential and supportive units. Recently, KFS collaborated with a local organization representing lived experiences to establish an Indigenous supportive housing program catering to the most vulnerable community members. Additionally, KFS proudly serves as the Indigenous Community Entity for the Federal Reaching Home initiative, a program aimed at mitigating homelessness nationwide. This designation allows KFS to address local homelessness challenges, and the organization actively

collaborates with local First Nations, Métis communities, and sector partners to develop and support innovative initiatives related to Indigenous homelessness. On the horizon, is the implementation of an Indigenous coordinated access system that would support the Central Okanagan in becoming a more culturally safe and accessible collective of service provision, with the organization being a key partner alongside local First Nations and Indigenous groups.

Employing both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, this study endeavors to delve into the underlying causes and effects of Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan. Through this research, we seek to illuminate the firsthand experiences of Indigenous individuals affected by homelessness while pinpointing avenues for systemic transformation and community-led interventions. Central to our investigation are key research inquiries concerning demographics, scale, root causes, potential solutions, and existing initiatives pertaining to Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan, with a particular emphasis on the City of Kelowna.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

The PAC for this CMHC funded research project is comprised of a group of Indigenous individuals and allies that are well positioned in the community and have an in-depth knowledge of the key sectors that affect Indigenous housing in the Central Okanagan. The PAC convened over the course of the project, both virtually and in-person, to guide and provide input to the research and subsequent analysis of causes, effects, and potential for regional collaboration for Indigenous-focused housing & homelessness projects.

Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).



1.3 PROJECT SUMMARY

1.3.1 What We Heard Report

The report provides a summary of the extensive engagement conducted with various groups, and the recommendations for action based on what we heard. The research took a variety of approaches, inclusive of 1-1 conversations with individuals who have experiences of vulnerability, and those that wield positions of power within the social serving system. A series of focus groups took place with participants from over 15 organizations and from the following sectors and organizations.

100+ Indigenous individuals, community partners and service providers participated in focus groups to explore and better understand the experiences of Indigenous homelessness from the following perspectives:

20 + Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, with Indigenous community members experiencing or having experienced homelessness, from many diverse perspectives. These interviews focused on gathering narratives, experiences, and insights regarding housing challenges, service needs, and cultural considerations.

12 focus group discussions were facilitated with Indigenous individuals from varying perspectives, and community professionals to delve deeper into specific themes related to homelessness experiences, cultural needs, and pathways to housing stability. An empathy mapping process was used for the focus groups, further discussion is noted within the engagement approach section of the report.

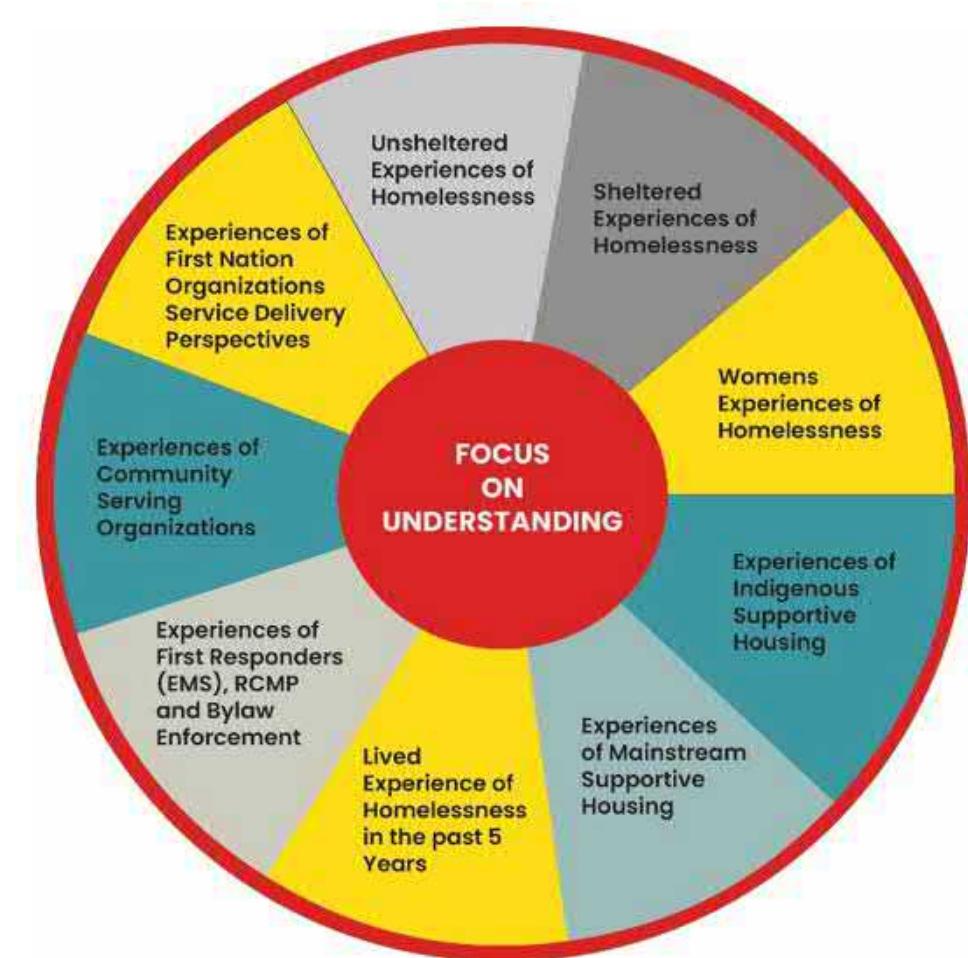


Figure 4. Perspectives Engaged

1.3.2 Historical Context & Data Report

The report delves into the complexity of the Indigenous experience of homelessness in Canada, with a particular focus on the Central Okanagan region. It begins by providing an overview of the data available and context within Central Okanagan and the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, the organization central to this study. The report then delves into the historical roots of Indigenous homelessness, tracing its origins to colonialism and examining its enduring impacts on Indigenous communities.

Key sections of the report explore access to data on Indigenous homelessness, the historical events contributing to the crisis, and the intersecting issues of Indigenous peoples within the institutions and systems. The report also highlights contemporary efforts toward truth and reconciliation, examining concepts such as cognitive imperialism, epistemic privilege, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

A demographic analysis offers insights into Indigenous population and household demographics in the Central Okanagan, providing crucial context for understanding the scope of the issue. The report concludes by emphasizing the importance of addressing Indigenous homelessness and offers considerations for action to guide future efforts in combating this pressing social issue.

Throughout, the report aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Indigenous homelessness in Canada and to inform meaningful action toward reconciliation and social justice.



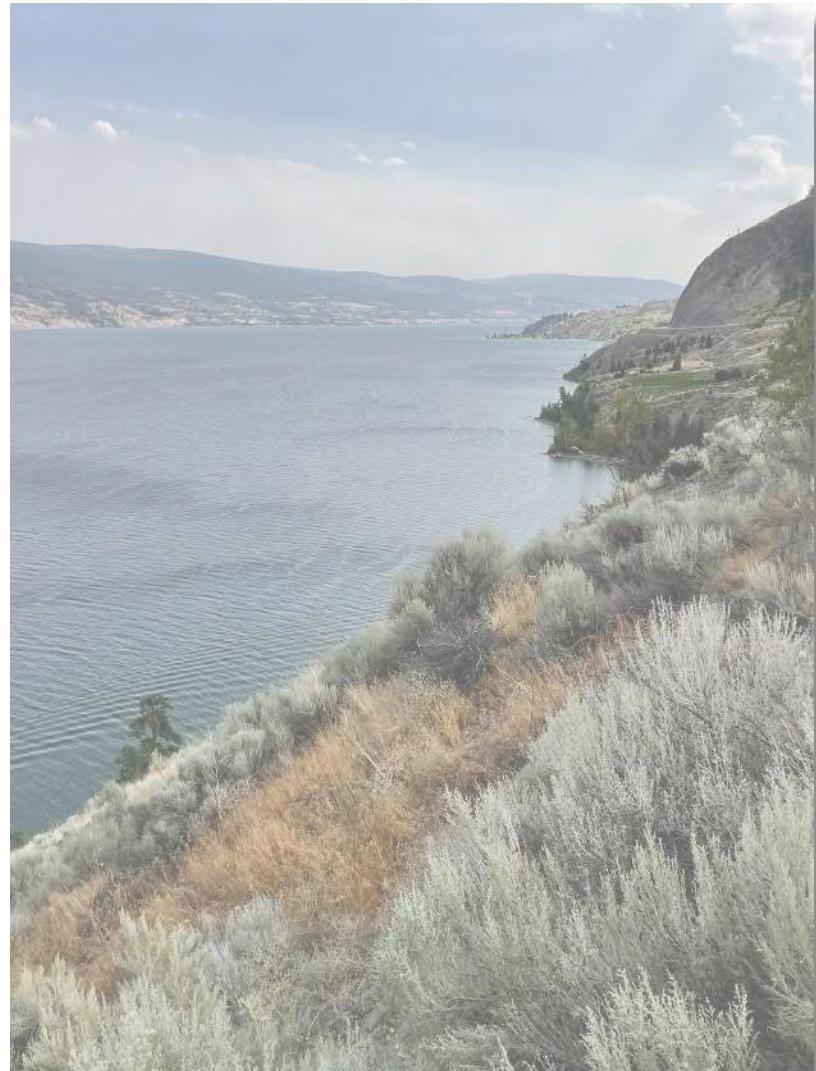
1.3.3 How These Reports Were Used

The findings from the "What We Heard Report" (**Appendix B**) and the "Historical Context & Data Analysis" (**Appendix C**) were instrumental in shaping the key priorities and determining the most urgent actions for addressing Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan. These reports provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous individuals and informed the development of targeted strategies to address these issues effectively.

The engagement findings from the "What We Heard Report" highlighted the lived experiences, needs, and recommendations of Indigenous community members, service providers, and stakeholders. These insights were crucial in identifying the most pressing issues and areas requiring immediate attention. The key priorities were developed through a collaborative process involving the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and community representatives.

The urgency of the identified actions was determined based on several factors, including the severity of the issues, the potential for immediate impact, and the availability of resources. The Priority Setting Workshop facilitated discussions on the timelines for each action, categorizing them into "Now," "Next," and "Later" based on their feasibility and urgency. This decision-making matrix provided a clear roadmap for implementing the actions in a phased manner, ensuring that the most critical issues were addressed promptly.

Ultimately, these reports served as the building blocks for this final report and the recommendations for action which is shown in full in **Appendix A**.



An Overview of the Central Okanagan's Indigenous Population

3X

Lone parent Indigenous families in the Central Okanagan are over 3 times as likely to be led by women.

Gender matters:

In the Central Okanagan area, women are three times as likely to lead lone parent Indigenous families.

\$70 K

Lone-parent
Indigenous families
average total income.

\$147 K

Indigenous families
average total income.

The Income Story:

Indigenous households earn an average of \$10,750 per year more than non-Indigenous households. But – there is more to the story than meets the eye.

The average Indigenous household size of 2.9 persons is larger than the comparable family size in the Central Okanagan of 2.3 persons. That means **there are more people in an Indigenous household with the potential to earn a salary**, therefore, Indigenous individuals often earn less than non-Indigenous individuals in the Central Okanagan.



Figure 5. Households

Core Housing Needs

What is a 'core housing need'?

Core housing need is a 2-stage indicator. It helps to identify households living in dwellings considered unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable.



HOUSING INDICATOR THRESHOLDS INCLUDE:



1. Adequate housing is reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs.

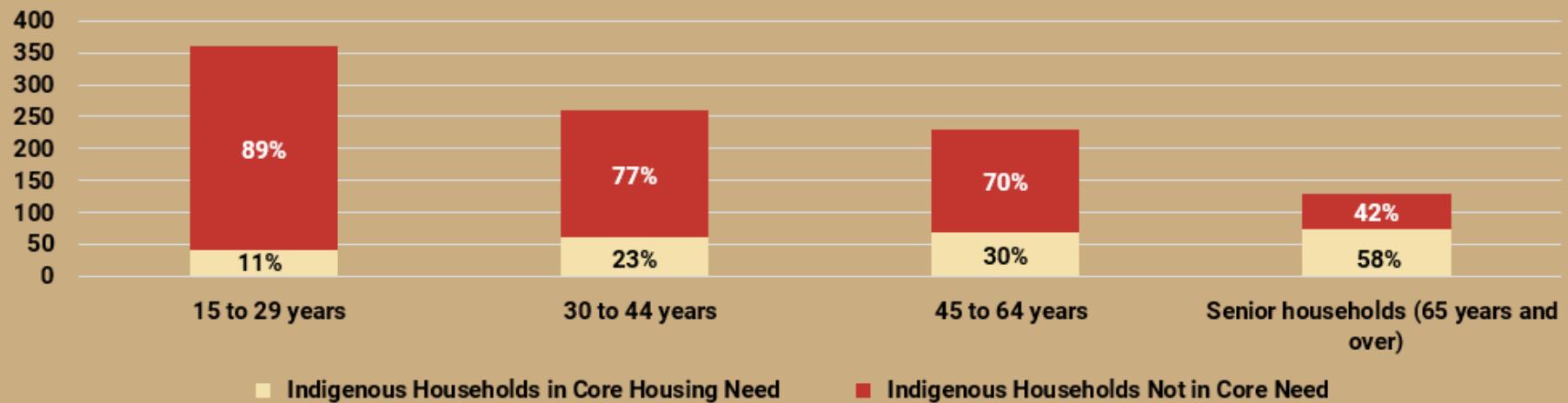


2. Affordable housing has shelter costs equal to less than 30% of total before tax household income.

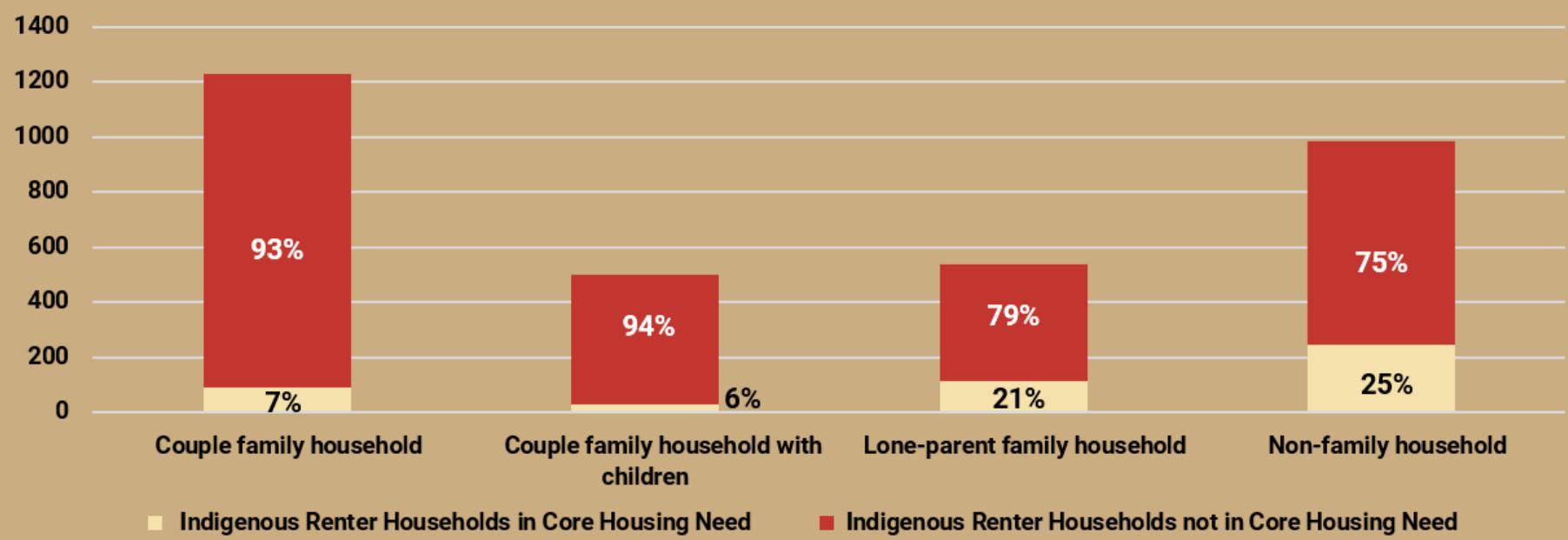
Note: Non-family households with at least one maintainer aged 15 to 29 attending school are considered not to be in 'core housing need' regardless of their housing circumstances. Attending school is considered a transitional phase, and low incomes earned by student households are viewed as being a temporary condition.

Figure 6. Core Housing Needs

Rate of Core Housing Need in Indigenous Renter Households by Age of Primary Household Maintainer



Rate of Core Housing Need in Indigenous Renter Households by Family Type



1.4 PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC), was convened as an external table comprised of well-positioned individuals that collectively have an in-depth knowledge of the key sectors and system that affect Indigenous residents' housing. PAC members convened for four meetings over the course of the project to advise elements including approach to developing a culturally sensitive engagement plan, approach to data analysis, and development of a comprehensive set of considerations for action.



First Nations Health Authority



Interior Health

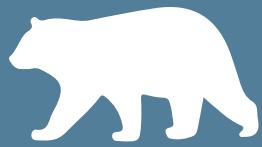




2 CONTEXT OF URBAN INDIGENOUS HOUSING IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN



i spa-us ki-low-na The H
Ki-Low-Na Friendship So



2.1 CURRENT CONTEXT

The Central Okanagan faces a significant disparity in housing availability for Indigenous populations. Despite the presence of 309 Indigenous-focused housing units, this number falls short of addressing the needs of Kelowna's growing unhoused Indigenous population. In 2020, Kelowna recorded 297 homeless individuals, with 21% identifying as Indigenous. By 2023, this proportion rose to 33% among 280 visibly homeless individuals. To address this urgent issue, it is recommended to create 160 more units immediately, with an additional 200 units planned over the next few years to meet both visible and hidden homelessness needs.

Indigenous focused housing operators such as the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Okanagan Métis & Aboriginal Housing Society, and PEOPLE's Lived Experience Society currently provide vital housing units and act as community hubs for Urban Indigenous peoples in the Central Okanagan. These organizations also offer a wide variety of essential social supports. While the community is grateful for these resources, waitlists are extremely long, highlighting the vast need for expanded support for the Indigenous community.

To further explore the options and initiatives available, let's delve into the specific Indigenous housing solutions currently offered.





2.1.1 Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society Housing

i spa-us ki-low-na Heart of Kelowna

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, in partnership with BC Housing, the Aboriginal Housing Management Association, and the City of Kelowna, operates i spa-us ki-low-na Heart of Kelowna, an 86-unit affordable housing project in the Central Green neighbourhood. i spa-us ki-low-na is an nsyilxcən term that means 'heart of Kelowna'. Nsyilxcən is the language of the Syilx people, the original inhabitants of the Okanagan Valley.



Figure 7. i spa-us ki-low-na Heart of Kelowna

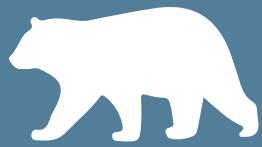


Figure 8. Margaret's Landing

Margaret's Landing

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society operates subsidized housing in the Black Mountain neighbourhood of Kelowna. This housing consists of 3 and 4 bedroom townhomes, and 1 and 2 bedroom apartments. Two 2-bedroom apartments are disability suites.

Margaret's Landing is subsidized housing (rent geared to income), and is funded under the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund. As a condition of this funding, this housing is designated for individuals and families who are of Indigenous ancestry.



Tupa's Lodge

Tupa's Lodge is a low-barrier, second-stage transition house designed for Indigenous mothers and birthing parents navigating pregnancy and parenthood. The residence can accommodate up to 8 individuals including participants and their children. "Tupa", meaning "great-grandmother" in nsyilxcən, signifies the spiritual guidance and ancestral traditions upheld in the program. Tupa's Lodge engages a holistic care model that integrates cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed practices, and personalized support. The program organizes daily activities focused on essential life skills to empower participants to reclaim their strengths and agency, so that they can advocate for their sovereignty and well-being and thrive alongside their children.

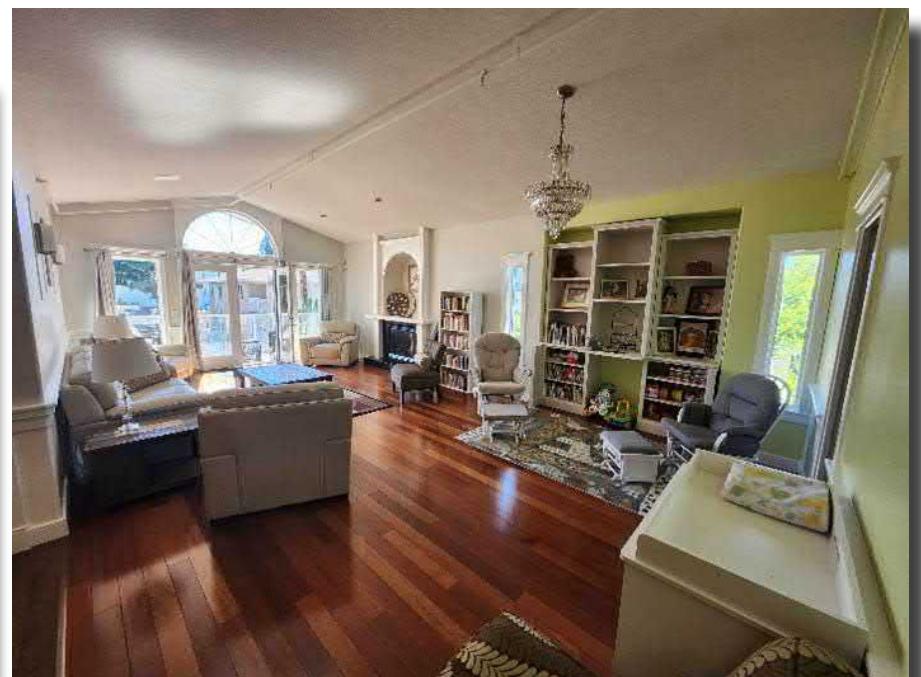


Figure 9. Tupa's Lodge



2.1.2 Okanagan Métis & Aboriginal Housing Society

Nissen Crossing

Operated by the Okanagan Métis & Aboriginal Housing Society, Nissen Crossing contains bachelors, one- and two-bedroom units. These units will be offered at or slightly below then current market rents. Of those, only nine 2-bedroom unit are subsidized.



Figure 10. Nissen Crossing

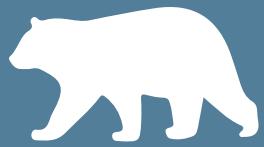


Figure 11. Gerstmar Road

Gerstmar Road

Operated by the Okanagan Métis & Aboriginal Housing Society, the Gerstmar Road property is improved with 28 two-storey wood frame townhomes contained with seven clusters. The 1989 constructed townhomes are developed over a full basement and include 16 3-bedroom and 12 4-bedroom units.

Ingram Road

Operated by the Okanagan Métis & Aboriginal Housing Society, the Ingram Road property is improved with 42 one and two-storey wood frame townhomes contained in 13 clusters. The 1992 constructed townhomes are developed over a full basement and include 19 two-storey 3-bedroom units including two handicapped units, and 23 two-storey 4-bedroom units.



Figure 12. Ingram Road



2.1.3 People Lived Experience Society

Xast Wilxwtn

xast wilxwtn (hast wheel tin) is a pilot project that supports the addition of 10 Indigenous-specific beds in community. This project fills a key housing gap by providing a timely, culturally safe, affordable housing space for Indigenous community members to live and thrive during transitions that require abstinence (e.g., between detox and treatment, or upon release from incarceration), while simultaneously supporting clients in case management planning for the next stage of their journey.

Individuals selected to participate in the program will be supported with intensive case management, cultural supports, and a private room with a bathroom and kitchenette. The maximum stay will range between 30 to 90 days with eligibility reviewed monthly.

The project is designed as a temporary solution to meet immediate housing needs within the Indigenous community, offering stability and support during critical transitions. During the winter of 2023/2024, Xast Wilxwtn secured an additional funding specifically for the a cold weather response . This funding enabled the project to extend its services by funding additional beds, increasing capacity to accommodate more individuals during the colder season. These resources have been instrumental in providing essential shelter and support, ensuring that community members have access to safe and culturally appropriate housing during this challenging time. This temporary funding boost underscores the project's flexibility and responsiveness in addressing the urgent needs of the Indigenous population.

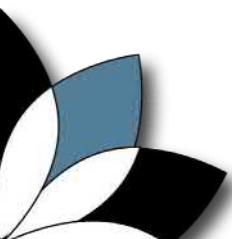
2.2 FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS FOCUSED HOUSING

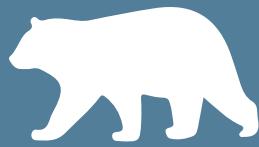
Based on what we heard from Indigenous residents, service providers, and supporting professionals during our engagement, there are a number of significant housing and supportive programming gaps in the Central Okanagan. The following types of supportive housing types are needed and represent future opportunities for Indigenous focused housing.

Youth Housing

Throughout the engagement process, a major gap in the housing and support spectrum was identified as an Indigenous youth housing and programming component that integrates a shift towards upstream interventions to prevent people from experiencing homelessness in the first

place. The work of healing intergenerational trauma, and building traditional family roles within our communities and families requires the foundation of a home. Homelessness prevention and response programs promote and provide the opportunity for healing intergenerational relationships prior to the entrenchment of vulnerable community members within systems. We imagine this work includes fostering connections within kinship networks, extended and adoptive families, and is inclusive of the entire family versus a nuclear and individualistic perspective. These connections would emerge across generations, with youth and through access to culturally safe housing and programing.





Transitional Housing, Indigenous Shelters, and Housing Operators

While transitional housing is not a long-term solution to the experience of homelessness or housing insecurity, it has been identified as a defined as a strong need throughout engagement with service providers, People with lived and living experience (PWLE) and also by local First Nations.. There is a willingness to move forward more Indigenous shelters and transitional housing supports but there is a drastic gap in the capacity of Indigenous service providers to take on the important work of front-line service delivery necessary to support these initiatives. This gap may stem from challenges such as training, funding limitations, or infrastructure deficits. Partnering with an established operator to build capacity or incubating an Indigenous housing operator is a point of interest that deserves a deeper conversation and resources to support the capacity building component in the community.

Integrated Healing Centre

Establish integrated healing spaces, networks and places that cater to various needs of Indigenous people, such as traditional healing spaces with access to Elders and cultural knowledge, language revitalization, collective and self- development classes, and empowerment programs would all support cultural revitalization for the Indigenous community. These centers and spaces should adhere to Indigenous principles and values of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion, while also addressing the lack of community awareness about available programming and be developed in a way that supports Indigenous self determination. A vision for community well-being and cultural revitalization remains paramount. Through increased access to cultural programs, support for traditional healing practices, and opportunities for intergenerational knowledge exchange, an initiative as such, aims to nurture a sense of identity, belonging, and pride in Indigenous culture.

Abstinence Based Housing and Culturally Safe Mental Health and Substance Use Services

Many individuals with lived and living experience highlighted a lack of options for shelters and programs that supported abstinence-based options. they emphasize the critical need for comprehensive pathways both before and after treatment, as well as from low barrier to higher barrier abstinence housing. Establishing robust pathways from both treatment and low-barrier housing to higher-barrier abstinence housing is essential to accommodate varying needs and support sustained recovery efforts.

To meet the needs of Indigenous peoples, we propose expanding abstinence-based transitional and supportive housing options. Integrating activities such as sports, music, and arts into treatment programs aims to foster holistic healing experiences. Additionally, incorporating culturally safe practices like traditional ceremonies, language revitalization programs, and Indigenous healing practices into housing programs will honor cultural heritage and promote spiritual well-being.

In addition to housing and activities, there is a clear need for comprehensive social integration initiatives. These include job support programs to help individuals reintegrate into the workforce and rebuild their lives. Access to educational opportunities and life skills training should also be prioritized to empower individuals in their recovery journey.

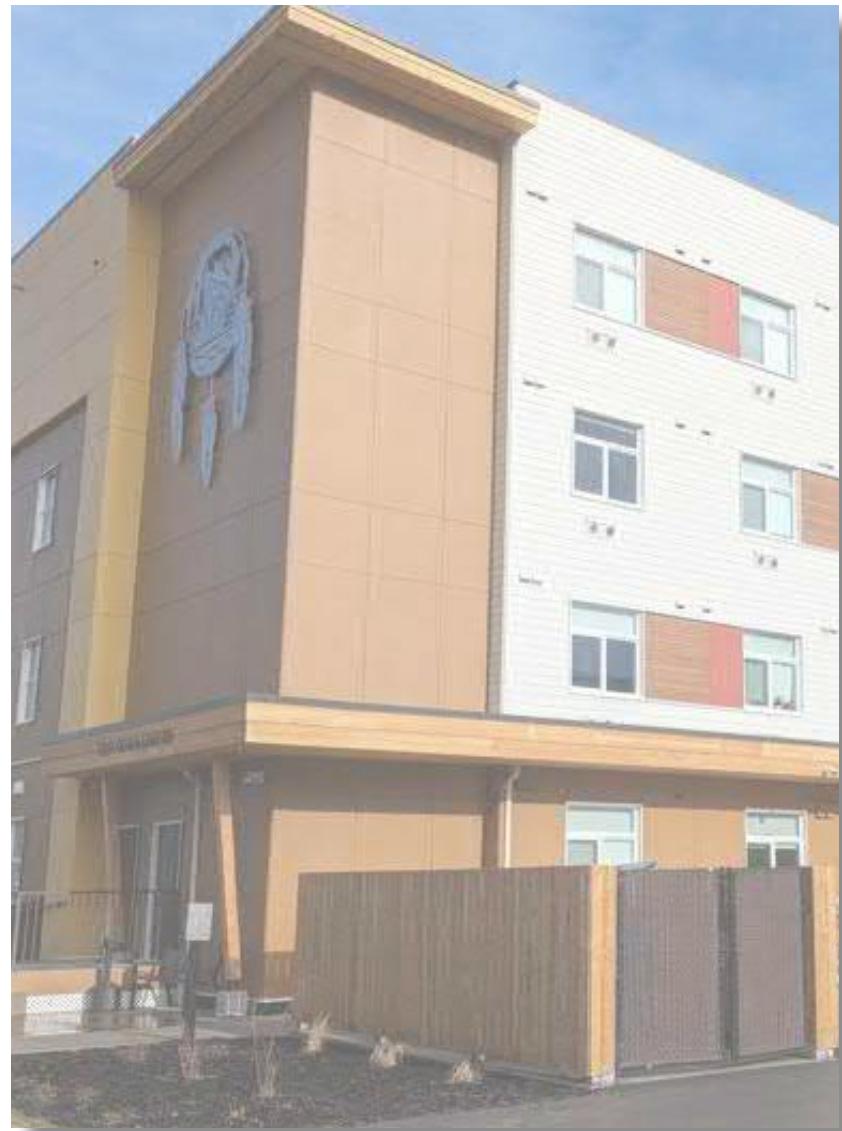
By prioritizing these initiatives, we aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment that meets the diverse needs of individuals seeking recovery and rehabilitation.



Complex Care and Specialized Housing Services and Supports

Complex care housing serves people who need a level of support that goes beyond what is currently available in supportive housing, including people at risk of eviction because of complex mental health and addictions issues, acquired brain injury and histories of trauma. Indigenous individuals are overrepresented in the terms of the number of people experiencing complex needs, and the need for complex care, and specialized Indigenous care has been outlined within the Complex Needs Advocacy Paper in the Central Okanagan. More relationship building and collaboration must occur across the health, housing and justice sectors to address the unique needs of this specific demographic.

Community Living BC (CLBC) serves individuals with developmental disabilities i.e.. Adults who have significantly impaired intellectual functioning and significantly impaired adaptive functioning, and adults who do not have a developmental disability but have either a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and significant limitations in adaptive functioning. These limitations mean that the person requires extensive help and support to complete basic daily living activities such as personal care, decision-making, communicating effectively, and household tasks, inclusive of maintaining housing. Sadly, anecdotally we understand that there are gaps in service around provision of housing and support services for this population. There is also vastly limited capacity within the sector, and a shortage of Indigenous service providers providing these services to Indigenous people. More exploration and partnerships could be developed to investigate opportunities and solutions to the intersection of housing and supporting clients of CLBC.



BEST PRACTICES

3
COOP





This research shares examples of programming led by First Nations communities that shifts homelessness service delivery from crisis support programs to emergency management, as well as successful models of emergency programming for those experiencing homelessness. Every effort has been taken to explore examples that are rooted in Indigenous culture.

These best practice examples have been included as a guide for the initiation of any potential future processes in the Central Okanagan.

3.1 NATION AFFILIATED PROGRAMMING

Numerous initiatives have been implemented or are underway to address housing insecurity and social challenges within Indigenous communities. These projects range from housing facilities, shelters for those fleeing abuse, and supportive housing facilities. These projects emphasized that access to culture, land, territory, and community were indispensable elements of these programs.

These initiatives also highlighted culturally appropriate services, including counseling, workshops, and healing spaces, to address issues like homelessness, domestic violence, mental health, and addiction.

Collaborative partnerships between Indigenous communities, nations, and non-profit organizations drive these initiatives forward, ensuring holistic support and sustainable solutions. Overall, these endeavors represent a commitment to empowering Indigenous communities and fostering resilience through culturally relevant housing and support services.





Table 1: Nation Affiliated Programming

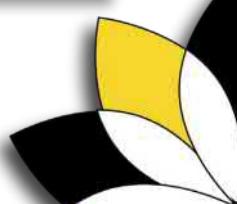
Initiatives	Description
Rapid Housing Initiative (in development) Pasqua First Nations, SK https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/media-newsroom/news-releases/2023/canada-supports-rapid-housing-projects-saskatchewan	<p>The Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) provides capital contributions to facilitate the rapid construction of new housing and/or acquisition of existing buildings for the purpose of rehabilitation or conversion to permanent affordable, supportive, or transitional housing. The objective is to quickly create new permanent affordable housing units that support people who are vulnerable and prioritized under the National Housing Strategy.</p> <p>The new homes are part of 3 separate projects across southern Saskatchewan, which includes the building of 40 new homes in Pasqua First Nation for seniors and those at risk of homelessness. \$9,117,632 was allocated to build 40 units in two separate projects in the Pasqua First Nation.</p>
Indigenous Women's Shelter (in development) Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) White Horse, YT https://www.yukon-news.com/local-news/construction-of-indigenous-run-shelter-in-whistle-bend-begins-with-site-blessing-7004443 Services – Council of Yukon First Nations (cyfn.ca)	<p>The shelter houses Yukon First Nations women and children who are fleeing abuse, experiencing homelessness and dealing with mental health or addictions issues.</p> <p>The single-storey, wood-framed building will contain 15 apartments and 32 beds. To reflect First Nations values, the design prioritizes gathering spaces and natural light. There will be common dining areas, a wet workshop and a cultural room. The outdoor grounds will include play areas and picnic space.</p> <p>The apartments are divided into low- and high-barrier housing units to “safely meet the needs of families and women who require more supports,” according to CYFN. Women will be able to access the five-bed low-barrier wing while intoxicated.”</p>
Kii-we-yan Bail Bed and Transition Home NANLegal Pikangikum First Nation, ON https://www.northwesthealthline.ca/displayService.aspx?id=203458 https://211ontario.ca/service/71570172/	<p>The Kii-we-yan Bail Bed and Transition Home offers an 18-bed facility with gathering spaces and a range of amenities including a full kitchen, dining room and lounge. The facility also offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides temporary shelter and healing services for Pikangikum members, including those on bail or serving intermittent sentences• Enables individuals who have been arrested to remain in home community and those on bail to be released from custody and supervised while awaiting trial



<p>https://aeswellnessportal.ca/Services/Display/203458/Bail_Bed_and_Transition_Facility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides community-based and culturally appropriate support, supervision and accommodation for arrested individuals• Addresses social and mental health issues through the provision of holistic supports and cultural practices• Assists to alleviate the high representation of First Nations in the criminal justice system
<p>Community Safe Village (Community Safe House-Hotel) Pikangikum First Nation, ON https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PW3MG4fBsA https://www.edo.ca/downloads/pikangikum-opening-pdf.pdf https://www.northernnews.ca/news/local-news/pikangikum-opens-new-safe-house-hotel-facility/wcm/5148225d-1342-4c19-967a-c5ee186af918/amp/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9_uWgYP6tl</p>	<p>Pikangikum First Nation has built an eight residential unit 'Community Safe Village' that provides safe, transitional, emergency housing with professional and culturally sensitive support for community members escaping violence. The facility includes six hotel units accessible from a separate entrance for those visiting the community, to generate revenue to support the operation and maintenance of the Community Safe Village.</p> <p>The facility consists of eight self-contained safe house units which will provide sanctuary, peace and healing for people in times of need and six quality overnight hotel accommodation units for visiting professionals. The facility also includes a community kitchen, administration offices, meeting rooms, an elder room and a large outdoor courtyard for healing and cultural events.</p> <p>The Indigenous Homes Innovation Initiative is a partnership between Indigenous Services Canada, Infrastructure Canada, and the Privy Council Office's Impact and Innovation Unit.</p> <p>The Initiative is led, from start to finish, by an Indigenous Steering Committee. The Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando) is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Initiative, with advice and support from ISC.</p> <p>The safe house offers secure shelter and culturally appropriate services for community members seeking refuge from violence or abuse. It operates as a temporary facility, resembling a motel, with individual rooms and family suites. Staff provide emotional support, and elders are available upon request for guidance and counseling in Ojibwe, catering to those whose primary language is Anishinaabemowin. The facility includes staff offices, a common room for visits, a kitchen providing traditional meals, and a healing room where people can receive counseling, pray, or meet with elders. Additionally, workshops are offered for families to engage in skill-building activities and support each other. An outdoor area features a yard with a fire pit, suitable for group meetings or gatherings with elders. The initiative is championed by the leadership of the community, emphasizing the importance of local access to safety and support services without the need for individuals to leave their community.</p>



Initiatives	Description
<p>Sacred Wolf Lodge Chief Red bear Childrens Lodge Cowessess First Nation, SK https://redbearlodge.ca/about/faqs/#toggle-id-7 https://redbearlodge.ca/sacred-wolf-lodge/</p>	<p>Chief Red Bear Children's Lodge is the big Lodge – it holds all the services and programs and Administration.</p> <p>One of the services is a family Healing Home called Sacred Wolf Lodge where families are brought into care for up to a year to heal, learn and grow as parents and as a family. This model ensures that children are not separated from their parents in times of crisis.</p> <p>Sacred Wolf Lodge is supported by the Kokums program. Kokums add the extra love and attention that many families need to resolve trauma and negative impacts from history.</p> <p>Programs & Resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counselling, Equine Therapy, Programs for Parents and Family, Narcotics Anonymous, Adult Basic Education, Life skills• After treatment support, Daycare/child care, Participants set their own goals for their own plan.





Neepinise Healing Family
Centre
Bigstone Cree Nation
Wabasca, AB
[https://www.bigstone.ca/
neepinisefamilyhealingcentre](https://www.bigstone.ca/neepinisefamilyhealingcentre)

The Neepinise Healing Family Centre believes in helping women and children understand the cycle of abuse. They believe in helping women and children learn effective ways of resolving abusive relationships. The centre provides:

- A safe and secure accommodation to woman and children fleeing abuse.
- Food and basic needs.
- Emotional support, crisis counselling, referrals and information.
- Medical attention and emergency transportation.
- Care, support and coping strategies for children experiencing violence in their lives.
- Follow-up support.
- Confidential, 24-hour, 7 days a week service to in-house residents, and a crisis line service to non-residents.

Community Support Services

The Women's Shelter added a new entity to their existing services. Next to the Shelter and Second Stage Housing, there is the Community Support Services Building that includes: two staff offices, a kitchen and large conference room.

Women and children who leave the Shelter are offered longer term services from our Community Support Worker to ensure they have the essential services needed to continue along their journey toward lives free of violence.

Shelter Facilities

The Shelter has two levels. The ground floor has two offices, a family room, a large dining room, a kitchen, a pantry, and two full bathrooms. All the major entries to the Shelter are wheelchair accessible. The facility is fully-furnished to provide the basic living comforts to the women and children. The dining room can seat sixteen people and is equipped with the additional booster seats and high chairs.

Second Stage Housing

The centre offers one-year accommodations to the women and children who want to make a permanent change for a better lifestyle. Women who have completed their twenty-one day stay in the Shelter have the option to move into one of the four self-contained units. Three houses have up to six bedrooms, two full baths including a laundry room and a full size basement. One unit is equipped for persons with disabilities and includes a wheel-chair accessible bathroom.



Initiatives	Description
<p>Supportive Family Housing Projects (in development) Shishalh, BC https://shishalh.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Supportive-Housing-FinalReport-without-Appendices-01.06.22.pdf</p>	<p>Shíshálh Nation's first supportive housing project is currently under development. The CMHC funded Rapid Housing Initiative will comprise of three supportive housing duplexes (six units) and a support building. The project, located on Kwatamus Avenue, is targeted toward families, with a focus on shíshálh women and children.</p> <p>This project is a pilot program for supportive family housing, with operations funded by BC Housing. Services provided to families include meal support, life skills training, and on-site support, all administered by the Nation. Eligibility for the program is limited to shíshálh Nation members.</p> <p>Examples of housing supports may include life skills training, culture and language programs, meals, cleaning assistance, childcare, and connections to off-site services (such as primary health care, mental health, or substance use services, etc.).</p>
<p>Indigenous Housing First Program Native Counselling Services of Alberta (in development) Edmonton, AB https://www.ncsa.ca/programs/indigenous-housing-first-edmonton https://frameworkha.org/7-principles-of-housing-first</p>	<p>The Indigenous Housing First Program provides housing and follow up support for chronically homeless Indigenous people in Edmonton.</p> <p>The program is intended to last no more than 12 months as participants are stabilized and transitioned to a reduced level of support. The final stages of the program involve planning to discharge the participant once self-sufficient. Indigenous Housing First embraces the principle of Housing First and that every person has the right to a safe, secure home.</p>



Okanagan Nation Transition Emergency House
Penticton, BC
<https://onteh.org/>

The Okanagan Nation Transition Emergency House (ONTEH) is a non-profit organization committed to providing temporary shelter to all women and children experiencing domestic violence.

ONTEH offers a variety of services that encourages empowerment and restores family unity.

ONTEH provides:

- Safe and secure shelter
- Meals and laundry facilities
- Referrals – counselling services, drug and alcohol, housing
- Transportation
- Safety planning
- Advocacy
- Accompaniment to appointments
- Immediate support

Managed Alcohol Program – MAP
Health and Family Services
Gwa'sala-nakwaxda'xw Nations, BC
<https://www.gwanaknations.ca/health-family-services/>

MAP is a harm reduction strategy that may reduce consumption of alcohol and non-beverage alcohol resulting in fewer Emergency Department visits and hospital admissions while improving the health of individuals who are suffering from alcohol use disorder. MAPs are also useful for patients who are at risk for seizures and over-intoxication.

Managed alcohol (MA) offers healthcare practitioners an opportunity to form a therapeutic relationship with patients who might have had past negative healthcare experiences.

MAP goals:

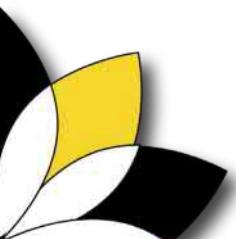
- Prevent withdrawal,
- Maintain or reduce alcohol in-take,
- Reduce non-beverage alcohol consumption,
- Reduce health risks and other harms, and
- Promote safer use through harm reduction education and self-management.
- Focus is on harm reduction, peer, self-management, and education on safer drinking
- Low barrier to prevent harms and increase ability of individuals to stay at home and isolate
- Ideal for chronic daily users who are low to mild/moderate risk for complicated withdrawal and are able to self-manage their consumption



Initiatives	Description
<p>Dzee Inzu Yikh (in development) Burns Lake, BC</p> <p>https://www.lakebabine.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Spring-2021-Neduten-Distlis-Revised.pdf</p> <p>https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/burns-lake-motor-inn</p>	<p>The Gramma's House Society is a non-profit Society that is working to provide safe and affordable housing for Lake Babine Nation members, and people living in and around Burns Lake.</p> <p>This project will accommodate people who are experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless from seven communities: Lake Babine Nation, Burns Lake Band, Skin Tyee Nation, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, NeeTahi Buhn Band, and the Village of Burns Lake.</p> <p>The project includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 44 one-bedroom units (including 3 accessible units)• Full kitchens and bathrooms within the units to encourage self-sufficiency• Lounge area, dining room, quiet study room, staff office and a community room• 24/7 on-site staffing <p>In addition to a home, residents would also have access to wrap around services such as life skills training, education and health, that would assist them to build their life and employment skills and to support their journey to wellness.</p>
<p>Simpcw FirstNation</p> <p>https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023CFD0048-001548</p>	<p>Simpcw FirstNation is partnering with the province on a two-year project focused on keeping families together through connections to their culture, language, families and traditional decision-making for members who live away from home.</p>
<p>Ehlettesaht First Nation</p> <p>https://www.nationalobserver.com/2023/02/10/news/ehlettesaht-first-nation-bc-declares-drug-alcohol-crisis-emergency</p> <p>Nuchatlaht First Nation (Sister Nation Programming)</p>	<p>Ehlettesaht First Nation declared a state of emergency due to the drug toxicity crisis and the losses the community faced, from the state of emergency funding was received to outreach for the Ehlettesaht people. The Nation is attempting try to stabilize the crisis by focusing on outreach to its most vulnerable members in an urban context. The team consists of 3-4 staff that provide referrals and connection to local services and support with housing. The team is based in Campbell River but work with members in Campbell River, Zeballos, Ocluje, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Victoria, and Vancouver. They provide direct outreach, advocacy, and collaboration for their members, The team assists with harm reduction supplies, detox and treatment applications, connecting to counselling, health services, and support groups as needed. Ehlettesaht is currently in the planning stages for related programs (a healing camp, a variety of continuous workshops, etc).</p>



<p>Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council https://hashilthsa.com/news/2024-03-04/outreach-van-hits-streets-fight-overdose-crisis</p>	<p>Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council has developed a harm reduction outreach team. They are based in Port Alberni but travel to other communities as well.</p> <p>The harm reduction outreach team offers regular assistance to substance users on the streets of Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Campbell River and Tofino. With the aim of improving the safety of Nuu-chah-nulth members who use illicit drugs, the outreach van will be operated by two staff who specialize in harm reduction measures. The van contains a large supply of Naloxone kits as well as “safe supply” packages containing items like clean syringes and smoking pipes to prevent the spread of infection by users sharing equipment. The harm reduction van also offers food, blankets and a tent as part of its support.</p>
<p>Penticton Indian Band Personal Communication; Central Okanagan Community Action Team Minutes</p>	<p>Penticton Indian Band recently received funding from FNHA and will be hiring an urban outreach support worker to start spring of 2024. The position will work with vulnerable people that are living off-reserve, who are unsheltered, are experiencing homeless or are underhoused.</p>





3.2 NON-NATION AFFILIATED PROGRAMMING

Numerous initiatives have been implemented or are underway to address housing insecurity and social challenges within Indigenous communities. These projects range from housing facilities, shelters for those fleeing abuse, and supportive housing facilities. These projects emphasized that access to culture, land, territory, and community were indispensable elements of these programs.

These initiatives also highlighted culturally appropriate services, including counseling, workshops, and healing spaces, to address issues like homelessness, domestic violence, mental health, and addiction.

Collaborative partnerships between Indigenous communities, nations, and non-profit organizations drive these initiatives forward, ensuring holistic support and sustainable solutions. Overall, these endeavors represent a commitment to empowering Indigenous communities and fostering resilience through culturally relevant housing and support services.

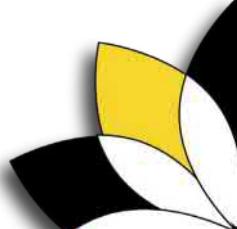
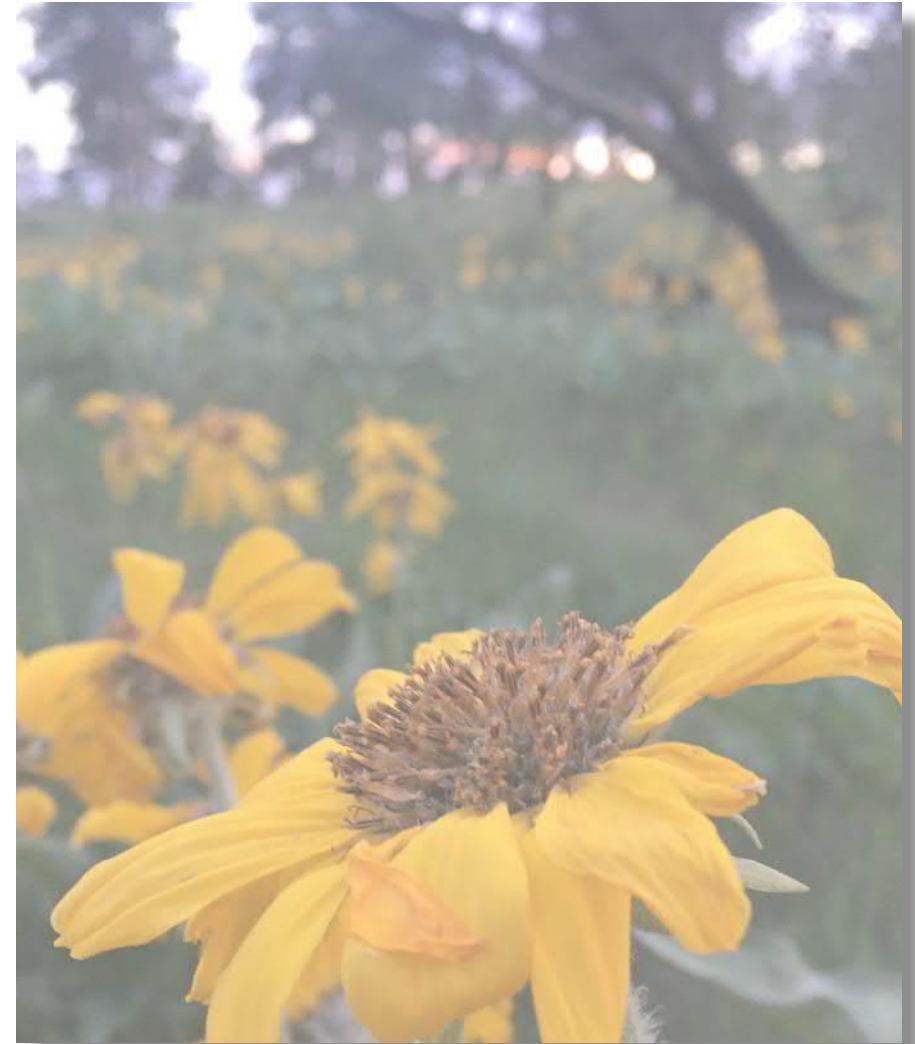




Table 2: Non-Nation Affiliated Programming

Initiatives	Description
Emergency Shelter: Men's Residence Na-Me-Res Toronto, ON Https://www.nameres.org/housing/	Since 1985, Na-Me-Res has provided shelter to homeless indigenous men in Toronto. The residence takes a unique cultural approach filled with respect and dignity. Clients receive short-term housing, food, clothing, assistance with other fundamental needs, cultural reconnection, and support to secure permanent housing. To meet the increasing demand, the residence has grown over the years to 71 beds.
Transitional Housing: Sagatay Na-Me-Res Toronto, ON Https://www.nameres.org/housing/	Sagatay provides transitional housing for indigenous men. This unique residence and program offers life skills training, cultural re-connection, Elder guidance, and counseling. Classes include healthy living, drumming, literacy, community gardening, sharing circles, financial literacy, creative writing, traditional teachings, photography and employability. Residents may participate in the program for up to one year. They are expected to work with staff toward achieving the goals identified in their personal care plan.
Permanent Housing Na-Me-Res Toronto, ON Https://www.nameres.org/housing/	To help address the acute need, Na-Me-Res has developed permanent housing for the Indigenous community in Toronto for over ten years. Na-Me-Res has acquired and converted locations in Parkdale and Cabbagetown, but much more is needed. These projects help address the need for more affordable and supportive rental housing for single Indigenous males of modest incomes, some with mobility issues. To ensure a successful transition, dedicated support and counseling is offered to tenants.
O'Gitchidaa Mushkiki Wigwam (OMW) Na-Me-Res Toronto, ON Https://www.nameres.org/housing/	O'Gitchidaa Mushkiki Wigwam (OMW), which loosely translates in English as Warriors Medicine House, consists of two affordable housing units in Parkdale. Opened in September 2012, it is available to Na-Me-Res clients who are transitioning to permanent housing.



Initiatives	Description
<p>Kinew Poonii Waahkiiganaan: Golden Eagle Landing Na-Me-Res Toronto, ON https://www.nameres.org/housing/</p>	<p>Opened in June 2019, Kinew Poonii Waahkiiganaan is newest affordable housing unit owned and operated by Na-Me-Res. Located in the Cabbagetown neighbourhood, this building with 16 one-bedroom units features a first floor that caters to tenants who may have accessibility or mobility issues.</p>
<p>Nekenaan Second Stage Housing (NSSH) Anduhyauh Inc. Toronto, ON https://anduhyaun.org/nssh</p>	<p>Nekenaan Second Stage Housing (NSSH) is a Transitional Housing service that provides safe, affordable, temporary housing to Indigenous women with or without children.</p> <p>Nekenaan provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A substance and violence-free environment• A six story building that is on a major bus route• 24 furnished units - 10 single occupancy units with a fridge & microwave oven - 14 double occupancy units that include a fridge, microwave oven, and stove - 1 AODA compliant accessible unit to suit an individual or families up to 3 people• Space designed to suit an individual or families of up to 5 people• Free laundry facilities and telephones (local line) on each tenant floor• A common area that has a dining, kitchen, and lounge area• Security features such as a coded phone system to enter the building, security camera system, tenant only elevator access, and emergency on-call service• Available each month - culture specific programming - a variety of workshops to promote personal growth and well-being



Anduhyaun Shelter
Anduhyauh Inc.
Toronto, ON

<https://anduhyau.org/anduhyau-emergency-shelter-1>

Anduhyaun Shelter is a Violence against Women (VAW) Emergency Shelter servicing Indigenous and Non-Indigenous women with or without children fleeing violence.

Anduhyaun Shelter provides:

- Emergency shelter in a substance and violence free environment
- 18 beds for women and their children
- Culturally sensitive counselling and referrals. Women are provided support in a culturally-safe and inclusive environment.

The shelter operates on a client focused and strength based approach which promotes advocacy and empowerment for women while maintaining their cultural identity in addition to respecting diversity of race, religion, and sexuality. The goal here is to address the unique needs of each woman as she navigates her path on her healing journey.

Services offered at the Shelter include, but are not limited to:

- Individual Counselling
- Sexual Assault Counselling
- Crisis Counselling
- Life Skills
- Resident Support Services
- Cultural Ceremonies and Elders

Aboriginal Front Door Society
Vancouver (Downtown East Side), BC
About AFDS - Aboriginal Front Door Society (abfrontdoor.org)

The Aboriginal Front Door Society is a culturally safe, peer-designed non-judgemental place for Aboriginal Peoples and their friends and family in the Downtown East Side.

The Society offers support through Aboriginal cultural traditions, caring, and acceptance.

A meeting place and a drop-in centre is offered with a welcoming environment, providing opportunities to learn more about Aboriginal Peoples and Culture. When necessary, the Society also offers other services, such as serving as a crisis centre, brokering long-term and specialty trauma counseling, and court accompaniments.

The goal of the Aboriginal Front Door Society is to restore respect, dignity, and pride to our members.





Initiatives	Description
<p>Aboriginal Mother Centre Society Vancouver, BC https://www.aboriginalmothercentre.ca/about</p>	<p>""Under One Roof", AMCS provides housing for Aboriginal mothers and their children who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or that have had, or are at risk of having their children apprehended.</p> <p>AMCS supports families in their goals to regain and retain their children and achieving self-sufficiency.</p> <p>AMCS is dedicated to supporting Aboriginal families by providing cultural, traditional services through a holistic grass roots approach."</p>
<p>ANDERSON LODGE HEALING CENTRE FOR WOMEN Circle of Eagles Lodge Society (COELS) Vancouver, BC https://www.circleofeagles.com/sisters-lodge/</p>	<p>Anderson Lodge Healing Centre for Sisters is a Community Residential Facility (CRF) for women who are leaving the Federal Institutions, as well as for women who are homeless and in need of shelter. The Circle of Eagles Lodge Society opened Anderson Lodge Healing Centre for Sisters for homeless women in March of 2001. It has been available to women in transition since.</p> <p>On April 1st, 2004, the Circle of Eagles Lodge Society entered into a contract with the Corrections Services Canada and it currently has eight (8) beds for women who are at some stage of involvement with the Correctional System, on Conditional Releases (day parole, full parole, statutory release, the Electronic Monitoring Program, probation or bail), and offers a structured, supportive environment for their reintegration into society.</p> <p>The Anderson Lodge Healing Centre for Sisters as part of the Circle of Eagles Lodge Society, designs, delivers, coordinates and evaluates programs and services which support and provide a nurturing and safe environment that encourages positive changes for Indigenous women that need services and assistance in their healing journey; whilst maintaining culturally appropriate care. It recognizes homelessness and accepts Homeless Indigenous women, including Indigenous women who are at imminent risk of homelessness, and chronically & episodically homeless women.</p> <p>Length of stay ranges from a few days up to three years. Provided conditions of release and residency are met, a resident may stay at Anderson Lodge Healing Centre for Women until she reaches her warrant expire date (WED), or until she feels ready to leave and has established another residence for herself in the community (whichever comes first). Most women stay 4 – 6 months.</p> <p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life skills development• Elder Support – Social Distance, Face mask covering, and/or telephone



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Step Recovery Program – (off site, can also participate on-line through the Zoom program)• Addictions Education – (off site, can also participate on-line through the Zoom program)• Encouraged to attend AA/NA Outside Meetings – (off site, can also participate on-line through the Zoom program)• Employment Program• Cultural & Traditional Teachings (Medicine Wheel)• Sweat Lodge ceremonies –• Native Arts & Crafts• One to one counseling• Cultural Wellness Worker – (staff work one to one with sisters in teaching them the Indigenous World View of healing)
<p>Naa-Na-Himyis Brothers' Lodge Circle of Eagles Lodge Society (COELS) Vancouver, BC</p> <p>https://www.circleofeagles.com/brothers-lodge/</p>	<p>The Naa-na-himyis Brothers Healing Lodge is located at 1470 East Broadway in Vancouver. Staffed and supervised 24 hours, the Lodge has 17 beds, 3 double rooms and 11 single rooms. It is not wheelchair accessible. The Naa-na-himyis Brothers Healing Lodge contains one industrial sized kitchen, four full bathrooms- two on each floor, free laundry facilities, cable television in the dining room, in the rooms, and the common room; and a phone.</p> <p>Naa-Na-Himyis Brothers Healing Lodge provides culturally relevant services and supports including Elders, Sweat Lodge, Smudging, Canoe Teachings and Protocols, Feasts, Pipe Ceremonies, and Sharing Circles. COELS also provides a Pre-employment training program, Circle of Healing Support Network, Housing Program to prepare for living on own, Camp Potlatch, Spiritual Advisor, and a cooking program.</p> <p>Programs offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life Skills Program• Sweat Lodge Ceremonies• Elder Counseling• Personal Development• Recovery Program• Circle of Healing Program• COELS Pre-Employment Program• One-to-one counseling• Cultural Teachings• Health and Nutrition• Physical exercise• Household maintenance



4
REFLECTION



4.1 IMPACT

The initial goals that were aimed for at the outset of this research project included on-the-ground research with individuals and organizations in the housing and homelessness sector to determine the challenges and needs of people with lived and living experience. More than that, it was hoped that though the project, organizations involved would develop strategies and partnerships through their own reflections and insights gained. Throughout the course of the project, and multiple rounds of interviews and conversations, our team was able to put pen to paper on the challenges that Indigenous peoples are facing. The reality is that these challenges have not been a secret to those in the supportive services sector, or those

Indigenous individuals facing housing precarity. The overwhelming benefit of this project has been the documentation of these open secrets, and more importantly, giving key community partners the fuel needed to drive policy change and an opportunity to come together to build relationship and meet others in our community that have similar organizational goals. We see the future impact of these relationships within the research project as having the greatest potential to make change in our community.





4.2 CHALLENGES

Completing this research project on Indigenous housing and homelessness presented significant challenges due to the current poly-crisis affecting the social sector. Service providers continue to be stretched thin by the overlapping crises of housing shortages, the opioid epidemic, skyrocketing housing costs, and workforce shortages, making it difficult to move the project forward in a linear manner. Indigenous leaders are also overextended because of the need to continuously work to improve a wide range of issues in their communities while dealing with complex challenges and are tasked with meeting the diverse needs of community. These interconnected issues compounded the strain on resources and limited the capacity for effective collaboration, slowing progress and complicating efforts to build the foundational relationships and support in depth mentorship that is needed to support non-Indigenous organizations to move forward the work of reconciliation. While we call on our communities to lean into the responsibility of learning and unlearning, we understand that this work cannot be done without Indigenous partnerships, which takes time and capacity of the Indigenous community.

A concrete example of these interconnected challenges emerged during the focus group with emergency services providers that took place during the research phase of this project. The individuals attending the focus group were representatives of police, fire, and emergency services, and all of these groups recounted the challenge of “putting out fires” on a daily basis, which had become the focus of their respective positions, and the Indigenous status of their clients was not necessarily regarded as consideration, let alone a priority. This meant that the provision of culturally appropriate services and developing reconciliation strategies or guidance towards Indigenous-focused services providers, and recognition of the importance of an individual’s Indigeneity were not addressed during their

shifts. This challenge represents a sizable gap in services that is captured in the recommendations for action in **Appendix A**.

Ultimately, despite these obstacles, our team—along with the service providers—agreed that the findings reaffirmed what was already known about the state of Indigenous housing and homelessness in the Central Okanagan. The challenges faced only highlighted the critical need for targeted interventions and systemic change.





4.3 MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

Research and analysis of Indigenous homelessness and housing precarity in the Central Okanagan have highlighted several harsh realities that Indigenous peoples in our community are forced to navigate to access basic daily needs including adequate housing. Some of the major findings from this intensive research project are as follows:

- The historical legacy endured by Indigenous communities has left enduring impacts that are passed down through generations and shaped contemporary realities and sustained challenges of inequity for Indigenous peoples. These include loss of culture, systemic discrimination, and inequity across sectors and systems.
- The data analysis further underscores the pronounced disparities faced by Indigenous peoples in the Central Okanagan, particularly concerning their housing situation. Indigenous renters experience disproportionately high rates of core housing need (CHN), reflecting systemic barriers to accessing safe, adequate, and affordable housing. This disparity is not merely a matter of housing policy but is deeply rooted in historical injustices, including the dispossession of Indigenous lands, discriminatory housing policies, and inadequate government support for Indigenous housing initiatives.
- The findings from data analysis highlight the importance for housing and services to be designed for Indigenous peoples with the appropriate supports and programming suited for groups by Indigenous identity, gender, ability, age, health, and household structure.
- Current data sources are inadequate to tell the full story of the relationship between housing, homelessness, and Indigenous peoples in the Central Okanagan. This limitation underscores the need for data sovereignty which empowers First Nations communities to determine the terms under which their data is collected, managed, and utilized, including the right to withhold consent or negotiate agreements with external parties.
- Indigenous peoples experiencing housing precarity in the Central Okanagan face the harsh reality of trying to meet their basic needs, navigating webs of bureaucratic colonial hurdles, and discrimination all while maintaining cultural connections. Their experiences are impacted by historical trauma, family losses, and a sense of disconnection from their cultural roots. They are sons, daughters, parents, partners, and community members navigating the complexities of addiction and the daily struggle for survival. They are people with goals and aspirations, who seek healing and balance in their lives.
- Service providers take their work seriously and despite the many challenges, frustrations and worries about the growing demand for services in the community, they proclaim that they are dedicated to making a difference for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness but lack the necessary resources and accountability check points to measure this impact. They see how big and complicated the homelessness crisis is and although they all work on different elements of the problem, they are eager to work together to make progress. They recognize that health services, government policies, temporary and emergency housing, affordable housing, and Indigenous services need to come together to create meaningful and lasting change. Service providers also have communicated that they

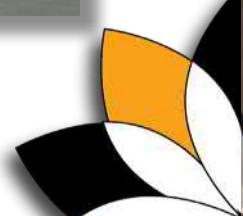


need support in addressing the inequities with Indigenous partners and need help to move reconciliation forward.

- First Nations communities and Indigenous service providers on reserve face significant challenges in meeting the needs of those seeking services, compounded by the unique difficulties of addressing the needs and service requests of members living away from home. Colonial legacies have historically limited collaboration among Indigenous groups, further complicating these efforts. Communities must balance providing and prioritizing services for their on-reserve membership, and community members while also supporting those living off-reserve. This creates a challenging dynamic, especially when a First Nation community is located near an urban center. Service providers often operate with limited capacity and resources within a complex ecosystem. To address these challenges, it is crucial to establish formal networks and collaboration agreements among Indigenous groups and service providers to enhance resource sharing, capacity building, and coordinated service delivery.

These findings have influenced a series of considerations for action that represent a comprehensive approach to addressing the complex and multifaceted challenges faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing housing precarity in the Central Okanagan. This actionable list represents a combination of culturally relevant support services, trauma-informed care, long-term support networks, collaboration, and advocacy, with an aim to create lasting positive change and empower Indigenous communities to overcome housing instability and homelessness.

The considerations for action provide a roadmap for advancing initiatives that prioritize cultural relevance, community collaboration, and long-term sustainability. Through collective effort and commitment, we can create positive change and build a future where Indigenous peoples in the Central Okanagan have the opportunities and tools available to thrive.



5
CONSIDERATIONS
FOR ACTION





The considerations for action outlined in this report were meticulously developed through a comprehensive and collaborative process involving extensive engagement with Indigenous community members, service providers, and key community partners. This process included one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, and empathy mapping sessions to capture diverse perspectives and experiences. The Project Advisory Committee (PAC), consisting of Indigenous leaders and community representatives, played a crucial role in guiding the research approach, validating findings, and ensuring cultural relevance and sensitivity. The insights gathered from these engagements were analyzed thematically to identify common themes and recurring issues, which were then prioritized based on their urgency and potential impact. This collaborative and inclusive approach ensured that the proposed actions are grounded in the lived experiences of Indigenous individuals and are designed to address the root causes of homelessness and housing precarity in the Central Okanagan.

The successful implementation of these considerations for action hinges on the active involvement and commitment of community champions. Local groups with deep understanding of the local context, cultural nuances and the unique challenges faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness positions them as key influencers who can mobilize resources, foster collaboration, and inspire collective action. By championing these actions, they can help build momentum, secure necessary support from stakeholders, and ensure that the proposed solutions are effectively tailored to meet the community's needs. Their leadership and advocacy are essential in transforming the recommendations into tangible outcomes that can significantly improve the lives of Indigenous individuals in the Central Okanagan.





5.1 SERVICES & CARE

CULTURALLY RELEVANT SUPPORT SERVICES

- Develop and enhance support services tailored specifically to the cultural needs and preferences of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This could include culturally appropriate housing options, counseling services, life skills, and employment programs.
- Community Care for Women: Women prioritize their family and friends, even when they are struggling to find or maintain their own housing. More care and supports for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes would reduce the pressure on women. Including shifting social norms to include cultural perspectives on multigenerational living.
- Mental Health Support: Provide continuous, accessible long-term mental health support and education to address trauma and promote emotional well-being among Indigenous individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness and social challenges.
- Impact of Decriminalization: Decriminalization efforts need to be accompanied by comprehensive services to address substance abuse effectively.
- Resource Awareness: Improve awareness of available resources and support services through effective communication and outreach efforts.
- Establish Healing Centers that cater to high demand, providing a holistic approach to healing and empowerment. These centers should offer traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language and parenting classes, and empowerment programs.
- Advocate for funding for housing on reserves to facilitate the return home of individuals seeking support, following LECoH's principles of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion.
- Establish integrated healing centers that cater to various needs, such as traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language revitalization, parenting classes, and empowerment programs. These centers should adhere to LECoH's principles of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion, while also addressing the lack of community awareness about available programming.
- Build relationships with shelters and transitional housing providers to co-create solutions how to increase cultural safety within shelters and services, leveraging community relationships and education. This involves creating action plans, standardizing cultural safety practices, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives in shelter management.
- Expand abstinence housing options, improve transportation access, and integrate activities like sports, music, and arts into treatment programs.
- Prioritize smaller supportive housing initiatives specifically tailored to Indigenous communities and promote the design and implementation of Indigenous-led housing and shelter projects





TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

- Implement trauma-informed approaches in service delivery to address underlying trauma and mental health challenges among Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Train service providers to recognize and respond to trauma with sensitivity and compassion.
- Empathy Training: Provide training for staff and community members to enhance their understanding and empathy towards individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- Policy Review: Review and revise shelter rules and policies to ensure they are clear, consistent, and culturally appropriate, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts.
- Advocate for and facilitate Indigenous cultural safety assessments to support building capacity of Indigenous service delivery and cultural safety within the housing, homelessness and adjacent sectors.
- Safety and Privacy: Ensure safety, privacy, and respect for individuals in temporary and supportive housing environments, particularly focusing on the unique needs of Indigenous individuals.
- Improve access to culturally safe shelters and services by standardizing practices and involving individuals from Indigenous communities in their design and operation. Increase community awareness of available programming and services.
- Develop culturally safe consumption sites and increase abstinence housing shelters.
- Invest in smaller supportive housing specifically for Indigenous individuals and prioritize the design of Indigenous-led housing and shelter initiatives.

LONG-TERM SUPPORT NETWORKS

- Develop long-term support networks and mentorship programs to facilitate successful transitions out of homelessness for Indigenous individuals. Foster peer support, life skills and mentorship within the Indigenous community.
- Community Building: Foster community connections and support networks to combat isolation and provide a sense of belonging for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Advocate for funding for housing on reserves to facilitate the return home of individuals seeking support.





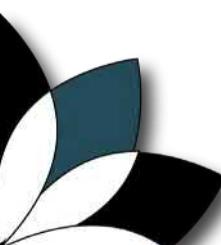
5.2 COLLABORATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

COLLABORATION WITH INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

- Foster partnerships and collaboration with local Indigenous organizations and leaders to co-design and implement initiatives addressing homelessness. Engage Indigenous communities in decision-making processes to ensure culturally respectful and effective interventions.
- Collaboration and Engagement: Prioritize collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities, interest holders, and decision-makers to ensure their needs and perspectives are prioritized in policy and program development.
- Advocate for First Nations organizations to receive funding to enable them to join conversations that support planning for and serving Urban Indigenous to support building substantive equality across jurisdictional boundaries imposed by colonial practices.
- Collaborate with organizations like Westbank First Nation, Syilx Language House and The Enowkin Centre to support cultural connection and provide language programs aimed at reinforcing identity, particularly within schools and educational institutions.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND EDUCATION

- Provide opportunities in the housing and social serving sector for capacity building and education within the Indigenous community, including skills training, financial literacy programs, and access to educational resources. Empower individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and stability.
- Training and Awareness: Require the housing and social serving sector to participate in cultural safety training programs for service providers to enhance understanding and support for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This should include trauma-informed care and education about Indigenous cultures and histories.
- Education and Awareness: Engage the housing and social serving sectors into conversations that further develop pathways to increasing education about Indigenous cultures, histories, and current issues to combat stereotypes and biases among service providers, community members, and policymakers. This could look like an Indigenous cultural safety assessments.
- Staff Training: Provide ongoing training for staff in shelters, supportive housing, and outreach services to enhance empathy, communication, and trauma-informed care.
- Empowerment: Empower Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness by involving them in decision-making processes and providing avenues for feedback and complaints.





- Employment Assistance for Women: Remove the obstacles for Indigenous women to get jobs, such as providing safe and affordable childcare, pathways out of intimate partner violence, and addressing stigma, to improve Indigenous women's financial, housing stability and wellbeing.
- Advocate and allocate more resources to schools for learning Indigenous languages, while also incorporating cultural education into service provider training programs, such as the Indigenous Cultural Safety Assessment, to promote greater understanding and support for Indigenous communities.
- Advocate and provide education programs tailored to individuals who have experienced homelessness, including support for collaboration with colleges/universities, funding initiatives for young men and women, and training programs for advancement while supporting peers with lived and living experience

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

- Strengthen community engagement and outreach efforts to build trust and rapport with Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Offer accessible and welcoming spaces for community gatherings and social connections.
- Resource Accessibility: Improve access to basic needs such as food, hygiene facilities, and storage for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness to enhance their quality of life and dignity.
- Upstream Interventions: There's a need to shift towards upstream interventions that assess the risks of homelessness and provide appropriate supports to prevent homelessness before it occurs. Service providers need to advocate for policy changes and implement early intervention programs within their organizations to address the root causes of homelessness.





5.3 RECONCILIATION & CULTURAL PRESERVATION

ACTION PLANS AND RECONCILIATION

- Emphasize more than land acknowledgment and celebrate genuine reconciliation efforts within homelessness services. Acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples is commendable, yet we recommend organizations create an action plan highlighting the concrete steps they plan to take to support Indigenous communities into the future.
- Develop an Urban Indigenous Action plan to address the needs within the Central Okanagan.



CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND PRIDE

- Promote cultural preservation and Indigenous pride among individuals experiencing homelessness through cultural activities, traditional ceremonies, and access to Indigenous language revitalization programs.
- Recognition and Respect: Acknowledge and honor Indigenous knowledge and culture in all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and governance. This can be actioned through ongoing cultural awareness initiatives, representation of First Nations and Indigenous artwork in public spaces and historical markers that share truth telling and the local context to recreate the narrative of Indigenous people belonging in community.
- Advocate for public education programs aimed at humanizing the homeless population and fostering home ownership, alongside efforts to educate higher levels of government on the realities faced by marginalized communities. Implement paid life skills programs post-housing attainment to further empower individuals transitioning out of homelessness.



ENHANCED RELATIONSHIPS

- Reinstate traditional family roles within homelessness programs and promote intergenerational relationships, including fostering connections with grandparents and youth through culture and language programs. This could look like an Indigenous Housing First program.
- Encourage collaboration with Indigenous service groups and Nations/bands to address homelessness issues collectively, while also providing education and support for parenting to young men and women.
- Implement a community-wide approach focused on building trust and faith in institutions. This involves regular meetings with all Indigenous service groups to ensure collective commitment to a common goal.
- Emphasize the importance of learning from individual stories to efficiently support people, particularly focusing on mental health and education. Additionally, convey the significance of First Nations organizations and urban partners in addressing homelessness.





5.4 ADVOCACY & DATA RIGHTS

ADVOCACY FOR HOUSING RIGHTS:

- Advocate for Indigenous housing rights and access to affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate housing options. Collaborate with policymakers and interest holders to address systemic barriers and inequities in housing.
- Advocacy and Empowerment: Encourage and support Indigenous individuals' efforts to advocate for themselves, access resources, and heal from past traumas. This could involve supporting initiatives that promote Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty.
- Supportive Housing: Increase access to supportive housing options that are culturally appropriate and respectful of Indigenous traditions and values.
- Policy Changes: Advocate for policy changes that address systemic discrimination and improve access to resources and support for Indigenous communities. This could include changes to housing regulations and increased support for individuals with criminal records.
- Advocacy for Funding and Resources: Service providers need more flexible and increased funding to provide holistic care and preventive support. This could be addressed by lobbying government officials, raising awareness about funding constraints, and collaborating with interest holders to secure sustainable funding solutions. Governments and funding bodies also need to recognize that more flexible funding programs can help prevent harm and save money in the long run.
- Prioritize culturally integrated services and a long-term support network, incorporating Elders and culturally appropriate elements like transportation to the land and decorating to reduce institutionalization.
- Advocate for distinction-based data collection and support Indigenous-led data collection and analysis. Establish culturally safe data collection tools and ensure that data is contextualized and shared transparently to inform decisions.
- Regional Advocacy: Work with regional local governments to create a Regional Indigenous Advocacy Task Force to collaborate on Indigenous focused housing policy direction.
 - Collective Advocacy: Collectively advocate and work alongside to local and senior levels of government to raise the profile of the housing crisis Indigenous peoples are facing in the Central Okanagan in order to gain additional housing and support.
 - Indigenous Seniors: Indigenous seniors in the Central Okanagan have a high risk of experiencing core housing need. Social service providers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous must develop assistance programs and initiatives that partner, target and support the Central Okanagan's Indigenous senior population. Coordinated advocacy to senior levels of government is also needed.
 - Renter Protections: Due to the high proportion of Indigenous renters in the Central Okanagan, advocate to local and senior levels of government for stronger renter protection laws, and



the ability to address discrimination and human rights issues. To address the stigma that Indigenous households face in the rental market, an awareness and education campaign may be developed.

- **Housing Development:** As Indigenous households have higher than average household size, the construction of additional housing for the region's Indigenous population is needed. Encourage the development of additional culturally appropriate housing through:
 - Development of educational forums and capacity building workshops to move the Indigenous housing sector forward.
 - Promotion of partnerships between the development community, local First Nations communities, Councils, and Indigenous organizations.
 - Collaborate with financial institutions, local and senior government to secure a range of funding sources for affordable housing.

DATA MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Establish mechanisms for ongoing data monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of interventions and ensure continuous improvement. Use data-driven insights to refine and adapt support strategies over time.
- **Site Identification:** Develop regional mapping tools for First Nations governments and Indigenous organizations to better understand the existing land base and identify potential sites for affordable housing. Establish a set of criteria that can be used to assess and evaluate potential sites for affordable housing.

- **PiT Counts:** Point in Time (PiT) Count Reports are a snapshot of visible homelessness and are used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs targeting homelessness and the proportion of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. The last PiT count was conducted in 2020. Do Indigenous housing and service providers see the PiT count as a valuable tool? Are there other ways of gathering this information with a stronger cultural lens?





SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND DATA UTILIZATION

- Establish a comprehensive system for the collection and dissemination of available resources, programs, and funding to ensure consistent support for successful existing programs.
- Foster long-term commitment to employment and advocating for unity across Indigenous Peoples to secure housing and services.
- Develop co-operating service delivery models and extend the creation of a safety net with attached resources, utilizing a mixed model approach facilitated by development corporations.
- Formulate a task force focused on advocacy and the mandate for improving Indigenous housing, utilizing a regional model with concrete timelines to address complex needs and jurisdictional challenges.
- Build capacity in data management and recording methods that prioritize storytelling alongside numerical data. Review and support the implementation of coordinated access systems, while advocating for an Okanagan-based census and putting collected data into actionable use to avoid over-researching.
- Advocate for the relinquishing of government control over data to empower Indigenous communities in decision-making processes.
- Coordinated Access Data Sharing: Ensure that Indigenous partners are embedded in data sharing conversations, and advocate for OCAP® principals to be understood by data sharing partners. Support data sovereignty by ensuring that data collection strategies align with the practices and culture of the Indigenous Nation, community or Peoples who are represented in the data.

- Access to Relevant Data: Ensure that there is coordinated Indigenous representation at the local and provincial levels to assert Indigenous data sovereignty for all data that is collected from Indigenous sources.
- Impact Assessments: Develop culturally appropriate evaluation tools that measure impact Indigenous housing and homelessness initiatives.





The considerations for action as listed in Section 6.0 of this report have been categorized with a decision-making matrix based on timelines categorized as “Now, Next, Later”, which is shown in full in **Appendix A**. Categorization was developed through deliberations with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and a Priority Setting Workshop with key community representatives based on discussions around the

achievability of each action with timelines in mind. The matrix includes timelines for each action, as well as seven (7) prioritized action items identified during the Priority Setting Workshop. This decision-making matrix should be used to guide the future of collective efforts of Indigenous focused entities in the Central Okanagan.

NOW

Initiatives that can be started within the next
1-2 years

NEXT

Approximate timeframe to begin the initiative is
within 3-5 years

LATER

Initiatives that have a starting timeframe of
5-10 years



5.5 TOP PRIORITY ACTIONS

These actions were categorized as being of the highest priority during the Priority Setting Workshop with key community representatives. The intention of highlighting these actions is to encourage local supportive agencies to consider making these a top priority in their organizations,

either collaboratively or as a solo initiative. These priorities are numbered to correspond with the full list of Considerations for Action that is shown in **Appendix A**. Each consideration for action is also linked to a specific Call to Action from the Truth & Reconciliation Committee.

SERVICES & CARE	1.6	Establish Healing Centers that cater to high demand, providing a holistic approach to healing and empowerment. These centers should offer traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language and parenting classes, and empowerment programs.
	1.12	Implement trauma-informed approaches in service delivery to address underlying trauma and mental health challenges among Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Train service providers to recognize and respond to trauma with sensitivity and compassion.
	1.2	Develop long-term support networks and mentorship programs to facilitate successful transitions out of homelessness for Indigenous individuals. Foster peer support, life skills and mentorship within the Indigenous community.
COLLABORATION & CAPACITY BUILDING	2.1	Foster partnerships and collaboration with local Indigenous organizations and leaders to co-design and implement initiatives addressing homelessness. Engage Indigenous communities in decision-making processes to ensure culturally respectful and effective interventions.
ADVOCACY & DATA RIGHTS	4.1	Advocate for Indigenous housing rights and access to affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate housing options. Collaborate with policymakers and interest holders to address systemic barriers and inequities in housing.
	4.10	Establish mechanisms for ongoing data monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of interventions and ensure continuous improvement. Use data-driven insights to refine and adapt support strategies over time.
	4.13	Establish a comprehensive system for the collection and dissemination of available resources, programs, and funding to ensure consistent support for successful existing programs.



5.6 SECONDARY PRIORITY ACTIONS

These actions were categorized as secondary priorities during the Priority Setting Workshop with key community representatives. These actions are viewed as being critically important for the Central Okanagan, but ultimately secondary to the “Top 7 Priorities”.

- 1.1** Develop and enhance support services tailored specifically to the cultural needs and preferences of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This could include culturally appropriate housing options, counseling services, life skills, and employment programs.
- 1.2** Community Care for Women: Women prioritize their family and friends, even when they are struggling to find or maintain their own housing. More care and supports for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes would reduce the pressure on women. Including shifting social norms to include cultural perspectives on multigenerational living.
- 1.6** Establish Healing Centers that cater to high demand, providing a holistic approach to healing and empowerment. These centers should offer traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language and parenting classes, and empowerment programs.
- 1.7** Advocate for funding for housing on reserves to facilitate the return home of individuals seeking support, following LECoH's principles of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion.
- 1.12** Implement trauma-informed approaches in service delivery to address underlying trauma and mental health challenges among Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Train service providers to recognize and respond to trauma with sensitivity and compassion.
- 1.20** Develop long-term support networks and mentorship programs to facilitate successful transitions out of homelessness for Indigenous individuals. Foster peer support, life skills and mentorship within the Indigenous community.
- 2.1** Foster partnerships and collaboration with local Indigenous organizations and leaders to co-design and implement initiatives addressing homelessness. Engage Indigenous communities in decision-making processes to ensure culturally respectful and effective interventions.
- 2.9** Empowerment: Empower Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness by involving them in decision-making processes and providing avenues for feedback and complaints.



2.13 Strengthen community engagement and outreach efforts to build trust and rapport with Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Offer accessible and welcoming spaces for community gatherings and social connections.

2.14 Resource Accessibility: Improve access to basic needs such as food, hygiene facilities, and storage for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness to enhance their quality of life and dignity.

3.1 Emphasize more than land acknowledgment and celebrate genuine reconciliation efforts within homelessness services. Acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples is commendable, yet we recommend organizations create an action plan highlighting the concrete steps they plan to take to support Indigenous communities into the future.

3.2 Develop an Urban Indigenous Action plan to address the needs within the Central Okanagan.

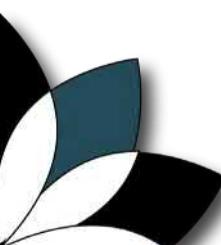
3.7 Encourage collaboration with Indigenous service groups and Nations/bands to address homelessness issues collectively, while also providing education and support for parenting to young men and women.

4.1 Advocate for Indigenous housing rights and access to affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate housing options. Collaborate with policymakers and interest holders to address systemic barriers and inequities in housing.

4.10 Establish mechanisms for ongoing data monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of interventions and ensure continuous improvement. Use data-driven insights to refine and adapt support strategies over time.

4.13 Establish a comprehensive system for the collection and dissemination of available resources, programs, and funding to ensure consistent support for successful existing programs.

4.19 Coordinated Access Data Sharing: Ensure that Indigenous partners are embedded in data sharing conversations, and advocate for OCAP® principals to be understood by data sharing partners. Support data sovereignty by ensuring that data collection strategies align with the practices and culture of the Indigenous Nation, community or Peoples who are represented in the data.



GLOSSARY

Aboriginal:

Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples including Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples. The term “aboriginal” is used in a legal context.

Affordable Housing:

Housing that costs no more than 30% of household income before taxes.

Colonization:

The process by which a dominant group establishes control over a territory and its inhabitants, often resulting in the exploitation and marginalization of indigenous peoples.

Complex Trauma:

The exposure of children to multiple traumatic events, often involving interpersonal harm, and the extensive, enduring consequences of such exposure. These events, which commonly include severe and pervasive forms of abuse or neglect, typically occur during early developmental stages, profoundly disrupting various aspects of a child's growth and the establishment of self-identity.

Core-Housing Need:

A private household that falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds and spend 30% or more of its total pre-tax income to pay the median rent. Housing indicator thresholds include:

- Adequate housing is reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs.
- Affordable housing has shelter costs equal to less than 30% of total before tax household income.



- Non family households with at least one maintainer aged 15 to 29 attending school are considered not to be in 'core housing need' regardless of their housing circumstances. Attending school is considered a transitional phase, and low incomes earned by student households are viewed as being a temporary condition.

Culturally-Safe Environment:

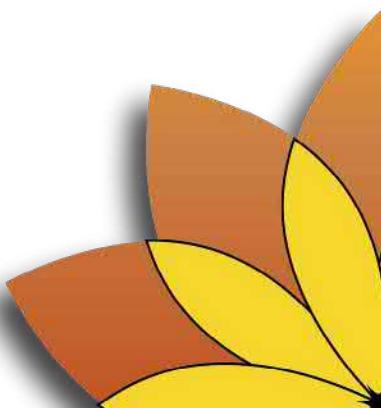
The desired outcome and can only be defined by the Indigenous person receiving care in a manner that is safe and does not profile or discriminate against the person but is experienced as respectful, safe and allows meaningful communication and service. It is a physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually safe environment, without challenge, ignorance or denial of an individual's identity. To be culturally safe requires positive anti-racism stances, tools and approaches and the continuous practice of cultural humility.

First Nation:

First Nations people include both status and non-status "Indians" under the Indian Act.

Homelessness:

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.



<i>Household:</i>	A group of people who live together and share common living arrangements, such as a family or group of roommates.
<i>Housing Vulnerability:</i>	The susceptibility of individuals or households to housing-related risks, including eviction, displacement, and homelessness, often due to factors such as poverty, discrimination, or inadequate housing conditions.
<i>Indian:</i>	The Government of Canada uses the term “Indian” because it has a legal meaning in the Indian Act. This term is defined in the Indian Act as a person who is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.
<i>Indigenous:</i>	Refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists.
<i>Indigenous Homelessness:</i>	Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships.



Inuit:

The literal translation of Inuit is “The People” and refers to all Indigenous peoples living in arctic regions.

Intergenerational Trauma:

The transmission of trauma from one generation to the next, often resulting from experiences of violence, oppression, or discrimination.

Métis:

Indigenous peoples who are descendants of combined First Nation and European ancestry, people who have continued ties to a historical Métis community and are accepted as such by that community. Métis identity is also adopted by some non-status Aboriginal peoples and others who have mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, yet are not connected to a contemporary Métis society. Others use Métis as a blanket term to identify anyone with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, regardless of how that person may self-identify.

Non-Market Housing:

Housing that is provided or subsidized by the government or non-profit organizations, often targeting low-income or vulnerable populations.

OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession):

A framework developed to assert Indigenous rights to data and information, emphasizing principles of ownership, control, access, and possession over data collected by external researchers or institutions.

Point-in-Time (PiT) Count:

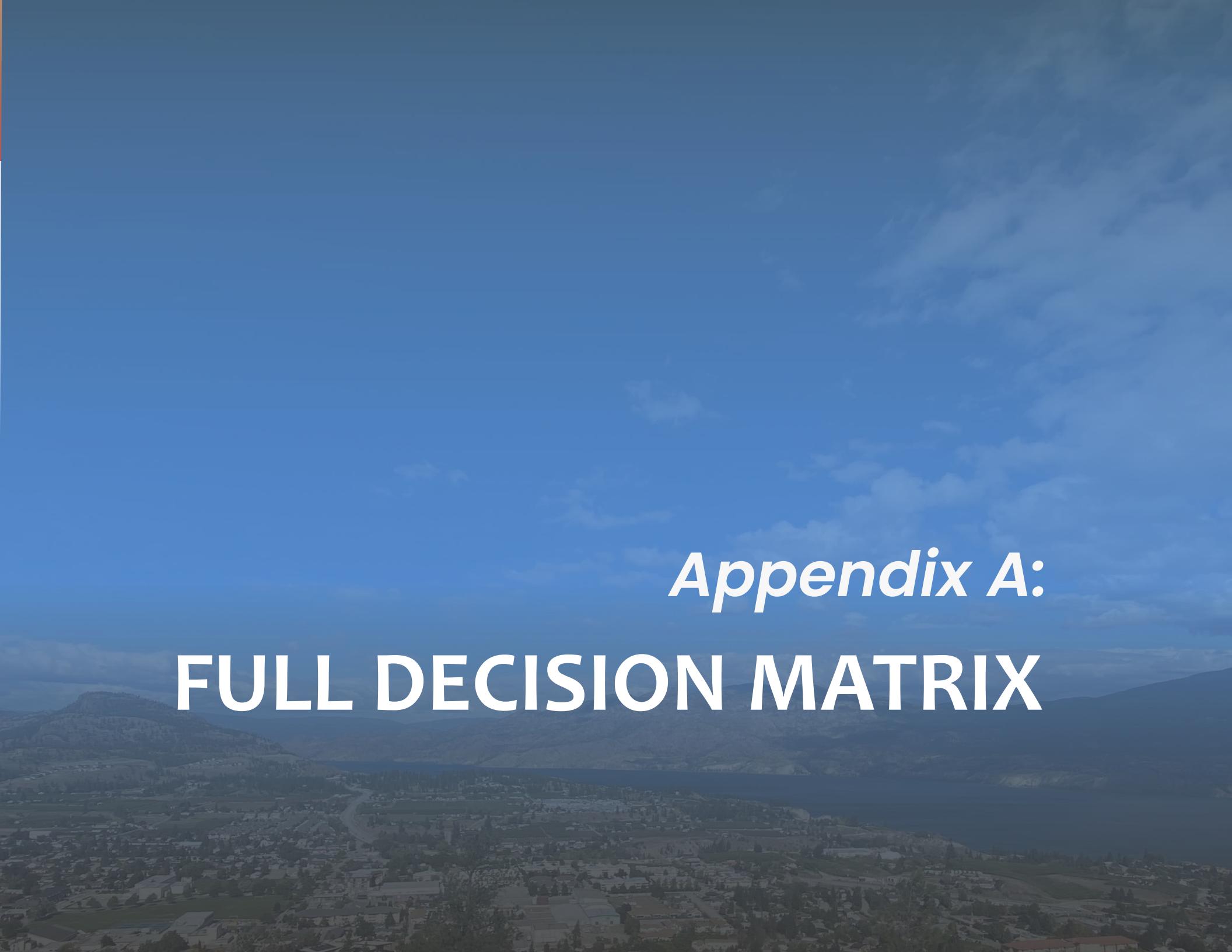
A method used to estimate the number of homeless individuals or households within a particular geographic area at a specific point in time, typically conducted through a survey or census.

Post-Majority Care:

Support services and resources provided to individuals who have aged out of the foster care system or other forms of youth care, often aimed at assisting with the transition to independent living.

Substantive Equality:

A concept emphasizing genuine equality in outcomes, addressing systemic discrimination and structural inequalities to ensure equitable opportunities for all individuals and groups. When substantive equality does not exist, inequality remains.



Appendix A:

FULL DECISION MATRIX

DECISION MATRIX – TIMELINES FOR ACTION

The considerations for action as listed in Section 6.0 of this report have been categorized with a decision-making matrix based on timelines categorized as “Now, Next, Later”. Categorization was developed through deliberations with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and a Priority Setting Workshop with key community representatives based on discussions around the achievability of each action with timelines in mind. The matrix includes timelines for each action, as well as seven (7) prioritized action items identified during the Priority Setting Workshop. This decision-making matrix should be used to guide the future of collective efforts of Indigenous focused entities in the Central Okanagan.

NOW

Initiatives that can be started
within the
next 1-2 years

NEXT

Approximate timeframe to begin
the initiative is within **3-5 years**

LATER

Initiatives that have a starting
timeframe of
5-10 years



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	Services & Care			
	Culturally Relevant Support Services			
1.1	Develop and enhance support services tailored specifically to the cultural needs and preferences of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This could include culturally appropriate housing options, counseling services, life skills, and employment programs.	<p>7. "We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians." [Education and Employment Gaps]</p> <p>18. "We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the Treaties." [On Going Health Effects of Residential Schools]</p> <p>19. "We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services." [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]</p> <p>21. "We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to</p>	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
		<p>address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools, and to ensure that the funding of healing centres in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories is a priority.” [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]</p> <p>22. “We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.” [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]</p> <p>31. “We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending.” [Alternatives to imprisonment]</p> <p>40. “We call on all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, to create adequately funded and accessible Aboriginal-specific victim programs and services with appropriate evaluation mechanisms.” [Victim Programming]</p>		
1.2	<p>Community Care for Women: Women prioritize their family and friends, even when they are struggling to find or maintain their own housing. More care and supports for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes would reduce the pressure on women. Including shifting social norms to</p>	<p>1.ii. “We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by: Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.” [Keeping Aboriginal Families together]</p>	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	include cultural perspectives on multigenerational living.	40. Create adequately fund and accessible Aboriginal-specific victim programs [Victim Programming]		
1.3	Mental Health Support: Provide continuous, accessible long-term mental health support and education to address trauma and promote emotional well-being among Indigenous individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness and social challenges.	21. Sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 40. [Victim Programming]	NOW/NEXT	
1.4	Impact of Decriminalization: Decriminalization efforts need to be accompanied by comprehensive services to address substance abuse effectively.	30. "We call upon federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade, and to issue detailed annual reports that monitor and evaluate progress in doing so." [Eliminate Overrepresentation] 31. Provide sufficient and stable funding to provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment of aboriginal offenders. [Alternatives to imprisonment] 32. "We call upon the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to allow trial judges, upon giving reasons, to depart from mandatory minimum sentences and restrictions on the use of conditional sentences." [Mandatory Minimum Sentences] 33. "We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to recognize as a high priority the need to address and prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and to develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, FASD preventive programs that can be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner." [FASD Preventative Programs] 35. "We call upon the federal government to eliminate barriers to the creation of additional Aboriginal healing lodges within the federal correctional system." [Healing in Corrections]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
		<p>36. "We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work with Aboriginal communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experience of having been sexually abused." [Cultural Services for Inmates]</p> <p>38. "We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in custody over the next decade." [Youth Overrepresentation in Custody]</p>		
1.5	Resource Awareness: Improve awareness of available resources and support services through effective communication and outreach efforts.	<p>19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]</p>	NOW	
1.6	Establish Healing Centers that cater to high demand, providing a holistic approach to healing and empowerment. These centers should offer traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language and parenting classes, and empowerment programs.	<p>13. "We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights." [Language Rights]</p> <p>14.i "Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them." [Language Preservation]</p> <p>14.iii "The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation." [Funding Language]</p> <p>21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]</p> <p>22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]</p>	NOW/NEXT	Priority Action
1.7	Advocate for funding for housing on reserves to facilitate the return home of individuals seeking support, following	<p>19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]</p>	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	LECoH's principles of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion.			
1.8	Establish integrated healing centers that cater to various needs, such as traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language revitalization, parenting classes, and empowerment programs. These centers should adhere to LECoH's principles of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion, while also addressing the lack of community awareness about available programming.	<p>13. Acknowledging Aboriginal rights including language. [Language Rights]</p> <p>14.i Aboriginal languages are fundamental and there is an urgency to preserve them. [Language Preservation]</p> <p>14.iii A responsibility to fund Aboriginal Language revitalisation. [Funding Language]</p> <p>21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]</p> <p>22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]</p> <p>24. "We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism." [Medical Staff Education]</p>	NOW	
1.9	Build relationships with shelters and transitional housing providers to co-create solutions how to increase cultural safety within shelters and services, leveraging community relationships and education. This involves creating action plans, standardizing cultural safety practices, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives in shelter management.	<p>22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]</p> <p>37. "We call upon the federal government to provide more supports for Aboriginal programming in halfway houses and parole services." [Support in Transition]</p> <p>40. [Victim Programming]</p> <p>57. "We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will</p>	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
		<p>require skillsbased training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.” [Public Servant Education]</p> <p>92.iii. “We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following: iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.” [Corporate Training]</p>		
1.10	Expand abstinence housing options, improve transportation access, and integrate activities like sports, music, and arts into treatment programs.	<p>19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]</p> <p>21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]</p> <p>22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]</p> <p>89. “We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.” [Physical Activity and Health]</p> <p>90.i. “We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:</p>	LATER	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
		In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal peoples." [Funding Sports]		
1.11	Prioritize smaller supportive housing initiatives specifically tailored to Indigenous communities and promote the design and implementation of Indigenous-led housing and shelter projects	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]	LATER	
Trauma Informed Care				
1.12	Implement trauma-informed approaches in service delivery to address underlying trauma and mental health challenges among Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Train service providers to recognize and respond to trauma with sensitivity and compassion.	18. Acknowledging the current state of Aboriginal health is a direct result of previous government policies and implementing health-care rights of Aboriginal people. [Health Care Rights] 22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices] 23.iii. "We call upon all levels of government to: iii. Provide cultural competency training for all health-care professionals [Health-care Training] 24. Medical schools to provide education on Aboriginal health issues including skill-based training, intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. [Medical Staff Education] 27. "We call upon the Federation of Law Societies of Canada to ensure that lawyers receive appropriate cultural competency training, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal– Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism." [Lawyer Training]	NOW	Priority Action



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
		<p>57. Provide education to public servants on the histories of Aboriginal peoples. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. [Public Servant Education]</p> <p>92.iii. Provide education to staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. [Corporate Training]</p>		
1.13	Empathy Training: Provide training for staff and community members to enhance their understanding and empathy towards individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.	<p>19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]</p> <p>22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]</p> <p>57. [Public Servant Education]</p> <p>92.iii. [Corporate Training]</p>	NOW	
1.14	Policy Review: Review and revise shelter rules and policies to ensure they are clear, consistent, and culturally appropriate, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts.	<p>19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]</p> <p>92.iii. [Corporate Training]</p>	LATER	
1.15	Advocate for and facilitate Indigenous cultural safety assessments to support building capacity of Indigenous service delivery and cultural safety within the housing, homelessness and adjacent sectors.	<p>18. [Health Care Rights]</p> <p>22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]</p> <p>23.iii. Provide cultural competency training to all health-care professionals. [Health-care Training]</p> <p>27. Ensure Lawyers receive cultural competency training. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism [Lawyer Training]</p> <p>57. [Public Servant Education]</p> <p>92.iii. [Corporate Training]</p>	NOW	
1.16	Safety and Privacy: Ensure safety, privacy, and respect for individuals in temporary and	<p>18. [Health Care Rights]</p> <p>92.iii. [Corporate Training]</p>	NOW/NEXT	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	supportive housing environments, particularly focusing on the unique needs of Indigenous individuals.			
1.17	Improve access to culturally safe shelters and services by standardizing practices and involving individuals from Indigenous communities in their design and operation. Increase community awareness of available programming and services.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 92.i. "Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects" [Consultation on Economic Development]	NOW	
1.18	Develop culturally safe consumption sites and increase abstinence housing shelters.	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 30. Eliminate the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade. [Eliminate Overrepresentation] 31. [Alternatives to imprisonment] 92.iii. [Corporate Training]	LATER	
1.19	Invest in smaller supportive housing specifically for Indigenous individuals and prioritize the design of Indigenous-led housing and shelter initiatives.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]	NEXT	
Long Term Support Networks				
1.20	Develop long-term support networks and mentorship programs to facilitate successful transitions out of homelessness for Indigenous individuals. Foster peer support, life skills and mentorship within the Indigenous community.	7. Develop a joint strategy with Aboriginal people to eliminate educational and employment gaps between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people. [Education and Employment Gaps] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	Priority Action
1.21	Community Building: Foster community connections and support networks to	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	combat isolation and provide a sense of belonging for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness.			
1.22	Advocate for funding for housing on reserves to facilitate the return home of individuals seeking support.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NEXT	
Collaboration & Capacity Building				
	Collaboration with Indigenous Organizations			
2.1	Foster partnerships and collaboration with local Indigenous organizations and leaders to co-design and implement initiatives addressing homelessness. Engage Indigenous communities in decision-making processes to ensure culturally respectful and effective interventions.	22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices] 23.iii. [Health-care Training] 92.i. Commit to consultation and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before economic developments. [Consultation on Economic Development] 92.ii. "Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects." [Access to Jobs, Training, and Education; Benefit from Economic Developments]	NOW	Priority Action
2.2	Collaboration and Engagement: Prioritize collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities, interest holders, and decision-makers to ensure their needs and perspectives are prioritized in policy and program development.	57. [Public Servant Education] 92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development]	NOW	
2.3	Advocate for First Nations organizations to receive funding to enable them to join conversations that support planning for and	20. "In order to address the jurisdictional disputes concerning Aboriginal people who do not reside on reserves, we call upon the federal government to recognize, respect, and address the	NEXT	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	serving Urban Indigenous to support building substantive equality across jurisdictional boundaries imposed by colonial practices.	<p>distinct health needs of the Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.” [Off Reserve Healthcare]</p> <p>21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]</p> <p>92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development]</p> <p>92.ii. Ensure equitable access to jobs training, and education and that Aboriginal Communities get long term benefit from economic developments. [Access to Jobs, Training, and Education; Benefit from Economic Developments]</p>		
2.4	Collaborate with organizations like Westbank First Nation, Syilx Language House and The Enowkin Centre to support cultural connection and provide language programs aimed at reinforcing identity, particularly within schools and educational institutions.	<p>12. “We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.” [Childhood Education Programs for Families]</p> <p>16. “We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.” [Language Degrees]</p> <p>62.iii. “We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to: Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.” [Funding Aboriginal Schools]</p> <p>63.ii. “We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including: Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.” [Education Best Practice Knowledge Sharing]</p> <p>92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development]</p>		NOW/NEXT
Capacity Building & Education				



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
2.5	Provide opportunities in the housing and social serving sector for capacity building and education within the Indigenous community, including skills training, financial literacy programs, and access to educational resources. Empower individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and stability.	7. [Education and Employment Gaps] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NEXT	
2.6	Training and Awareness: Require the housing and social serving sector to participate in cultural safety training programs for service providers to enhance understanding and support for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This should include trauma-informed care and education about Indigenous cultures and histories.	57. [Public Servant Education] 92.iii. [Corporate Training]	NOW	
2.7	Education and Awareness: Engage the housing and social serving sectors into conversations that further develop pathways to increasing education about Indigenous cultures, histories, and current issues to combat stereotypes and biases among service providers, community members, and policymakers. This could look like an Indigenous cultural safety assessments.	57. [Public Servant Education] 92.iii. [Corporate Training]	NOW	
2.8	Staff Training: Provide ongoing training for staff in shelters, supportive housing, and	57. [Public Servant Education] 92.iii. [Corporate Training]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	outreach services to enhance empathy, communication, and trauma-informed care.			
2.9	Empowerment: Empower Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness by involving them in decision-making processes and providing avenues for feedback and complaints.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
2.10	Employment Assistance for Women: Remove the obstacles for Indigenous women to get jobs, such as providing safe and affordable childcare, pathways out of intimate partner violence, and addressing stigma, to improve Indigenous women's financial, housing stability and wellbeing.	7. [Education and Employment Gaps] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 40. [Victim Programming]	NEXT	
2.11	Advocate and allocate more resources to schools for learning Indigenous languages, while also incorporating cultural education into service provider training programs, such as the Indigenous Cultural Safety Assessment, to promote greater understanding and support for Indigenous communities.	13. [Language Rights] 14.i [Language Preservation] 14.iii [Funding Language] 16. Post-secondary schools to create language degrees and diplomas [Language Degrees] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 57. [Public Servant Education] 62.iii. Provide funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize indigenous knowledge and teaching. [Funding Aboriginal Schools] 92.ii. [Access to Jobs, Training, and Education; Benefit from Economic Developments] 92.iii. [Corporate Training]	NEXT	
2.12	Advocate and provide education programs tailored to individuals who have experienced	7. [Education and Employment Gaps] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	LATER	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	homelessness, including support for collaboration with colleges/universities, funding initiatives for young men and women, and training programs for advancement while supporting peers with lived and living experience			
Community Engagement & Outreach				
2.13	Strengthen community engagement and outreach efforts to build trust and rapport with Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Offer accessible and welcoming spaces for community gatherings and social connections.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
2.14	Resource Accessibility: Improve access to basic needs such as food, hygiene facilities, and storage for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness to enhance their quality of life and dignity.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
2.15	Upstream Interventions: There's a need to shift towards upstream interventions that assess the risks of homelessness and provide appropriate supports to prevent homelessness before it occurs. Service providers need to advocate for policy changes and implement early intervention programs within their organizations to address the root causes of homelessness.	1.ii. Provide adequate resources to keep Aboriginal families together and keep children in culturally appropriate environments. [Keeping Aboriginal Families together] 5. "We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families." [Parenting Programs] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 66. "We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to	NEXT	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
		share information and best practices." [Funding Youth Organizations Reconciliation Programs]		
	Reconciliation & Cultural Preservation			
	Action Plan & Reconciliation			
3.1	Emphasize more than land acknowledgment and celebrate genuine reconciliation efforts within homelessness services. Acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples is commendable, yet we recommend organizations create an action plan highlighting the concrete steps they plan to take to support Indigenous communities into the future.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 57. [Public Servant Education] 92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development] 92.ii. [Access to Jobs, Training, and Education; Benefit from Economic Developments]	NOW	
3.2	Develop an Urban Indigenous Action plan to address the needs within the Central Okanagan.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
	Cultural Preservation & Pride			
3.3	Promote cultural preservation and Indigenous pride among individuals experiencing homelessness through cultural activities, traditional ceremonies, and access to Indigenous language revitalization programs.	22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]	NOW	
3.4	Recognition and Respect: Acknowledge and honor Indigenous knowledge and culture in all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and governance. This can be	12. Develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for families. [Childhood Education Programs for Families] 22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	actioned through ongoing cultural awareness initiatives, representation of First Nations and Indigenous artwork in public spaces and historical markers that share truth telling and the local context to recreate the narrative of Indigenous people belonging in community.	<p>24. [Medical Staff Education]</p> <p>27. [Lawyer Training]</p> <p>57. [Public Servant Education]</p> <p>63.iv. "We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including: Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above. [Teacher Training]</p> <p>66. Establish funding for youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and network to share information and best practices. [Funding Youth Organizations Reconciliation Programs]</p> <p>83. "We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process." [Reconciliation Art]</p>		
3.5	Advocate for public education programs aimed at humanizing the homeless population and fostering home ownership, alongside efforts to educate higher levels of government on the realities faced by marginalized communities. Implement paid life skills programs post-housing attainment to further empower individuals transitioning out of homelessness.	<p>7. [Education and Employment Gaps]</p> <p>23.iii. [Health-care Training]</p> <p>57. [Public Servant Education]</p> <p>62.i. "Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students" [Curriculum K-12]</p>	NOW	
Enhanced Relationships				
3.6	Reinstate traditional family roles within homelessness programs and promote intergenerational relationships, including	<p>19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]</p> <p>21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]</p>	NEXT	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	fostering connections with grandparents and youth through culture and language programs. This could look like an Indigenous Housing First program.			
3.7	Encourage collaboration with Indigenous service groups and Nations/bands to address homelessness issues collectively, while also providing education and support for parenting to young men and women.	5. Develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families. [Parenting Programs] 12. [Childhood Education Programs for Families]	NOW	
3.8	Implement a community-wide approach focused on building trust and faith in institutions. This involves regular meetings with all Indigenous service groups to ensure collective commitment to a common goal.	18. [Health Care Rights] 57. [Public Servant Education] 92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development]	NEXT	
3.9	Emphasize the importance of learning from individual stories to efficiently support people, particularly focusing on mental health and education. Additionally, convey the significance of First Nations organizations and urban partners in addressing homelessness.	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 20. Address jurisdictional disputes of Aboriginal people who do not reside on reserves by recognizing, respecting, and addressing the district health needs of Metis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples. [Off Reserve Healthcare] 57. [Public Servant Education] 92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development]	NOW	
	Advocacy & Data Rights			
	Advocacy for Housing Rights			
4.1	Advocate for Indigenous housing rights and access to affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate housing options. Collaborate with policymakers and interest holders to	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 92.iii. [Corporate Training]	NOW	Priority Action



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	address systemic barriers and inequities in housing.			
4.2	Advocacy and Empowerment: Encourage and support Indigenous individuals' efforts to advocate for themselves, access resources, and heal from past traumas. This could involve supporting initiatives that promote Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]	NOW	
4.3	Supportive Housing: Increase access to supportive housing options that are culturally appropriate and respectful of Indigenous traditions and values.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
4.4	Policy Changes: Advocate for policy changes that address systemic discrimination and improve access to resources and support for Indigenous communities. This could include changes to housing regulations and increased support for individuals with criminal records.	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 30. [Eliminate Overrepresentation] 31. [Alternatives to imprisonment] 37. More support for Aboriginal program in halfway houses and parole services. [Support in Transition] 57. [Public Servant Education]	NEXT	
4.5	Advocacy for Funding and Resources: Service providers need more flexible and increased funding to provide holistic care and preventive support. This could be addressed by lobbying government officials, raising awareness about funding constraints, and collaborating with interest holders to secure sustainable funding	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 31. [Alternatives to imprisonment] 61.i. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement, in collaboration with Survivors and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, to establish permanent funding to Aboriginal	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	solutions. Governments and funding bodies also need to recognize that more flexible funding programs can help prevent harm and save money in the long run.	people for: Community-controlled healing and reconciliation projects. [Funding from Church Parties] 62.iii. [Funding Aboriginal Schools] 66. [Funding Youth Organizations Reconciliation Programs]		
4.6	Prioritize culturally integrated services and a long-term support network, incorporating Elders and culturally appropriate elements like transportation to the land and decorating to reduce institutionalization.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 22. [Value of Aboriginal Healing Practices] 30. [Eliminate Overrepresentation] 31. [Alternatives to imprisonment] 38. Commit to eliminating overrepresentation of youth in custody over the next decade. [Youth Overrepresentation in Custody]	NOW	
4.7	Advocate for distinction-based data collection and support Indigenous-led data collection and analysis. Establish culturally safe data collection tools and ensure that data is contextualized and shared transparently to inform decisions.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
4.8	Regional Advocacy: Work with regional local governments to create a Regional Indigenous Advocacy Task Force to collaborate on Indigenous focused housing policy direction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective Advocacy: Collectively advocate and work alongside to local and senior levels of government to raise the profile of the housing crisis Indigenous peoples are facing in the 	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres] 92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development] 92.ii. [Access to Jobs, Training, and Education; Benefit from Economic Developments]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	<p>Central Okanagan in order to gain additional housing and support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous Seniors: Indigenous seniors in the Central Okanagan have a high risk of experiencing core housing need. Social service providers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous must develop assistance programs and initiatives that partner, target and support the Central Okanagan's Indigenous senior population. Coordinated advocacy to senior levels of government is also needed. Renter Protections: Due to the high proportion of Indigenous renters in the Central Okanagan, advocate to local and senior levels of government for stronger renter protection laws, and the ability to address discrimination and human rights issues. To address the stigma that Indigenous households face in the rental market, an awareness and education campaign may be developed. 			
4.9	<p>Housing Development: As Indigenous households have higher than average household size, the construction of additional housing for the region's Indigenous population is needed. Encourage</p>	<p>19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 57. [Public Servant Education] 92.i. [Consultation on Economic Development] 92.iii. [Corporate Training]</p>	NEXT	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	<p>the development of additional culturally appropriate housing through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of educational forums and capacity building workshops to move the Indigenous housing sector forward. • Promotion of partnerships between the development community, local First Nations communities, Councils, and Indigenous organizations. • Collaborate with financial institutions, local and senior government to secure a range of funding sources for affordable housing. 			
Data Monitoring & Evaluation				
4.10	Establish mechanisms for ongoing data monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of interventions and ensure continuous improvement. Use data-driven insights to refine and adapt support strategies over time.	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	Priority Action
4.11	Site Identification: Develop regional mapping tools for First Nations governments and Indigenous organizations to better understand the existing land base and identify potential sites for affordable housing. Establish a set of criteria that can be used to assess and evaluate potential sites for affordable housing.	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 92.ii. [Access to Jobs, Training, and Education; Benefit from Economic Developments]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
4.12	PiT Counts: Point in Time (PiT) Count Reports are a snapshot of visible homelessness and are used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs targeting homelessness and the proportion of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. The last PiT count was conducted in 2020. Do Indigenous housing and service providers see the PiT count as a valuable tool? Are there other ways of gathering this information with a stronger cultural lens?	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
Sustainable Funding & Data Utilization				
4.13	Establish a comprehensive system for the collection and dissemination of available resources, programs, and funding to ensure consistent support for successful existing programs.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 21. [Funding for Aboriginal Healing Centres]	NOW	Priority Action
4.14	Foster long-term commitment to employment and advocating for unity across Indigenous Peoples to secure housing and services.	7. [Education and Employment Gaps] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NEXT	
4.15	Develop co-operating service delivery models and extend the creation of a safety net with attached resources, utilizing a mixed model approach facilitated by development corporations.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NEXT	
4.16	Formulate a task force focused on advocacy and the mandate for improving Indigenous	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps] 20. [Off Reserve Healthcare]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
	housing, utilizing a regional model with concrete timelines to address complex needs and jurisdictional challenges.			
4.17	Build capacity in data management and recording methods that prioritize storytelling alongside numerical data. Review and support the implementation of coordinated access systems, while advocating for an Okanagan-based census and putting collected data into actionable use to avoid over-researching.	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NEXT	
4.18	Advocate for the relinquishing of government control over data to empower Indigenous communities in decision-making processes.	18. [Health Care Rights] 19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NEXT	
4.19	Coordinated Access Data Sharing: Ensure that Indigenous partners are embedded in data sharing conversations, and advocate for OCAP® principals to be understood by data sharing partners. Support data sovereignty by ensuring that data collection strategies align with the practices and culture of the Indigenous Nation, community or Peoples who are represented in the data.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	
4.20	Access to Relevant Data: Ensure that there is coordinated Indigenous representation at the local and provincial levels to assert Indigenous data sovereignty for all data that is collected from Indigenous sources.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NOW	



	Considerations for Action	TRC Calls to Action	Timeline (Now, Next, Later)	Priority Action
4.21	Impact Assessments: Develop culturally appropriate evaluation tools that measure impact Indigenous housing and homelessness initiatives.	19. [Close Aboriginal Health Gaps]	NEXT	





Appendix B:

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT



WHAT WE HEARD

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THE JOURNEY TOWARDS HOME

May 23, 2024

urban
matters

PREPARED FOR:

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society
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INTRODUCTION

The Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellness in the Journey Towards Home Project, conducted by the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society and with Urban Matters CCC, aims to gather insights from Indigenous community members and service providers regarding homelessness in the Central Okanagan, with a focus on Kelowna. The project addresses the lack of Indigenous-led shelters and limited services for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness, emphasizing the need for culturally appropriate and safe support.

We are extremely grateful for the support of our partner organizations in the development of the PAC (Project Advisory Committee), our allied organizations that continue to support our initiatives, the people with lived and living experiences that shared their stories and experiences with us as well as our Elders and Knowledge Keepers that guided and supported us in the journey. Without the collective efforts of our Indigenous community, and allies, this project would not be possible. Please see Appendix A for a comprehensive list of organizations that were invited to participate in the PAC and those that were involved within the project.



PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

In the Central Okanagan, despite the substantial Indigenous population and their disproportionate representation within the homelessness sector, there is a notable absence of Indigenous-led shelters and limited services tailored to Indigenous community members experiencing homelessness. The lack of comprehensive information, resources, and understanding of the needs of this community underscores the urgent need for culturally appropriate and safe support services. Insufficient resources and funding frequently hinder the engagement of communities in crucial discussions concerning Indigenous well-being and the advancement of health initiatives with diverse partners, people with lived and living experiences of homelessness, and across various sectors through reconciliation efforts. Regrettably, Indigenous communities face concurrent crises with constrained time and resources to implement preventative approaches effectively.

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (KFS) has been at the forefront of addressing Indigenous housing needs since 1974, pioneering initiatives such as the Aboriginal Housing Outreach Program in partnership with BC Housing and Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA). Over time, KFS has expanded its scope, assembling a multidisciplinary team of housing support and outreach workers who have spearheaded various affordable housing projects, resulting in the creation of numerous units. Recently, KFS collaborated with a local organization representing lived experiences to establish an Indigenous supportive housing program catering to the most vulnerable community members. Additionally, KFS proudly serves as the Indigenous Community Entity for the Federal Reaching Home initiative, a program aimed at mitigating homelessness nationwide. This designation allows KFS to address local homelessness challenges, and the organization actively collaborates with local First Nations, Métis communities, and sector partners to develop and support innovative initiatives related to Indigenous homelessness. On the horizon, is the implementation of an Indigenous coordinated access and assessment tool that would support the Central Okanagan in becoming a more culturally safe and accessible collective of service provision.

Employing both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, this study endeavors to delve into the underlying causes and effects of Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan. Through this research, we seek to illuminate the firsthand experiences of Indigenous individuals affected by homelessness while pinpointing avenues for systemic transformation and community-led interventions. Central to our investigation are key research inquiries concerning demographics, scale, root causes, potential solutions, and existing initiatives pertaining to Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan, with a particular emphasis on the City of Kelowna.

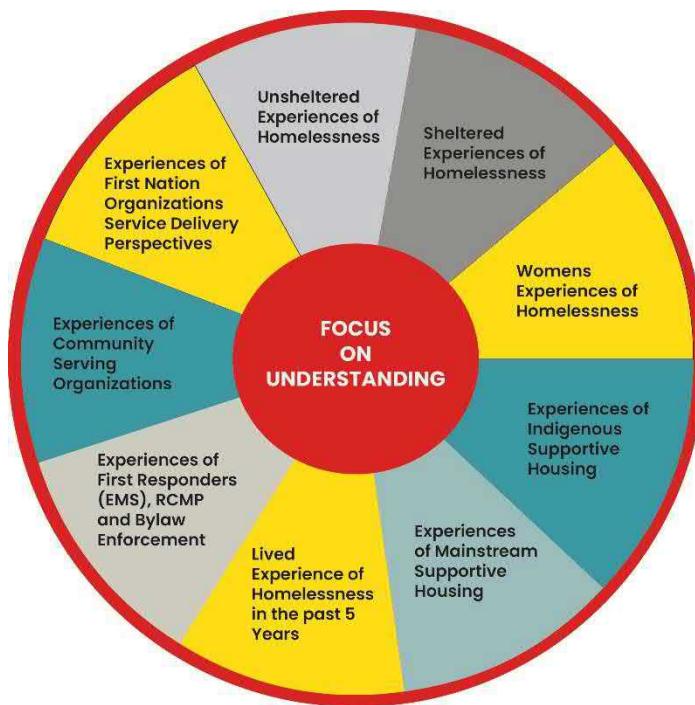
RESEARCH APPROACH

This section provides information about the research approach, which includes information about both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, guiding principles for qualitative research, key audiences engaged and methodology that was employed.

Overview of Research Methodology

The research took a variety of approaches, inclusive of 1-1 conversations with individuals who have experiences of vulnerability, and also those that wield positions of power within the social serving system. A series of focus groups took place with participants from over 15 organizations and from the following sectors and organizations.

100 Individuals participated in focus groups that focused on understanding the experiences of Indigenous homelessness from the following perspectives:



20 + Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, with Indigenous community members experiencing or having experienced homelessness, from many diverse perspectives as well as with service providers. These interviews focused on gathering narratives, experiences, and insights regarding housing challenges, service needs, and cultural considerations.

12 focus group discussions were facilitated with Indigenous individuals from varying perspectives, and community professionals to delve deeper into specific themes related to homelessness experiences, cultural needs, and pathways to housing stability. An empathy mapping process was used for the focus groups, further discussion is noted within the engagement approach section.

The research project also has a substantive Quantitative Report that examines local census data, housing tenure, economic and household data. The Qualitative Report explores data received from BC Housing, local Point in Time Counts and takes into consideration the complexities of homelessness in Kelowna. Enumeration of Indigenous people within the unsheltered population has not been a primary focus of national or local efforts to address homelessness and remains a complex challenge. Due to limited census data, the local capacity of support organizations to highlight Indigenous needs has often been a lower priority and under resourced.

Guiding Principles for Respectful Engagement

The research approach employed was rooted in several guiding principles aimed at ensuring ethical, respectful, and comprehensive engagement. These principles include trauma-informed approaches to avoid re-traumatizing participants and centering Indigenous leadership through the application of First Nations Principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession). Validation sessions, involving feedback loops with participants, ensure accurate representation of experiences. Customized approaches tailored to the diverse needs of individuals, relational approaches grounded in respect and transparency, promoted a safe space for engagement. Additionally, we aimed to amplify the perspectives of vulnerable individuals whose voices, are not often heard, acknowledged or respected. Compensation for participants' time and efforts is provided, and traditional protocols are honoured throughout the engagement process. An emphasis is placed on informed policy analysis and knowledge mobilization to drive concrete actions and policies. The engagement strategy encompasses various methods, including focus group discussions, interviews with individuals with lived and living experiences of homelessness, and consultations with frontline service providers and community interest holders. Collaboration with Indigenous partners and communities is central to the approach, guided by principles of reconciliation, cultural humility, and the principles of OCAP®, ensuring Indigenous voices are heard, respected, and meaningfully represented throughout the research process.

Audiences Engaged

The successful facilitation of this research project hinged on close collaboration with community partners, ensuring access to diverse populations and providing comprehensive support to participants throughout the process. Prior to conducting the Empathy Mapping Sessions, we recognized the significant variations in the experiences of homelessness across demographics. As such, we deliberately engaged with a range of focus groups to capture the nuanced perspectives of various groups, including Indigenous individuals with lived experience of homelessness, those with experiences of sheltered and unsheltered stays, individuals facing hidden homelessness, as well as Indigenous women and gender-diverse perspectives. Additionally, we prioritized the input of individuals with recent experiences of homelessness, particularly within Indigenous supportive housing settings. Acknowledging the importance of frontline staff and community partners in providing context and support, we also sought the perspectives of various interest holders, including bylaw and local government officials, emergency responders, Indigenous service providers, and frontline staff across relevant sectors such as harm reduction, shelter, outreach, health, and child and family services. By engaging with these diverse audiences, we aimed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding Indigenous homelessness and the broader context of support within the Central Okanagan community.

Demographics Missed

During the engagement phase, it became apparent that several populations were inadvertently missed. Despite our efforts to engage with a diverse range of individuals, certain groups, including 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, those experiencing hidden homelessness, individuals involved in the corrections system, renters, and those at risk of homelessness or facing overcrowding, were not adequately represented in our research. Factors such as stigma, fear of discrimination, and limited access to communication channels may have contributed to the underrepresentation of these populations. Recognizing the importance of capturing the full spectrum of experiences within the Indigenous community affected by homelessness, we are committed to revising our outreach strategies to ensure the inclusion of these marginalized groups in future research endeavors. By actively addressing these gaps, we aim to foster a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous homelessness and advocate for solutions that address the needs of all affected individuals.

Facilitator Identity & Approach

During each session, the facilitator team comprised at least two individuals. Emphasizing the significance of facilitator identity on the research methodology, an Indigenous facilitator led the conversation while another facilitator documented participants' contributions. At the outset of each engagement, the facilitators introduced themselves, shared the project's background and purpose, explained confidentiality, and invited voluntary participation in the process. During focus groups, an introduction circle was employed, providing a space for facilitators to model vulnerability, and inviting participants to share their names and Indigenous identity if they wished. This approach often facilitated a natural process of storytelling to unfold, with facilitators adeptly capturing the nuanced narratives.

Honorarium

In our invitation, we made clear to participants that we value their time and stories by offering an honorarium of \$25.00 per hour in cash, aligning with best practices for compensating individuals with lived experience and approved by the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society for participating in the process. Participants received funds for the full 3 hours, even if they were not required to stay for the entire duration. Participants were also encouraged to bring a friend, family member, or trusted service provider if they felt more comfortable having someone else present during the interview. Furthermore, as a gesture of appreciation for their time and energy, additional gifts such as tobacco ties or culturally appropriate items were offered alongside the compensation and a meal was provided at each session.

Engagement Approach

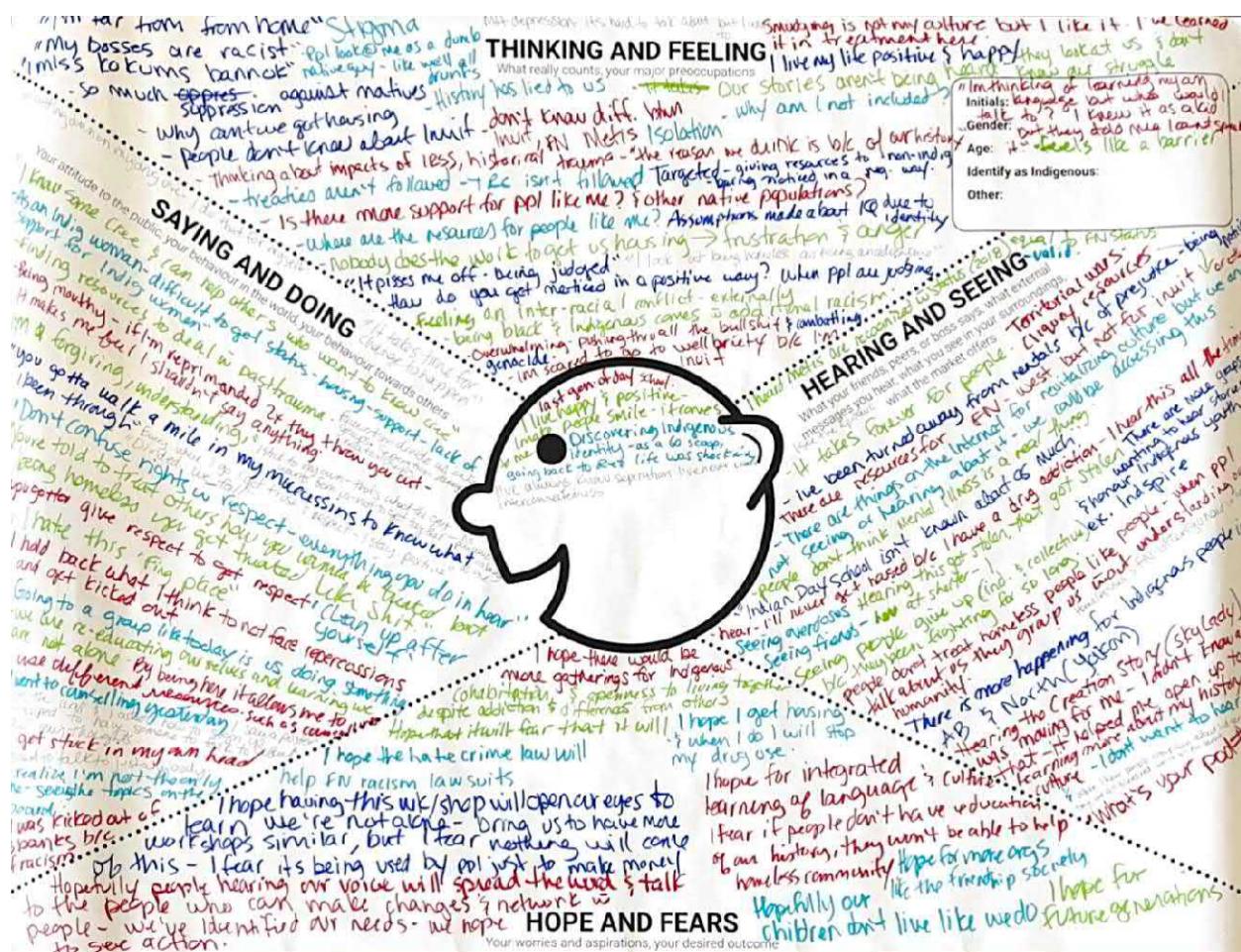
Interviews With People with Lived and Living Experience (PWLLE)

The interview process was designed with a focus on ensuring respect, sensitivity, and flexibility to participants' needs and experiences. Before each interview, the interviewers introduced themselves, provided information about the project, and clarified the voluntary nature of the questions, emphasizing that participants could skip any inquiries they were uncomfortable with. The interview questions covered various aspects, including participants' personal backgrounds, housing situations, experiences with discrimination, access to services, and recommendations for improvement. For organizations, questions focused on the programs and services offered to support Indigenous people, pathways into homelessness observed, factors contributing to homelessness, enabling factors for program participation, barriers faced by Indigenous individuals, gaps in services, and strategies for better support. The interviews prioritized confidentiality, with findings to be summarized thematically without attribution to specific individuals. Overall, the interview process aimed to gather comprehensive insights while respecting participants' autonomy, experiences, and privacy. A copy of the interview guide and questions can be found in Appendix C.

Empathy Mapping Focus Groups

The empathy mapping process involved focus group engagements where thoughts, needs, motivations, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and issues of different personas within the target population were mapped. This process included individual empathy maps and one collective map for each group, fostering personal reflection, joint understanding, and community building among participants. Each map consisted of sections capturing Thinking & Feeling, Hearing & Seeing, Saying & Doing, and Hopes & Fears. Facilitators guided conversations around these areas, employing techniques such as sharing circle and spontaneous sharing. The process allowed for the expression of perspectives not typically drawn out in standard interviews, facilitating deeper engagement and uncovering experiences of Indigenous homelessness.

Figure 1: Empathy Map, Experiences of Sheltered Homelessness



Participants found value in the exercise, expressing a desire for similar workshops, and feeling inherently listened to by the empathy mapping exercise and facilitator listening skills. The process involved exploring external elements such as what participants see and hear in their environment, as well as internal elements like their thoughts, feelings, hopes, and fears. This holistic approach aimed to uncover the nuances of participants' experiences and inform further exploration of Indigenous homelessness.

Journey Mapping

A Journey Mapping process was employed following each Empathy Mapping session to comprehensively document the systems-level strengths, challenges, and aspirations for systemic change. This method involved engaging participants in discussions about what aspects of the care system for Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan were particularly challenging, what elements were functioning effectively, and what improvements could be made. Responses provided insights into the efficacy of existing policies, services, and programs, shedding light on both successes and areas in need of enhancement. Moreover, participants shared firsthand accounts of the daily hurdles faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness, offering a holistic view of the systemic landscape.

Additionally, interviews with Indigenous people with lived and living experience (PWLE) were able to tell a story. These stories depicted the conditions people experience or become at risk of homelessness within each individual's story.

Process for Sensemaking & Analysis

The analysis for the research study on Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan involved several key steps:

1. Persona Creation from Individual Interviews:

- Researchers reviewed experiences captured from interviews with PWLE. From these experiences, a persona was crafted to encapsulate the individual's story, including their journey into homelessness, the unique challenges faced as an Indigenous person in the Central Okanagan, their strengths or successes, and their aspirations for the future. All identifying information was removed to maintain anonymity.

2. Analysis of Focus Group Empathy Maps:

- The experiences captured in focus group empathy maps were scanned according to each of the empathy map areas (thinking & feeling, hearing & seeing, saying & doing, hopes & fears).
- Researchers were able to identify key themes emerging from each section of the empathy maps and coded the information samples to the associated themes.

3. Thematic Analysis:

- Emergent themes within each of the empathy maps were analyzed to uncover the underlying messages and perspectives shared by participants.
- By examining the nuances within each theme, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the challenges, needs, and desires expressed by the participants.

4. Overall Empathy Map Analysis:

- The information from all sections of the empathy maps were synthesized to identify main challenges and key actions necessary to address the issues faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness in the Central Okanagan.

5. Final Analysis:

- The final analysis spanned both interview and focus group content to identify overarching and key insights across and between demographics, to better understand what the distinguishing gaps are, ideas and what else the information can tell us about various parts of the system in Kelowna, to specifically address Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan.

By following this comprehensive data analysis process, the research team was able to distill the rich qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups into meaningful insights and actionable recommendations to support Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness in the Central Okanagan.



Content Advisory

This report shares the intimate details of Indigenous experiences of homelessness and the systems of care that support them. Within, sensitive topics related to Indigenous homelessness will be shared, including systemic issues, historical trauma, racism, and social disparities. The content may evoke strong emotions and trigger discomfort or distress, especially for those with lived experiences or a deep connection to the issues discussed. Reader discretion is advised, and individuals are encouraged to seek support and ensure that they have support for content that may be triggering. The aim of this report is to raise awareness, foster understanding, and advocate for positive change in addressing Indigenous homelessness to ensure that we respect confidentiality and people's identity, all identifying information has been removed. If you need assistance or emotional support, please consider reaching out to appropriate resources or professionals.

Support Available 24 Hours a Day

Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention by phone or online chat. Call toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or start a confidential chat with a counsellor at hopeforwellness.ca.

Indian Residential School Crisis Line is a national service for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their residential school experience. Call toll-free 1-866-925-4419.

Kuu-Us Crisis Line Society provides crisis services for Indigenous people across BC. Adults/Elders line 250-723-4050; youth line 250-723-2040. Or call toll free 1-800-588-8717. Learn more at www.kuu-uscrisisline.com.

Métis Crisis Line is a service of Métis Nation British Columbia. Call 1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722).

Other Culturally-Safe Supports

Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS) is a partner with the FNHA in providing access to counselling, cultural and emotional support services to former students of residential and day schools, and their families, regardless of status. Call toll-free 1-800-721-0066 or visit www.irsss.ca.

Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society provides confidential outreach services such as counselling, cultural supports and personal wellness programs. Call toll-free 1-888-403-3123 or visit www.tsowtunlelum.org.

Unsheltered Population

Indigenous individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the Central Okanagan face the harsh reality of living outdoors, surviving extreme temperatures while trying to meet their basic needs and stay

alive. Their experiences are impacted by historical trauma, family losses, and a sense of disconnection from their cultural roots. They are sons, daughters, parents, partners, and community members navigating the complexities of addiction and the daily struggle for survival. They are people with goals and aspirations, who seek healing and balance in their lives. Their frustrations with societal biases and the disconnect between decision-makers and their lived experiences highlight the need for more understanding and compassionate support systems. Despite feeling isolated at times, unsheltered homeless individuals maintain a strong sense of community with one another, identifying as family amidst their challenging circumstances.

Thinking and Feeling

- Indigenous people experiencing homelessness acknowledge the presence of trauma in their lives and emphasize a need for personal healing before reconnecting with family members or returning to their communities. They also emphasize that healing is not a one-size fits-all process and that different people need different approaches. For example, there is frustration in the lack of abstinence recovery programs and clean-living shelters.
- Individuals express feelings of hopelessness regarding their housing situation. They have experienced long wait lists for housing and housing assessments, and some perceive it as unattainable, contributing to a sense of defeat.
- There is a recognition of the importance of connection with others. They express a desire for more communal spaces where they can interact with others, suggesting that social connection can contribute to overall well-being and sense of belonging.
- Some individuals express frustration at feeling penalized for caring for others. As an example, participants shared “While on the street we try to group together for safety and community, however bylaw always comes and separates us.” This discouragement of community contributes to disconnection from support systems and in turn exacerbates feelings of isolation, perpetuating a cycle of disconnection and loneliness.
- They express frustration with the inconsistency and poor communication of shelter rules. This lack of clarity can lead to misunderstandings and individuals being unfairly kicked out from shelters, leading to further street entrenchment.
- There is a perception of misalignment between the decisions made by those in authority and the actual experiences of individuals facing homelessness.
- There is a perception that shelters are designed for individuals with income (e.g. social assistance), which may exclude those who lack any financial resources.
- There is a desire for more understanding and compassion from service providers and society at large. They recognize that frontline workers often feel constrained by policies and procedures within the system, however advocate for a more human approach to service delivery.

Saying and Doing

- Indigenous individuals seek safety and community by grouping together while on the street, but face challenges such as being separated by bylaw enforcement.
- Obtaining and maintaining employment becomes exceedingly difficult when experiencing homelessness.
- Some individuals find solace and healing by connecting with nature and changing their environment to manage triggers and cope with their circumstances.
- There is a desire to express themselves, either creatively through writing, or through connection with others.
- People express their frustration with rules and the lack of clear communication in shelters.
- They advocate for more trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approaches from service providers.
- Individuals frequently express feelings of being shuffled along or constantly on the move while experiencing homelessness.

Hearing and Seeing

- Indigenous individuals often face stigmatization and discrimination, both in the media and within societal perceptions, which contributes to negative attitudes and biases against them.
- People feel that their voices are not fully heard, and that society focuses on the negative aspects of their experiences, overlooking the positive contributions they make and the resilience they demonstrate.
- They are hearing a growing discussion around mental health, which they note as positive, however they continue to face barriers to accessing adequate mental health support and services.
- They note misinformation and misconceptions lead to further challenges in finding stable housing.
- Indigenous people shared that they hear, see and experience violence such as assaults, theft, , and fires.

Hopes and Fears

- Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness hope for more trauma-informed and culturally sensitive training for service providers, recognizing the importance of understanding their unique cultural backgrounds and experiences.

- Hopes include achieving a good quality of life through access to harm reduction programs, rehabilitation services, and spaces where they can come together and talk, fostering a sense of community and well-being.
- The hope is to obtain stable, independent housing and to achieve a sense of autonomy and stability in their lives.
- They hope for their voices to be heard and valued in discussions about homelessness, with more inclusive approaches that consider their perspectives and experiences.
- There is a desire for less control over homeless individuals and more compassion from service providers. They hope for an environment of mutual respect and understanding.
- The fear is that the challenges they face, such as addiction and mental health issues, will prevent them from achieving their goals.
- They fear not being able to obtain housing, and desire independence in securing stable housing and resources.
- There is a fear of not having their voices heard and being excluded from decisions that affect them.
- There is a hope for more effective strategies that meet them where they are at.

Inner experience (person in middle)

- Individuals are in survival mode, focusing on meeting their basic needs and navigating the challenges of homelessness.
- They are resilient and brave, seeking ways to improve their situation despite the obstacles they face.
- They are multifaceted individuals, with various roles and identities, including being someone's child, parent, sibling, partner, and peer.
- They perceive themselves as self-aware and in the process of personal growth and healing.
- They recognize their uniqueness as individuals with their own experiences, skills, and interests.
- There is also a connection to spirituality and nature, with some expressing enjoyment of the outdoors and seeking balance in mind, body, heart, and spirit.

STEVEN'S STORY

Steven, a First Nations man from a remote community has had a rough life marked by trauma and substance leading to six years of homelessness, primarily at OS4. Despite his efforts to obtain housing, on multiple occasions the Vulnerability Assessment Tool process was not properly completed, hindering his access to support services. He believes this is possibly due to stigma regarding his reputation as gang affiliated.

High rental prices and stringent background checks further impede his ability to secure stable housing, exacerbating mental health challenges. Steven recognizes the role his behaviours have played in contributing to barriers; however, he feels that the system does not give him many opportunities to succeed.

Steven describes his days as marked with unhappiness, and he describes living conditions at the outdoor sheltering site as inhumane with surveillance and privacy violations. In addition, his previous home, a dome tent, was burnt down due to a propane tank and heater accident. All his belongings, many with sentimental importance, were gone.

Steven receives social assistance from his First Nation; however, it has not been easy for him to find the services that he needs in Kelowna. While grateful for support from organizations like Metro, Kelowna's Gospel Mission, and Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Steven notes negative experiences in shelters due to rude staff and suggests improvements in management. A positive experience at a halfway house where he feels as though he was "treated like a real person" with a reasonable curfew and the presence of "real food", fueled his determination for sobriety, highlighting the importance of supportive environments.

Journey Map Insights:

Stable housing free from high rental prices and excessive background checks, access to mental health services, and a supportive and respectful environment where he feels treated like a valued individual are Steven's main needs.

Main Challenges:

- **Rules and Perceptions:** Shelter rules are perceived as biased and unclear, leading to frequent misunderstandings and conflicts, which discourages individuals from seeking shelter support.
- **Access to Basic Needs:** There are consistent challenges in accessing food, hygiene facilities, and storage, impacting individuals' sense of dignity and well-being.

- **Trauma and Mental Health:** Mental health challenges, often stemming from past traumas and substance use, are pervasive and require specialized support.
- **Housing Insecurity:** The insecurity of supportive housing and shelters, coupled with fears of losing belongings, adds to the stress and instability of individuals' lives.

Key Actions:

- **Training and Awareness:** Implement more trauma-informed, culturally sensitive training for service providers to improve understanding and support for individuals' experiences.
- **Policy and Procedure Review:** Review and revise shelter rules and policies to be clearer and more consistent, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts.
- **Community Building:** Increase community connections and support networks to combat isolation and provide a sense of belonging.
- **Resource Accessibility:** Improve access to basic needs such as food, hygiene facilities, and storage to enhance individuals' quality of life and dignity.
- **Advocacy and Empowerment:** Encourage and support individuals' efforts to advocate for themselves, access resources, and heal from past traumas.



Sheltered Population (Individuals who Reside within the Shelter System)

They are Indigenous community members, many displaced from their home communities. They often have diverse backgrounds and may feel a sense of disconnect from their Indigenous identity. Many have survived or are intergenerational survivors of historically traumatic events like the Indian Residential School System and the Sixties Scoop. Despite managing complex challenges, they strive for success, and to someday have stable housing. Some are parents, and hope for a brighter future for their children. They find joy in making others smile but often feel a deep sense of isolation and struggle with mental health challenges. Frustrations arise from biased treatment and a lack of consistent access to services and supports. Many individuals in the shelter system desire counselling or workshops for processing trauma, and they long for connection, understanding, and respect. Many individuals fear speaking out against shelter staff due to past experiences of retribution, so they suppress their feelings – leading to heightened isolation and decreased mental health. Indigenous people residing in shelters are intelligent people who deeply internalize shame and guilt. With some support, they can recognize the systemic challenges rooted in colonization that have led them here, and which continue to separate and isolate them. They are strong and resilient in acknowledging their difficult pasts and current need for support. They seek acknowledgment of their cultural identity, desiring more opportunities to learn about their heritage and access cultural supports, and they want improved education among shelter staff.

Thinking and Feeling

- Indigenous residents in staying in shelters feel as though they must suppress their thoughts and feelings, due to fear of receiving a loss of service and/or being discriminated against due to a poor mental health state.
- While there is a strong sense of cultural identity and longing for connection to Indigenous culture, there is also a feeling that their expression of culture is being suppressed. They express a deep desire for the acknowledgement and respect of indigenous histories and cultures.
- Mental health issues, including depression, trauma, and suicide attempts are prevalent among Indigenous people who are residing in homeless shelters. There is a struggle to cope with these mental health issues, and this is compounded by the lack of understanding from family members..
- They highlight the systemic barriers in accessing resources, including the lack of support services tailored to Indigenous populations. There is a perception that reconciliation efforts are lacking, leading to a lack of trust in the system.
- Some individuals express a desire for more education about Indigenous cultures and distinctions between different Indigenous groups, such as Inuit, Métis, and First Nations. There is also a need for recognition of those who have intersecting identities, such as being black and Indigenous.

Saying and Doing

- People express frustration with compounded discrimination and biases that come along with being Indigenous and homeless, such as being asked to leave establishments or relocated .

- Individuals mention efforts to cut down on their substance use, seek counselling, and address mental health concerns as well as acknowledge the importance of healing from past trauma. There is a desire for more support services tailored to Indigenous needs.
- Individuals appreciate having a safe space to share their thoughts and experiences, acknowledging that they are not alone in their struggles.
- Individuals shared that it is challenging to navigate Indigenous specific services without a status card, and many individuals are unaware that Indigenous specific services exist.

Hearing and Seeing

- Indigenous people who reside in homeless shelters hear negative stereotypes and judgments about Indigenous people, contributing to feelings of isolation and frustration. They see people being turned away from rentals or being treated differently because of their Indigenous identity.
- They report hearing negative stereotypes and misconceptions about homelessness and addiction, leading to feelings of shame.
- Some express a desire to see and hear more about efforts to revitalize Indigenous culture and history, such as through educational programs or storytelling initiatives. They find value in reconnecting their heritage and learning about their traditional practices and stories.
- Individuals witness the harsh realities of homelessness, including overdoses, theft, violence and the struggle to access housing and support services.
- They hear shelter staff call them by a [bed/pod] numbers, and not by their names, which reminds them of the Indian Residential School System. Some report going days without hearing someone say their name.
- They witness service provision for certain Indigenous groups but not others (i.e. First Nations specific programming as opposed to Métis and/or Inuit population groups and vice versa) and discrimination, leading to a sense of being unheard and unseen.

Hopes and Fears

- Indigenous people residing in shelters express a desire for their voices to be heard and their experiences to be acknowledged. They fear being overlooked or dismissed, emphasizing the importance of being seen as individuals with unique needs and challenges.
- They hope for meaningful action when they share their voice and perspective with researchers and want to see systemic issues being addressed. There is a fear that these hopes will not be realized.
- They hope for more access to education and resources, including opportunities for further learning beyond high school. They see education as a pathway to empowerment and breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

- There is hope for greater cultural integration and understanding, including the preservation and promotion of Indigenous languages and traditions. They see cultural revitalization as essential for both community and personal well-being.
- They hope for more community gatherings, and for more services modelled after Friendship Centres. They hope organizations will work together and provide resources for grassroots programs aimed at supporting Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.
- There is a hope that future generations, including their own children, will not have to experience the same challenges and hardships faced by Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.
- They hope for programs that help fill the gap in traditional knowledge so parents and their children can connect to their culture, including Indigenous parental support and cultural preservation initiatives.

Inner experience (person in middle)

- Individuals navigate complex systems and challenges, including accessing resources and dealing with past trauma.
- They seek connection, understanding, and respect while facing discrimination and isolation.

Indigenous Supportive Housing Population

Indigenous individuals who have recently experienced homelessness and are now finding support and stability in Indigenous-centered supportive housing are actively engaged in finding ways to manage triggers and regulate their emotions in constructive ways. Despite facing barriers, such as having a criminal record, they are striving to make positive changes and deserve access to decent, affordable housing where they can feel safe and maintain sobriety. As they age, they seek safe environments conducive to healthy aging, recognizing themselves as warriors who have overcome hardships. They recognize the temporary nature of their situation and strive for stable housing. They value their cultural heritage and participate in healing practices like talking circles to address past traumas and envision a brighter future for themselves and their families. They are parents who prioritize creating a safe space for their children. Some have additional challenges such as brain injuries, which impedes ability to work or function at a high level, yet they persevere with resilience and determination.

Thinking and Feeling

- Individuals living in temporary supportive housing often reflect on their past and feel embarrassed and anxious as well as uncertain about their future.
- They try to be positive and are working hard to find a home where they feel safe, stable and like they belong.
- Some people feel grateful that supportive housing is available, that they have a roof over their head and that they can get help from staff that don't judge or shame them.

- Alternatively, others feel that staff in some supportive housings are not very caring or treat them like children. Some individuals feel that staff need training to be more people-focused and give tenants an appropriate balance of support and independence.
- They feel there's a lot of good being done with supportive housing but there's still room for improvement; some programs are too expensive and don't meet the needs of tenants.
- There needs to be more flexible supportive housing to meet different needs, including the needs of people with children, pets, health conditions, substance use challenges, and people who need various levels of support and independence.

Saying and Doing

- Individuals living in temporary supportive housing are working on their mental health and using coping strategies to stay positive and move forward. They go for walks, participate in sharing circles, reflect before reacting, and practice gratitude daily.
- Many individuals are actively looking for more permanent housing and places with affordable rent so they can move out and have a place that is their own.
- Some people withdraw and become more isolated because of the atmosphere in supportive housing. They don't want to interact with the people around them for the risk of being drawn back into harmful habits.

Hearing and Seeing

- Individuals that live in supportive housing see that some people prefer to live in tent city because they have a better, more supportive community. They want this level of community, freedom and independence in supportive housing as well.
- They see many barriers to accessing permanent housing: rent is very expensive, there are long waitlists for BC Housing, and Indigenous people face the added barrier of stigma and racism in applying for rentals.
- Indigenous people experience a lot of violence, microaggressions, and racism in the community in general.

Hopes and Fears

- Individuals living in supportive housing want to move in a positive direction. They want to find and keep their own place where they can live safely with their family and pets. They want to live in a place that feels like home. They want to have jobs they enjoy that give them stability.
- They hope government will create policies that reduce barriers for themselves and their communities, including rent controls and income assistance programs.

- They hope for more affordable and readily accessible mental health and trauma care.
- They fear that they will fall back into old patterns and become trapped in a harmful cycle. They fear that even if they find jobs and homes that they will lose them again.
- They fear that their children will also face challenges with housing, mental health, and grow up in unsafe and unhealthy environments.

Inner experience (person in middle)

- Individuals who live in supportive housing recognize that the challenges they face are difficult but temporary.
- They focus on the things that bring them the motivation to keep moving forward by reminding themselves of how hard they've worked already, that they deserve a home of their own, that they just need to keep trying, and that they need to be strong to avoid falling back into harmful behaviours.

FRANK'S STORY

Frank, an Ojibwe man raised in the lower mainland, faced challenges with alcoholism, leading to the dissolution of his marriage and eventual homelessness in Kelowna. Disconnected from his Ojibwe community, Frank navigates life with minimal support, relying on income assistance that barely sustains him beyond necessities like child support and food.

Despite the challenges, Frank found stability in supportive housing, where he diligently adheres to the rules and forges meaningful connections with his neighbours. He finds solace in activities such as cooking, cleaning, and helping those in need.

Frank wants to access services however he is discouraged because he completes lots of paperwork and applications that seem to go nowhere. He also encounters obstacles due to his lack of a status card and his challenge with memory due to a brain injury. Even when Frank does access services he feels judged based on his appearance.

Reflecting on his experiences, Frank desires to reconnect with his Indigenous heritage. Despite feeling content in his current housing situation, he is confronted with occasional safety concerns regarding others in the building.

Frank's main needs center on financial stability, access to consistent support services, and a desire for enrichment activities beyond survival.

Journey Map Insights:

Frank's main needs center on financial stability, access to consistent support services, and a desire for enrichment activities beyond survival.

WARREN'S STORY

Warren, an Indigenous Elder residing in Xast Wilxwtn, Kelowna's only Indigenous run supportive housing, has endured the intergenerational impacts of colonization, leading to family struggles with addiction. Disconnected from his family's Indigenous community of origin, Warren finds solace through the support of Xast Wilxwtn, his transitional housing, and the Ki Low-Na Friendship Society, which offer a sense of belonging and vital resources.

Warren's experience at Xast Wilxwtn has been "overwhelmingly positive," noting that staff help keep him on track and connected to resources. Warren's goal is to live long-term in a supportive environment similar to this, with friendly staff, structured programming and goal-setting opportunities.

While engaged in enriching activities and volunteering, Warren faces challenges in securing permanent housing due to discrimination, unattainable costs, and limited options. Warren expresses concern with BC Housing's selection process. He states that he has been on the list for years and has only finally been chosen for an interview. He is being considered for the Supported Transitional Housing with Embedded Programming (STEP) housing; however, it doesn't align with his goal of drug and alcohol-free living. Warren has experienced living in low-barrier and supportive housing and described it as marked with disorder and lack of programming leading residents to fall further into addiction, however he does not want to miss this opportunity for housing, so he feels obliged to accept it.

Warren knows there are places out there to help people change, but they are few and hard to find. He notes the need for more programming such as Cplkxwlxwalt (Returning to Ourselves), an Indigenous and Peer led Substance Use Day Treatment, he attended over the summer.

Warren passed away shortly after this interview. We honour his memory in this report by highlighting the significance of his wisdom, resilience, and commitment to healing.

Journey Map Insights:

Warren wishes for stable access to drug- and alcohol-free housing, and connections consistent employment and enriching programming such as Indigenous-led substance use treatment.

Challenges:

- **Systemic Challenges:** Indigenous communities face discrimination, lack of support, and cultural marginalization in various aspects of life, including housing, employment, and access to services.
- **Resource Needs:** There is a pressing demand for more visible and accessible support services, encompassing mental health resources, housing options, and educational opportunities.
- **Cultural Recognition:** Indigenous knowledge and culture often go unrecognized, leading to feelings of suppression and isolation among Indigenous peoples.
- **Navigational Hurdles:** Navigating complex systems like housing, education, and healthcare is particularly challenging, especially for those grappling with past trauma or mental health issues.
- **Holistic Solutions:** Addressing systemic issues, ensuring effective resource allocation, promoting staff accountability, addressing safety concerns, and fostering community engagement are critical in supporting Indigenous individuals transitioning out of homelessness.

Actions:

- **Education and awareness:** Increase education about Indigenous cultures, histories, and current issues to combat stereotypes and biases.
- **Support and resources:** Provide more accessible and culturally appropriate support services, including mental health resources, housing options, and educational opportunities.
- **Recognition and respect:** Acknowledge and honor Indigenous knowledge and culture in all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and governance.
- **Advocacy and empowerment:** Empower Indigenous individuals to advocate for their rights and needs, and support initiatives that promote Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty.
- **Policy change:** Advocate for policy changes that address systemic discrimination and improve access to resources and support for Indigenous communities.
- **Community engagement:** Foster community connections and networks to provide mutual support and address issues collectively.
- **Housing and Mental Health Support:** Increase access to affordable housing and continuous long-term mental health support, prioritizing needs without discrimination, while fostering community-building initiatives within supportive housing and providing staff with ongoing training in trauma-informed care and effective communication.

Mainstream Supportive Housing Population

Indigenous individuals who have recently experienced homelessness and now reside in mainstream supportive housing navigate a complex web of emotions and challenges. They are family members and partners who grapple with a profound fear of abandonment and are torn between seeking refuge indoors and leaving their partners and friends 'outside'. They are people with a passion to support one another and give back to their community through peer driven work, and they are good neighbours, frustrated with their circumstances. Many individuals spoke of frustrations with supportive housing staff, and shared that they believe some are inadequately trained in trauma-informed communication, and hope for a future where supportive housing residents can experience equal treatment, free from discrimination tied to personal circumstances. Individuals in supportive housing desire privacy, a sense of security, and opportunities for connection, community involvement, and cultural reconnection. They seek more support options for recovery, access to resources, and opportunities to build a sense of belonging within their housing environment.

Thinking and Feeling

- Individuals feel frustrated by the lack of empathy and understanding from staff and the wider community.
- There is a sense of abandonment and guilt, especially concerning partners or family members who are also experiencing homelessness.
- There is a desire for more training for staff and more opportunities for people with lived experience to be involved in decision-making processes.

Saying and Doing

- People are advocating for themselves and others, trying to access different avenues for recovery and better support.
- They are engaging with services and programs but often encounter barriers and unequal treatment.
- Many express a desire to give back to their community and contribute positively.

Hearing and Seeing

- There is a perception of lack of care and understanding from staff and the wider community.
- Rules and policies are often seen as rigid and not applied equally, leading to feelings of unfair treatment.
- There are instances of theft and violence within supportive housing, which can lead to a lack of safety and trust among residents.

Hopes and Fears

- People hope for stable housing, meaningful connections with family and community, and opportunities for growth and recovery.
- There is a fear of relapse, losing housing, not being able to access necessary support, and being judged or discriminated against.
- There are hopes for dignity and a sense of empowerment and self determination, including pathways into independent housing.

Inner Experience (Person in Middle)

- The individual's inner experience is shaped by a mix of frustration, hope, guilt, fear, and a desire for community and support.

Challenges:

- **Lack of Empathy and Understanding:** There is a perceived lack of empathy and understanding from staff and the wider community about Indigenous issues, leading to feelings of frustration and isolation.
- **Unequal Treatment:** Rules and policies are often seen as rigid and not applied equally, resulting in feelings of unfair treatment among residents.
- **Safety and Security:** Theft, violence, and lack of safety within supportive housing are significant concerns, impacting residents' well-being and sense of security.
- **Limited Opportunities for Recovery:** Some individuals feel that recovery is not adequately promoted in supportive housing, and there is a lack of support for those seeking different avenues to recovery.
- **Stigma and Discrimination:** There is a pervasive stigma against individuals experiencing homelessness or addiction, leading to feelings of shame and fear of judgment.

Actions:

- **Empathy Training:** Provide training for staff and community members to enhance their understanding and empathy towards individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- **Equitable Treatment:** Ensure that rules and policies are applied consistently and fairly to all residents, addressing any instances of favoritism or discrimination.
- **Safety Measures:** Implement measures to improve safety within supportive housing, such as increased security, regular safety checks, and protocols for addressing theft and violence.

- **Recovery-Oriented Support:** Offer more support and resources for individuals seeking different avenues to recovery, including access to various treatment options and recovery programs.
- **Anti-Stigma Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to combat stigma and discrimination against individuals experiencing homelessness or addiction, promoting understanding and empathy within the community.
- **Community Building:** Create opportunities for residents to engage in community-building activities within supportive housing, fostering a sense of belonging and support among residents.
- **Advocacy and Support Services:** Provide advocacy and support services to help residents navigate complex systems and access necessary resources and support.
- **Education and Awareness:** Increase education and awareness about homelessness, addiction, and recovery, helping to reduce stigma and promote understanding in the community.

Previously Homeless (within the last 5 Years or Precariously Housed)

The identities and personal stories of Indigenous people who have experienced homelessness or are struggling to maintain housing, encompass diverse roles in community and individual qualities. They include artists, and professionals, reflecting a range of talents and skills. Many emphasize their commitment to personal growth and healing from trauma, embracing sobriety or taking steps towards wellness, strengthening family and community connections. Each individual we connected with, was able to take pride in and highlight their resilience and determination to overcome what had previously seemed like insurmountable challenges. Despite facing difficulties, such as systemic racism and discrimination being waitlisted for or experiencing challenges navigating services or experiencing a deep fear of being able to successfully maintain their housing, a sense of hope remains and the will to build connections to their cultural identities.

Thinking and Feeling

- Individuals express feelings of disconnection from homeland and communities, with limited ability to receive support from their home communities.
- While there is temporary relief, individuals shared that an underlying sense of shame from the experience of homelessness, and fear and hopelessness remain due to the lack of availability and housing affordability. Participants shared that they are continuously developing contingency plans and compromise some aspects of their lifestyles to maintain their housing.
- Some participants expressed grief and loss around their personal situations.
- There's a sense of pride, accomplishment, and resilience when individuals are able to maintain housing or achieve certain milestones.
- Individuals that transitioned from supportive housing felt a sense of freedom in less structured housing.

Saying and Doing

- Some individuals reflected on feeling the need to act tough, create an alter ego and compromise their morals to navigate homelessness or access services. I.e.. Survival sex, violence etc.
- Individuals expressed that their confidence was greatly impacted by their experiences, and some individuals felt the need to lie about their Indigenous identity to be eligible for housing.
- Individuals shared that they were unable to express their true selves while previously experiencing homelessness in order to protect themselves and for self-preservation.
- There's a desire to advocate for and encourage others to access available services and supports.

Hearing and Seeing

- There's a perception of stigma and discrimination, with negative stereotypes about homelessness and addiction prevalent in society.
- Individuals observe systemic issues such as lack of resources, competitive and unattainable rental and housing rates, long wait times for affordable or supportive housing, and mental health declines among those experiencing homelessness.
- Individuals experienced intolerance, being ostracized from their communities and families, with negative assumptions around substance misuse and criminal safety concerns.
- Individuals experienced sympathy vs empathy and support from those close to them and had a limited understanding of the support pathways until they were amidst a crisis.
- Individuals witness the microaggressions, discrimination and fear of the unhoused, and believe that there is never going to be enough resources or support.
- Individuals witness explicit racism that remains unchecked and share the perception that Indigenous people receive handouts and a 'free ride'.
- Individuals witness Elders being treated poorly, and their knowledge being ignored, impacting confidence, and causing emotional harm.
- Individuals witness transformation, survival, and resilience.

Hopes and Fears

- Hopes include aspirations for stable housing and meaningful work included finding positions that individuals are passionate about and that move beyond paycheck-paycheck, and housing that is closer to 30% of their income.

- Individuals shared that they sought opportunities for cultural reconnection, and a willingness to learn their traditional languages and to receive support and connection to their communities or First Nations.
- Individuals also expressed a desire to give back and volunteer within their communities and support a collective effort towards healing.
- Individuals hoped to share their knowledge with others who have been in similar situations,
- Many individuals shared that they believed that housing should be a human right.
- Individuals shared that culturally safe and supportive services would be an asset to the community and included an Indigenous focused shelter and more supportive housing.
- Fears revolve around stability including losing housing, relapsing into addiction, and facing discrimination or harm.
- Individuals shared that there is a fear and deep mistrust of systems, especially relating to their children and homelessness exacerbating removals, which is systemic and does not mean people are bad parents.
- Individuals shared that they fear accessing the support of the RCMP or other emergency services because it may impact their housing.
- Some individuals shared that they feared services would become further automated and less personal, resulting in more people falling through the cracks.
- Some individuals feared that they would have to sell all their belongings to maintain their housing and expressed that they never wanted to own another home.

Inner Experience (Person in Middle)

- The inner experience reflects a range of emotions, from fear and shame to pride and hope.
- There's a struggle to maintain self-esteem and identity in the face of challenging circumstances, but individuals see themselves as caring and supportive community members with a desire to support those who have experienced homelessness.

Key Challenges:

- **Lack of Connection and Community in the Housing Sector:** Rental environments often lack a sense of community, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection among renters. This coupled with limited to no cultural presence does not support a positive sense of pride or identity and belonging for Indigenous community members in an urban context.
- **Eligibility for Services and Supports from First Nations Community:** Some individuals face challenges with eligibility criteria for supports and services from their home communities, leading

to feelings that they do not fit or unwelcome to connect. This may result in feelings of rejection and unworthiness.

- **Ostracization by Community and Family:** Family members may ostracize individuals who are homeless, leading to feelings of shock, shame, and isolation. They also may make negative assumptions about behaviours and deem people undeserving of supports based on lifestyle choices.
- **Fear of Losing Stability:** There is a pervasive fear among individuals experiencing housing precarity or housing instability of losing their stability, particularly related to facing financial difficulty or experiencing a crisis.
- **Housing Instability:** The uncertainty and instability of housing situations contribute to stress and anxiety, making it challenging to plan for the future.
- **Access to Services:** There are barriers to accessing services, including lack of information, difficulty or fear of navigating systems, and age or eligibility restrictions and bottlenecks in systems due to intense pressures placed on communities.
- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Individuals face racism, stigma and discrimination based on their housing status, ethnicity and self-identification of Indigeneity which can impact their mental health, self-esteem and overall wellbeing.
- **Lack of Trust:** There is a lack of trust in systems and services, stemming from past negative experiences or perceived biases.

Actions:

- **More Indigenous-Specific and Culturally Safe Services:** Increasing culturally appropriate services for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- **Culturally Safe Shelters and Housing Initiatives:** Establishing shelters and services that are culturally safe and respectful of Indigenous traditions and values.
- **Increased Community Connection:** Creating opportunities for community building and connection among renters and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Streamlined Access to Services:** Simplifying the process for accessing services and supports to reduce barriers and improve efficiency.
- **Education and Awareness:** Raising awareness about the underlying causation of homelessness and housing issues to combat stigma and discrimination.
- **Family Support Programs:** Providing additional support and education for families to better understand and support their loved ones who are experiencing homelessness or substance misuse challenges.

- **Housing Stability Programs:** Implementing programs that provide stability and support for individuals at risk of homelessness, such as rent supplements or housing assistance.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** Providing trauma-informed care and support to address the underlying issues contributing to homelessness and housing instability.

Women

Indigenous women who have experienced homelessness have a deep sense of responsibility to the people around them. They are mothers, pet owners, friends and caretakers for family members and Elders. Since they take on so much for other people, they feel like they have to hold all the pieces together, while their needs come last. At times, this is overwhelming and stressful, but the need to stand up for themselves and others makes them strong. Many describe themselves as fighters, standing up for their rights and the rights of their community.

Thinking and Feeling

- Women are stressed and anxious when they can't find work or childcare and fear that they'll lose their homes again if they lose their source of income.
- Women feel guilty if they can't provide stability for their children and their pets. Their greatest fear is having their children and pets taken away from them.
- They worry about the wellbeing of their children and pets while living in tents or campers and feel they can't protect them from heat, weather and having their possessions stolen.
- The most common and constant feelings are uncertainty, anxiety and being on edge, which stems from past trauma, experiences of sexual assault and unstable homes.

Saying and Doing

- Indigenous women care for many other people, including Elders, family members, children and friends, often prioritizing the safety and well-being of their loved ones above their own.
- They try to navigate a confusing and broken system that makes it difficult to advocate for themselves, their parents and their children.
- Women seek out safe, clean-living spaces with access to showers, so their children won't be taken away from them.
- Women who have experienced homelessness are extra careful with their money to avoid losing their homes and make back up plans just in case they lose their source of income or are evicted from their living space.

- Some women live in a different place than their partners and move to new communities to find jobs or education opportunities, which cuts them off from their support network and makes it challenging to find and maintain suitable housing.
- Some women resort to unconventional housing arrangements, such as trailers in farmers' fields, because they can't find affordable housing options in the city.
- Women try hard to find and keep jobs to provide for themselves and their loved ones, but there are frustrating barriers in their way: not having a stable mailing address, facing stigma and discrimination associated with homelessness and experiencing challenges with mental health and addiction.

Hearing and Seeing

- Indigenous women who are experiencing homelessness face stigma, misconceptions and assumptions that they are homeless because they are lazy or are experiencing addiction.
- Women who are experiencing homelessness are held back from accessing basic services like a post office box because of bureaucratic processes and barriers, which prevents them from applying for housing or jobs.
- There is a lot of competition and many strict requirements about income, appearance and race in housing applications, and the racism and discrimination make it more difficult for Indigenous women to find housing.
- Women experience exploitation and abuse from landlords, especially when they don't have any other choices for housing and have to stay even when it's an unsafe situation.
- Women must navigate complex family dynamics, such as caring for aging parents, and face housing insecurity and disconnection from their communities.

Hopes and Fears

- There is a fear among Indigenous women experiencing homelessness of losing their current housing situation, reflecting concerns about stability and security.
- Indigenous women express hope for increased access to organizations, information, guidance, and general awareness of available supports. They seek resources such as rent support from organizations like KFS (Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society).
- There is a desire for ground-up programs providing wrap-around services specifically tailored for parents. These programs would offer access to outreach workers, nurses, and various support services to address the needs of Indigenous families in urban settings.
- Indigenous women hope for the establishment of community-based drop-in centers that connect individuals to various services, provide opportunities to build relationships, and offer communal

meals. They seek spaces where they can access resources, build community, and receive support in a holistic manner.

- There is a need for programs that teach practical skills such as cooking, budgeting, and household management, particularly aimed at addressing generational gaps in knowledge. Indigenous women express a desire for resources to help them stretch food budgets, save money, and manage household expenses effectively.
- Indigenous women emphasize the importance of programs and support services that are tailored to their specific needs and life experiences. They stress the significance of support staff having both education and lived experience to effectively assist individuals facing trauma or learning difficulties.
- There is a call for increased collaboration among organizations serving Indigenous people to enhance access to grants, funding, and support services. Indigenous women highlight the importance of community-based initiatives and collaborative efforts to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous families in urban settings.

The Inner Experience (Person in the Middle)

- Individuals identify with their Indigenous heritage, often mentioning their specific cultural backgrounds such as Gitxsan Cree, Inuit, Carrier, Cowichan, etc. Their cultural identity is an essential aspect of how they perceive themselves, even in the context of homelessness.
- Some individuals express personal challenges such as failing health, struggles with substance abuse, and the impact of historical events like the 60s scoop, where Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities.
- They express a desire to be successful, to matter, and to survive for their loved ones, such as their children.
- Some express feeling like a caretaker who holds their families and their communities together but feels like they can't keep up. They feel like they are always in warrior mode.
- Many individuals maintain a positive outlook on life despite their circumstances. They mention living happily and positively, making others smile, and finding joy even in difficult situations.
- Some individuals mention a journey of rediscovering their Indigenous identity, especially those affected by historical events like the 60s scoop. This process involves reconnecting with their roots and grappling with feelings of separation and disconnection.

KATIE'S STORY – Safe Supportive Housing for Families

Katie is a Métis woman who currently is living in transitional housing. Two years ago, after losing her housing and custody of her daughter, Katie moved to Kelowna so that she could be closer to her child. Since then, Katie has experienced major challenges in accessing stable housing, thus she has spent most of the past two years living in shelters or on the streets.

Katie says she is grateful for the shelters to provide her refuge from the cold and a bed to sleep in, however, her experiences within the shelter have been marred with staff indifference and safety concerns. Staff escalating conflicts and the disappearance of personal belongings have left her feeling vulnerable and disheartened.

Despite her best efforts, Katie has found navigating the complex web of support services in Kelowna to be an uphill battle. She receives assistance from organizations like the Kelowna Friendship Society and HOPE Outreach, however, notes that many programs have long wait times and many hoops to jump through to access service.

Finding permanent housing has proven to be Katie's biggest challenge. High prices and discrimination against people with children have made securing housing nearly impossible. One landlord even dared to demand a pet damage deposit for her daughter's presence. The discrimination Katie faces leaves her feeling anxious and isolated, pushing her further into a cycle of instability.

Despite the hardships, Katie holds hope for better days ahead. She recalls fondly a time in Kamloops when she shared a home with a kind roommate who provided much-needed stability and support. It's moments like these that fuel Katie's desire for safe and supportive environments where she and her daughter can thrive.

Journey Map Insights:

Katie struggles to find permanent housing and has experienced discrimination as a parent, with one landlord demanding a pet deposit for her child.

Challenges:

- **System Navigation:** Indigenous women find it challenging to navigate complex and bureaucratic systems to help their friends and family in similar situations, while keeping their own homes that they have worked hard to find and afford.

- Financial Stability: Indigenous women do everything they can to manage their money responsibly, but face challenges in ensuring bills are paid and stigma and systemic barriers to get higher paying, more stable jobs.
- Caregiving Responsibilities: There are so many people to care for, including children, family members, Elders, and friends, that it puts a strain on Indigenous women to find and keep their own housing.
- Safety and Shelter: Indigenous women struggle to find living spaces that are safe, clean and have the necessary facilities, making them feel guilty about not providing a high quality of life for their children and scared that they may have their children taken away from them.
- Housing Affordability: There aren't enough affordable housing options in the city, forcing Indigenous women to find other places to live, such as trailers and campsites.

These challenges highlight systemic issues that Indigenous women face in securing stable housing and accessing the necessary support services.

Actions:

- **Advocacy and Support:** Indigenous women advocate and stand up for themselves, their loved ones and their community while doing what they can to help women in similar circumstances.
- **Financial Management Skills:** Some Indigenous women don't learn financial management skills from their parents or families, and need programs to learn how to manage money, budget, find and apply for jobs, and maintain their housing stability.
- **Community Care:** Women prioritize their family and friends, even when they are struggling to find and keep their own housing. More care and supports for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes would reduce the pressure on women.
- **Innovative Housing Solutions:** Creative housing solutions, such as tiny homes or unconventional arrangements, to give Indigenous women more affordable options for themselves and their loved ones.
- **Employment Assistance:** Remove the obstacles for Indigenous women to get jobs, such as providing stable mailing addresses and addressing stigma, to improve Indigenous women's financial and housing stability.
- **Advocacy Against Discrimination:** Indigenous women advocate against discrimination in housing applications work to address the challenges Elders and family members face in the housing system.

These actions reflect the depth of care and responsibility Indigenous women feel for their loved ones, and their determination to find accessible, affordable, and stable housing for their own families while still advocating for systemic change to better support their communities.

Service Providers

Service providers take their work seriously and despite the many challenges, frustrations and worries about the growing demand for services in the community, they are dedicated to making a difference for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. They see how big and complicated the homelessness crisis is and although they all work on different elements of the problem, they are eager to work together to make progress. They recognize that health services, government policies, temporary and emergency housing, affordable housing, and Indigenous services need to come together to create meaningful and lasting change.

Thinking and Feeling

- Service providers care about the work they do and the people they work with. They want to be able to help people who are struggling and get frustrated when their efforts are limited by politics, lack of funding, and colonial policies and procedures.
- It's frustrating that funding models are designed to only help people at the most extreme levels of need, which restricts service providers from taking more holistic, preventative approaches to supporting the community.
- There's too much talking and not enough action. Education and training is necessary but service providers can't wait for everyone within their organizations and the broader sector to get to the same level of understanding and awareness about the history and experiences of Indigenous people.
- Service providers feel anxiety, pessimism, and grief about the growing need for support in the community, systemic barriers that prevent them from helping community members, colonial policies that cause more harm than help, and a lack of trust in the system.
- On the other hand, service providers are inspired by the possibility of working more collaboratively to make a difference and advocate for long-term, sustainable solutions that prioritize community building and inclusion.
- Everyone recognizes the urgency of the homelessness crisis and the need to work together on large-scale systemic change and not just short-term fixes.

Saying and Doing

- Service providers prioritize empathy and care in their work, recognizing the importance of radiating care to those they serve and making them feel safe and supported.

- They strive to prevent individuals from getting caught in the revolving door of the justice system by connecting them to resources and prioritizing services for Indigenous people.
- Even if they work in an organization that has mostly non-Indigenous staff, they engage with the community and partner with other service providers to hear the voices of people with lived experience and integrate Indigenous lenses into programming.
- Efforts are made to respect the choices of individuals experiencing homelessness, meeting them where they are at and offering housing options while acknowledging their autonomy.
- They advocate for a shift towards upstream interventions to prevent people from experiencing homelessness in the first place.
- Service providers do their best with the funding and resources available but acknowledge that gaps exist in their programs and services, particularly for hidden and overlooked unhoused individuals.
- They advocate for reconciliation by educating staff and community members about how historical injustices like residential schools continue to impact Indigenous people. They build on this education by building bridges of understanding and empathy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- Despite funding limitations, individuals within these organizations work tirelessly to find solutions and support Indigenous businesses, recognizing the importance of every dollar in making a difference.
- They attempt to involve high-level decision-makers with Truth and Reconciliation initiatives, since these people have greater influence over tackling systemic issues and prioritizing Indigenous housing.

Overall, individuals working for these organizations are dedicated to making meaningful changes and addressing the root causes of Indigenous homelessness, despite facing challenges such as funding constraints and limited awareness and empathy in the broader community. They emphasize the importance of collaboration, empathy, and prioritizing Indigenous voices to create positive change.

Hearing and Seeing

- There's a lot of lip service about the homelessness crisis without genuine action.
- Racism and political barriers in system hold people back from accessing support.

- There's a lot of misinformation and stereotypes about Indigenous people and people experiencing homelessness related to substance abuse and criminality, leading to stigmatization and discrimination in the system.
- More people understand mental health and recognize that it can be treated, so it's easier to access some services.
- The system is changing too slowly and although the conversation on mental health and homelessness is getting more attention now, the specific needs and challenges of Indigenous people are getting overlooked.
- There are many factors that are putting more people at risk of experiencing homelessness, including a lack of opportunity for young people in rural areas, not enough housing options for families with children and pets, rising costs of housing, and wages that are too low to afford rent.
- There's a growing recognition of inter-Indigenous discrimination and a need for increased transparency in supportive housing initiatives.
- Perceptions of Indigenous people are often clouded by misinformation, leading to a lack of empathy and understanding in the wider community.
- Communities and organizations are making some progress, but there's still high levels of distrust and frustration because people can't see the change and organizations aren't communicating transparently.

Hopes and Fears

- Service providers have fears that change is happening too slowly and significant progress may not be seen for another lifetime, especially as the need for support continues to grow.
- Many service providers fear that trauma leads to feeling unworthy and hopeless, which holds Indigenous people back from seizing opportunities for jobs, housing, supports and community connection.
- Service providers hope that Indigenous people who experience homelessness can find a deeper connection to their culture and community.
- With more collaboration and communication, service providers hope to use more holistic approaches to address issues and increase access to housing and food security.
- There's hope that growing economic opportunities in rural areas, more cultural acceptance and awareness, more community building and a broader sense of belonging will help Indigenous people experiencing homelessness find more financial and housing stability.
- Service providers hope that with more public attention and advocacy for the homelessness crisis, governments will prioritize funding and improve policies for health care and housing.

- Despite challenges, service providers are determined to continue engagement and advocacy efforts to create meaningful change.
The Inner Experience (Person in the Middle)
- Service providers are shouldering the burden of a massive amount of work that needs to be done in the face of many bureaucratic and political barriers.
- There's tension between frontline workers and management that doesn't recognize the value of on-the-ground experience in decision-making.
- Frontline staff feel overwhelmed, isolated and unsure of where to turn but recognize how important their role is to the community.

Challenges:

- **Systemic Barriers and Misconceptions:** Service providers frequently encounter systemic racism, political obstacles, and misinformation that perpetuates stereotypes about Indigenous people. This prevents Indigenous people from accessing supports and service providers from getting the resources they need to serve the community. Addressing these barriers requires advocacy, education, and dismantling discriminatory practices.
- **Limited Funding and Resources:** Service providers are frustrated that strict funding requirements prevent them from offering proactive support to people who are at risk of experiencing homelessness. The fact that they can't intervene earlier and prevent Indigenous people from experiencing more harm perpetuates cycles of poverty and discrimination rather than effectively addressing the homelessness crisis.
- **Complex Needs and Trauma:** Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness often struggle with trauma, intergenerational trauma, and mental health challenges, which are compounded by systemic barriers and historical injustices. Service providers face daunting challenges to navigating complex needs while advocating for trauma-informed care and culturally appropriate support services.
- **Housing Affordability and Accessibility:** Housing affordability remains a significant challenge for all communities, particularly in rural areas, and it's even more difficult for families with children and to access suitable housing. Government, service providers and community partners need to address housing affordability and create more inclusive housing options to help Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness find and maintain homes.
- **Lack of Trust and Communication:** Ongoing systemic issues, gaps in communication, and a lack of transparency in supportive housing initiatives feeds into the deep sense of distrust and frustration among service providers and Indigenous communities. Building a foundation of trust and open communication will be crucial for effective collaboration and community engagement going forward.

Despite these challenges, service providers remain hopeful for positive change, including increased cultural acceptance, access to housing and resources, and advocacy for government funding and policy changes. They emphasize the importance of holistic approaches, community building, and prioritizing Indigenous voices in efforts to address Indigenous homelessness and create sustainable solutions.

Actions:

- **Education and Training:** Education and training needs to address ignorance about the history and experiences of Indigenous people so people can take actions that address the needs of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. This includes cultural competency training, historical awareness programs, and sensitivity training to foster understanding and empathy among staff and peers.
- **Advocacy for Funding and Resources:** Service providers need more flexible and increased funding to provide holistic care and preventive support. This could be addressed by lobbying government officials, raising awareness about funding constraints, and collaborating with interest holders to secure sustainable funding solutions. Governments and funding bodies also need to recognize that more flexible funding programs can help prevent harm and save money in the long run.
- **Empathy and Respect:** Service providers must prioritize empathy and respect in their interactions with Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This involves creating a safe and supportive environment, respecting individual choices, and fostering a sense of dignity and autonomy among those they serve.
- **Upstream Interventions:** There's a need to shift towards upstream interventions that assess the risks of homelessness and provide appropriate supports to prevent homelessness before it occurs. Service providers need to advocate for policy changes and implement early intervention programs within their organizations to address the root causes of homelessness.
- **Addressing Systemic Challenges:** Service providers must actively address systemic challenges such as racism, misinformation, and lack of trust within their organization and in the broader sector. This involves challenging stereotypes, promoting cultural understanding, and advocating for transparency and accountability in supportive housing initiatives.
- **Collaboration and Engagement:** Service providers should prioritize collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities, interest holders and decision-makers. This includes actively involving Indigenous voices in program development, decision-making processes, and advocacy efforts to ensure their needs and perspectives are prioritized.
- **Long-term, Sustainable Solutions:** Service providers must advocate for long-term, sustainable solutions that address the root causes of Indigenous homelessness. This includes promoting economic opportunities, increasing access to affordable housing and resources, and fostering community building and inclusion.

Overall, service providers must take a comprehensive and proactive approach that addresses both immediate needs and underlying systemic issues to effectively support Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. This requires a commitment to education, advocacy, empathy, collaboration, and long-term sustainability.

First responders: Bylaw Officers, Firefighters, and RCMP

Thinking and Feeling

- Responders express frustration with the insufficient availability of services, particularly for individuals suffering from mental health issues. They feel helpless when assistance is denied due to lack of resources or support.
- Responders experience anxiety and nervousness when responding to incidents involving unhoused Indigenous people, especially when details are vague, and situations occur late at night or in potentially dangerous locations like rail trails.
- Dealing with the same individuals repeatedly without seeing positive outcomes leads to compassion fatigue among responders. They feel overwhelmed by the persistent challenges and lack of improvement despite their efforts.
- Responders encounter confusion and frustration due to constantly changing regulations, particularly regarding issues like campfires. This inconsistency complicates enforcement efforts and exacerbates misunderstandings.
- Responders face difficult judgment calls, balancing their duty to enforce regulations with compassion for the individuals they encounter. They feel unfairly judged as the "bad guys" when carrying out their duties.
- Responders grapple with feelings of hopelessness about addressing the underlying issues of homelessness and mental health. Despite their efforts, they question whether they can make a meaningful difference in solving these complex societal problems.
- Responders experience uncertainty and fear when responding to incidents, particularly regarding potential danger and unknown outcomes. They struggle with the constant "what ifs" and the unpredictability of each situation they encounter.
- Responders question the impact of their work and whether it makes any difference at all. Despite the challenges, they emphasize their shared humanity and the importance of recognizing the human element in their interactions with unhoused individuals.

Saying and Doing

- There is a recognition of the need for advocacy and collaboration at various levels of government and across sectors, including from local governments, and authorities like the Mayor and BC Chief of Police, to better understand and address the issues faced by unhoused Indigenous individuals effectively.
- There's a concerted effort to target organized crime while fostering community engagement, allowing agencies like the RCMP to collaborate with outreach programs to tackle the root causes of homelessness. First responders share there is a disconnect from the community to provincial level indecision making.
- Substance use treatment programs do not have the ability to meet the intended impacts, due to their short duration and lack of post treatment support, leading to questions about their effectiveness in comparison to jail sentences.
- First responders express increased negativity and compassion fatigue over time due to the repetitive nature of their work and the perceived lack of tangible results. They feel their job descriptions don't fully capture the scope of their duties.
- Decriminalization efforts have had mixed effects, potentially contributing to an increase in overdoses due to the return of drugs to individuals after arrest. There's a need for comprehensive services to address substance abuse issues effectively.
- There's a consensus on the importance of long-term programs and robust healthcare services to address the underlying causes of homelessness and substance abuse effectively.
- It was identified that there could be learnings gleaned from the Independent Investigation Office (IIO) investigating incidents involving police.
- Service providers shared that limitations of sentencing conditions highlight challenges within institutional processes and their ability to connect people to care.
- There's a call for educating the public about the complexities of homelessness and substance abuse issues, as well as the need for empathy and understanding.
- While efforts are made to provide housing, there are concerns about individuals' ability to maintain stability without adequate support for basic life skills and mental health issues.
- There's recognition of the importance of collaboration between agencies and community support in addressing the multifaceted challenges of homelessness effectively.

Hearing and Seeing

- Trends such as increasing PIT counts and overdose statistics highlight the severity of the crisis, although not all unhoused individuals have addiction problems. Carrying Naloxone is essential due to the prevalence of overdoses.

- There's growing anger toward outreach services, with firefighters feeling unsafe and the public questioning the effectiveness of such services. Misunderstandings about the roles of these services contribute to tensions.
- There's a general lack of understanding among the public regarding the importance of supporting homeless individuals, leading to frustration and empathy fatigue.
- Municipalities often lack the authority to enact significant changes, particularly regarding mental health and addiction, which are under provincial jurisdiction.
- First responders are advocating for policy changes and leveraging different levels of government to address gaps in services. There's a recognition that systemic issues are beyond their control.
- The legal and bureaucratic complexities of the system contribute to challenges in providing effective assistance to unhoused individuals.
- Despite efforts to help, compassion fatigue is common among first responders, who feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the issue and the limited impact of their interventions.
- Many started with optimism but have become disillusioned over time due to the recurrent failures in addressing homelessness effectively. However, there's still hope that small successes, such as Tiny Homes initiatives, could lead to meaningful change.
- Lack of availability of services after hours poses challenges in providing timely assistance to those in need.
- Observations of increasing homelessness across the city indicate the severity and urgency of the issue, prompting concerns among first responders and the public alike.

Hopes and Fears

- There's hope for increased government funding, legislative changes, and partnerships with organizations to address homelessness effectively. Collaboration with traditionally unaligned groups like LeCOH is seen as crucial for achieving common goals.
- Over the past few years, there have been positive changes and increased partnerships in Kelowna, particularly with outreach programs and healthcare providers. These partnerships aim to provide comprehensive support and reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues.
- There's fear that the homelessness crisis may worsen rapidly, despite many caring individuals and organizations working to address it. The capacity of existing services may be overwhelmed by the increasing demand.
- While housing initiatives like Tiny Homes offer hope, there are concerns about their sustainability and the potential for misuse. Ensuring that housing is prioritized for local residents and providing necessary support services are seen as crucial.

- There's recognition of the importance of addressing underlying issues like poverty and providing life skills training to help individuals transition successfully into housing.
- There's a desire for 24/7 support services and immediate connections to resources for individuals in crisis situations. Lack of capacity, low wages, and bureaucratic hurdles pose challenges to providing effective support.
- First responders grapple with the challenge of balancing the safety of unhoused individuals with public safety concerns, particularly in emergency situations.
- Despite the daunting nature of the problem, there's a recognition that homelessness may never be completely eradicated. However, small positive changes provide hope and motivation to continue efforts to address the issue.

Challenges:

- **Insufficient Availability of Services:** Responders face frustration due to the lack of adequate services, particularly for individuals with mental health issues, which leads to a sense of helplessness.
- **Anxiety and Nervousness:** Responders experience anxiety when responding to incidents, especially in potentially dangerous situations or when details are vague.
- **Compassion Fatigue:** Dealing with repetitive situations without seeing positive outcomes leads to compassion fatigue among responders, causing feelings of overwhelm.
- **Confusion and Changing Regulations:** Responders encounter confusion and frustration due to constantly changing regulations, complicating enforcement efforts.
- **Struggle with Judgment Calls:** Balancing duty with compassion poses challenges for responders, who feel unfairly judged as the "bad guys" when enforcing regulations.
- **Hopelessness and Disheartenment:** Responders question whether they can make a meaningful difference in solving complex societal problems like homelessness.
- **Uncertainty and Fear:** Responders experience uncertainty and fear when responding to incidents, struggling with the unpredictability of each situation.
- **Questioning Impact and Humanity:** Responders question the impact of their work and emphasize the importance of recognizing the human element in their interactions.

Actions:

- **Advocacy Efforts:** There's recognition of the need for advocacy at various levels to address the issues faced by unhoused Indigenous individuals effectively.
- **Focus on Upstream Approaches:** Efforts should be made to target the root causes of homelessness; this can be done by fostering community engagement.

- **Challenges with Treatment Programs:** Criticisms of past treatment programs highlight the need for more effective long-term solutions.
- **Negative Attitudes and Compassion Fatigue:** There's a need to address increased negativity and compassion fatigue among responders over time.
- **Impact of Decriminalization:** Decriminalization efforts need to be accompanied by comprehensive services to address substance abuse effectively.
- **Need for Long-Term Programs and Healthcare Services:** There's a consensus on the importance of long-term programs and robust healthcare services.
- **Challenges with Institutional Processes:** Issues with institutional processes like the Independent Investigation Office highlight the need for improvements.
- **Education and Public Awareness:** There's a call for educating the public about the complexities of homelessness and substance abuse issues.
- **Concerns about Housing Stability:** Efforts should focus on providing housing stability with necessary support for basic life skills and mental health issues.
- **Emphasis on Collaboration and Community Support:** Collaboration between agencies and community support is crucial in addressing homelessness effectively.

These insights reflect the multifaceted challenges faced by first responders and underscore the importance of comprehensive and collaborative approaches to support Indigenous people who are homeless.



First Nation Service Delivery Provision

First Nations Communities and Indigenous service providers on reserve experience both challenges in meeting the needs of those that seek services, but also have unique challenges as they navigate the needs and service requests of members living away from home. Funding jurisdictions based on geography and the on and off reserve boundary, makes it challenging to respond to the needs of PWLLE of homelessness within an urban context. Communities are faced with providing and prioritizing services for their members, while they also support community members living their territory. This creates a challenging dynamic when a First Nation community is so close to an Urban Centre, service providers have with limited capacity and resources, in a complex ecosystem.

Thinking and Feeling

- Indigenous community service providers recognize misconceptions about homelessness and addiction and the stigma, discrimination and racism attached to these issues. Providers feel that society is desensitized to caring for people, especially in larger communities.
- Most individuals shared that they could relate to or had someone within their circle experiencing homelessness.
- They express frustration and worry about the lack of understanding within the dominate system of care, and that they were worried about the impacts on individuals, families, and communities.
- There's a strong sense of community responsibility towards Indigenous people experiencing homelessness and a desire to respond with empathy and understanding.
- There is a realization that the challenges are a result of complex challenges with many rippling impacts that span the generations and that solutions will take some time and effort across sectors.
- Indigenous community service providers acknowledge the challenges of managing complex and vicarious trauma within their work, and within their families with limited support available.
- They highlight that culture, language and Indigenous perspectives are often absent within discussions about homelessness and in the planning and discussions, and that it is not often a priority.
- Indigenous community service providers share that people experience homelessness differently, and that homelessness is more than about a house but about spirituality, belonging, identity and a connection to the land, water and territory. Homelessness also spans across relationships and kinship and can create barriers to connection when individuals 'wear out their welcome'.
- Indigenous community service providers are able to identify systemic barriers such as housing discrimination, oppressive systems and lack of support for single parents, and inadequate knowledge of tenancy rights.

- They advocate for community-led initiatives and culturally relevant housing solutions to address Indigenous homelessness effectively.
- Education is seen as a powerful tool for addressing and supporting mental health stigma, advocating for Indigenous people, and empowering individuals with knowledge about their rights.
- There's a call for increased investment and attention to housing and related industries to address the housing crisis effectively.
- Despite their efforts, Indigenous community service providers feel limited in their ability to help due to resource constraints, jurisdictional and programming boundaries and systemic challenges.
- There is room for reconciliation within the housing sector.

Saying and Doing

- Service providers can often relate to and empathise with those experiencing homelessness and housing precarity and understand the complexity of each community.
- The importance of maintaining an open and welcoming environment for individuals experiencing homelessness, offering support and resources whenever needed.
- They highlight the significance of education as a tool for empowerment, questioning the accessibility of workshops and advocating for free or low-cost educational opportunities.
- Providers express concerns about the systemic issues perpetuating homelessness and the need to focus on prevention strategies despite challenges within the existing system.
- Recognizing that homelessness affects entire families, service providers stress the importance of supporting families alongside individuals experiencing homelessness.
- They offer assistance in navigating complex systems and advocate for improved access to services, including mental health counseling and medical support.
- Service providers work to challenge and address stigma and discrimination related to homelessness, substance use, and Indigenous identity, aiming to create more inclusive and supportive environments.
- They engage in outreach programs to reach individuals who may be experiencing homelessness and provide them with necessary support and resources.
- Providers share positive experiences from shelters and outreach programs, emphasizing the importance of creating welcoming and supportive environments for those in need.
- They acknowledge the challenges and frustrations of their work, including the lack of resources, support for single fathers, and the need for systemic change.

- Service providers see themselves as advocates and resources for individuals experiencing homelessness, offering referrals, support, and guidance to help them navigate their situations.

Hearing and Seeing

- Providers hear and see pervasive stigmas attached to Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness, including assumptions of laziness, addiction issues, and receiving free handouts, contributing to further marginalization.
- Witnessing vulnerable people being unfairly treated and discriminated by landlords.
- Witnessing Indigenous people do not feel worthy of services that are there to support them due to identify issues or colonial discrimination.
- Some providers shared that Indigenous individuals have tried to hide their identity to avoid these stigmas, opting to identify as a different ethnicity to avoid discrimination and negative perceptions.
- Have an understanding that many people are within reach of homelessness, and that Indigenous people are overrepresented in the experience.
- Providers witness significant barriers to accessing resources and support, including transportation challenges, income limitations, and the high cost of living, particularly in the Central Okanagan.
- Providers are seeing many people just over the threshold for accessing housing resources and programming, that there is a perception that some people who need support might not be receiving it.
- Despite hardships, Indigenous individuals often form close-knit street families, providing mutual support and care for one another amidst challenging circumstances.
- Providers encounter complex health and safety risks such as unsafe substances, eviction threats from unsavory landlords and deteriorating health conditions among individuals experiencing homelessness, Elders and Youth included.
- There are misconceptions and stigma surrounding addiction, with individuals facing judgment rather than empathy and support for their struggles.
- Indigenous communities face unique challenges related to housing, including limited resources, political barriers, and discrimination from landlords, exacerbating the risk of homelessness.
- Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness often have intergenerational trauma, exacerbating vulnerabilities and contributing to mental health issues and substance use.

- Providers witness systemic failures in addressing homelessness, including gaps in services, racism within institutions, and a lack of transitional support for those moving out of supportive housing.

Hopes and Fears

- Providers hope for greater awareness and interaction with Indigenous populations and governments to address the root causes of homelessness and provide culturally sensitive support.
- There is a need for more supports tailored to Indigenous youth to prevent homelessness and provide pathways to stable housing and employment.
- Providers emphasize the importance of preventative measures to address homelessness before it occurs, including accessible education on trauma and early intervention strategies.
- The process of reconciliation, including opening the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) files, is seen as a step towards healing and addressing historical trauma within Indigenous communities.
- Providers stress the need to hold governments accountable for addressing Indigenous homelessness and advocate for systemic change to create more equitable housing policies.
- There is a desire to humanize individuals experiencing homelessness and provide empathy and support, recognizing their inherent dignity and rights.
- Providers hope for more culturally relevant programs and housing options tailored to the specific needs and preferences of Indigenous communities.
- There is a need for centralized hubs for resources and support services, including real-time waitlists and housing navigators to assist individuals in accessing available resources.
- More programs supporting clean living and substance abuse recovery are desired to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Providers hope for increased community engagement and participation in addressing Indigenous homelessness, including business conferences focused on supporting Aboriginal housing initiatives.
- Representatives shared that they were hopeful for deep and meaningful relationships, vs one offs, that supported long term collaboration and service building partnerships.

Challenges:

- **Misconceptions and Stigma:** Service providers encounter misconceptions and stigmas attached to Indigenous individuals and organizations, including assumptions about addiction, laziness, and receiving "free handouts." These stereotypes hinder efforts to provide effective support.

Providers also shared that there is a misconception that there is unlimited resources and capacity from local First Nations, and that they don't need additional support.

- **Systemic Failures and Barriers:** Providers face frustration and worry due to systemic failures, including long waits for support services, inadequate access to resources, and transportation and income barriers. These systemic challenges contribute to difficulties in addressing homelessness effectively.
- **Cultural Disconnection and Trauma:** Providers observe a disconnect from Indigenous culture and identity among homeless individuals, along with the impacts of historical trauma and childhood trauma. Lack of cultural understanding and access to trauma-informed care exacerbate the challenges faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Limited Resources and Support:** Providers express concerns about limited resources and support for Indigenous homeless individuals, including insufficient access to counsellors, medical supports, and housing options tailored to cultural needs.
- **Racism and Discrimination:** Racism and discrimination, both within the health sector and in housing practices, pose significant challenges for Indigenous homeless individuals, leading to further marginalization and barriers to accessing support.
- **Transitional Support and Housing Accessibility:** Challenges exist in navigating transitional support for individuals seeking supportive housing, and those wanting to transition from supportive housing to independent living. There are multifaced barriers ensuring housing accessibility and affordability, particularly for single parents and youth aging out of care.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Limited empathy and understanding from decision-makers and landlords contribute to difficulties in advocating for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness and in addressing systemic issues effectively.
- **Community Engagement, Education and Capacity:** Providers face challenges in building capacity to foster community collaboration, engagement, and education to address homelessness effectively, including addressing the lack of understanding about Indigenous mental health issues and addiction within Indigenous communities.

Overall, these challenges highlight the urgent need for systemic change, increased cultural relevance in support services, and enhanced community engagement to effectively address Indigenous homelessness.

Actions:

- **Challenge Misconceptions:** Educate the community about the misconceptions and stigmas surrounding Indigenous homelessness, emphasizing the complexity of the issue and combating stereotypes.

- **Provide Supportive Spaces:** Offer open and welcoming spaces for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness, fostering trust and providing immediate assistance where possible.
- **Address Barriers to Access:** Advocate for improved access to resources such as transportation and income support, recognizing the systemic barriers that contribute to homelessness.
- **Cultural Education and Trauma-Informed Care:** Offer accessible education about trauma and Indigenous culture to service providers, ensuring that support services are culturally sensitive and trauma-informed.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Promote empathy and understanding within the community, challenging stereotypes and stigmas surrounding homelessness and addiction,
- **Advocate for Systemic Change:** Advocate for systemic changes to address homelessness, including increased funding for preventative measures, affordable housing initiatives, and support for Indigenous youth transitioning into adulthood.
- **Community Engagement:** Foster community engagement and dialogue about Indigenous homelessness, encouraging collaboration between Indigenous populations, governments, and service providers.
- **Housing Support Programs:** Develop and support housing support programs tailored to the specific needs of Indigenous communities, including rental assistance, housing navigation services, and culturally relevant housing options.
- **Education and Awareness:** Raise awareness about Indigenous homelessness through community outreach, education initiatives, and advocacy efforts, challenging misconceptions and promoting understanding.
- **Political Advocacy:** Advocate for policy changes and increased government support for Indigenous housing initiatives, holding government officials accountable for addressing the root causes of homelessness.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Build partnerships with other organizations, governments, and community interest holders to leverage resources and support comprehensive solutions to explore creative housing solutions.

Indigenous community service providers can work towards addressing the root causes of Indigenous homelessness and creating supportive, culturally relevant solutions for Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Major findings and insights across themes

Homelessness is Heavy and Emotional Work

Across demographics and sectors, there is overwhelming emotional labor experienced, with diverse nuances and complex layers, emotion is tied to identify, belonging, dignity, family, community, shame, guilt, and frustration. Trauma is complex, multifaceted felt by all those that experience homelessness, have previously experienced homelessness and by those that work within or are connected to the system of care, and is elevated for Indigenous people and service providers because of personal connections to the experience. Emotions are perpetuated by a sense of hopelessness and frustrations with the lack of resources and support which, in turn, negatively impacts the Indigenous health mental health.

Yearning for Knowledge, Education and Training

There is a deep desire for more knowledge, training, and education, both for Indigenous people, those in leadership positions and within mainstream social serving organizations and institutions. Indigenous people are hungry for culture and language and seeking to heal from intergenerational traumas collectively as a community, and as individuals seeking to reclaim their identities and belonging. There is an awareness that the scope of education is vast, and that life skills are needed as much as the more complex concepts such as colonialism, and reconciliation.

Wellbeing and Upstream Approaches to Mental Health and Substance Use Services

There is heightened awareness that mental, and substance use services in their current form do not meet the needs of the Indigenous community, nor the general public. Indigenous PWLLE, community service providers and first responders share that more services are desperately needed, and that recovery-oriented and culturally safe supports would be beneficial, and that systems design doesn't support upstream approaches, and that design limits delivering holistic and person-centered services.

Safety, Security and Connection

Safety and security, inclusive of understanding, dignity and connection were overarching requests by those engaged within the project. Cultural Safety requests were embedded in discussions, and also the need for a more practical approach to physical safety were discussed within housing/ shelters. First Responders working within systems shared that there is more work to be done within the realm of public safety and responding to crisis, and that more can be learned from independent investigations, and how might service provision be supported.

Racial Discrimination, Stigmatization, Oppression and Systems Navigation

Indigenous people face relentless stigmatization and discrimination, both societally and within systems but also within their communities. Participants shared experiences of violence, microaggressions, and racism general that prevented utilizing services. Indigenous people face challenges with accessing services due to a deep fear and mistrust of these systems, as well as a lack of knowledge that some services exist.

Differences across Indigenous Demographics

While there are common themes among the demographics, we also found differences between each of the groups.

Unsheltered Experiences

Those that are experiencing unsheltered homelessness are focused on meeting their basic needs, which include food, clothing, and places to use substances safely. This group of people do their best to form communities to keep themselves safe, but are often separated or moved along by businesses, bylaw and RCMP. Individuals shared that they find rules inconsistent between shelters and challenging, and more clarity is needed at the beginning of shelter stay to avoid breaking the rules unknowingly and being penalized. This group shared that they have little rights, nowhere to store belongings or access hygiene services.

Sheltered Experiences

Those experiencing sheltered homeless defined systemic challenges about navigating pathways to stable housing, long wait times to access inappropriate vulnerability assessments and feelings associated with of going nowhere and falling through the cracks with no follow ups. Participants shared that there were also feelings of being re-colonized within a system, and that there is little knowledge of Indigenous services to things like status cards, and pathways to culturally safe services.

Supportive Housing Experiences

While many people expressed gratitude for having a home, participants expressed concerns around feelings of institutionalism. Often those that live in supportive housing are unable to have friends or family visit, cook their own food and be free of video surveillance. Interestingly, some participants shared that it was challenging to access or receive support for mental health or substance use services in a way that was desired, specifically, participants worried about not being able to stop using substances without being encouraged to begin medication to alleviate those substances.

Indigenous Supportive Housing

Participants within Indigenous Housing shared that while they are grateful and excited to be housed, isolation is a very real challenge, as is reintegrating into community and connecting with cultural resources. Many have not had the opportunity to be engaged or involved in cultural programming. Indigenous supportive housing in Kelowna is also not stable, and very much transitional, leaving participants feeling limited in their abilities to feel secure and at home.

5 years Past Lived Experiences

Previous experiences of homelessness promoted reflection around how difficult it was to be the person they truly are, and that many had developed a pseudo self, or pretend to be tough for safety reasons, and

likely also for self-preservation of such a vulnerable experience. Other reflections included challenges accessing the system, and how people remain in fear of that experience.

Women's Experiences

Discussions with women, provided emphasis on supports for parents and families and community building. There was a strong sense of community responsibility, and an awareness that practical and life skills programming was needed. Indigenous women experience extreme anxiety around housing insecurity as it related to their children and families.

Indigenous and Community Service Providers

Indigenous and Community Service Providers experience a range of emotions, Indigenous practitioners facing intense emotional connection to subject area, and find systemic barriers frustrating and long-term solutions lacking. Service providers share that more engagement and planning is needed, alongside more resources and capacity to support the programming that is necessary, inclusive of upstream interventions and off reserve.

Emergency Services (EMS) and RCMP

EMS and RCMP shared experiences of disconnect between the provincial and local governments, and that the goals and objectives of each are often not in alignment with one another. More advocacy and conversation between collaborators would benefit one another, as would increase hours and availability of essential services. Limited insights into ways to specifically support indigenous people, were understood and that the systems they work within often offer no special response.

Pathways Into Homelessness

SANDRA – Advocate for Indigenous Services in Kelowna

Sandra, a 62-year-old Indigenous woman in Kelowna, faces disconnection from her community and birth family due to early trauma, leading to depression and challenges with isolation.

Despite facing numerous challenges, Sandra has shown remarkable resilience in her journey toward healing. Sandra has been to treatment twice, after the first time she was placed in supportive housing, where she experienced a relapse. After being evicted from supportive housing, Sandra returned to treatment as she was determined to live a healthy life. Currently, Sandra finds herself at the Indigenous transitional housing, Xast Wilten.

Journey Map Insights:

Sandra has experienced challenges due to the lack of available detox facilities and the absence of streamlined transitions from detox to treatment centers.

Sandra wishes there were better systems regarding detox and treatment. There are not enough places to detox in Kelowna, and not a good system for moving those who are in detox to a treatment centre where they can take their next steps in recovery.

Sandra wants to access housing but does not have any reference and experiences racism when trying to access housing, both market and supportive. While some housing experiences have been positive, she has encountered negative situations with landlords entering her premises and harassing her, leaving her vulnerable and unsafe. Sandra desires safe, culturally empowering housing with access to Indigenous support groups and trauma counseling to reconnect with her heritage and heal from past trauma.

SEAN – Seeking Stability and Community Integration

Sean, a 20-year-old Indigenous man, moved to Kelowna with his uncle for job opportunities but ended up experiencing homelessness after their truck, their residence, was impounded due to lack of insurance. This upheaval caused Sean stress and volatility, leading to job loss. Despite previously leading a stable life in the Kootenay area, Sean now feels isolated in Kelowna, lacking friends and support networks. His acquired brain injury complicates his access to services, although he has received support from various organizations. Currently residing in Xast Wilten, Sean suggests shelters should assist with transitioning to permanent housing and goal-setting.

Sean notes that accessing services can be challenging as the applications are complicated and wait lists are long. This is the longest he has gone without employment, and he notes that enrichment activities with people his age would be a great support for integrating into the community in a meaningful and healthy way. Despite challenges, Sean remains hopeful, actively seeking stable employment and housing resembling Kelowna Friendship Society's subsidized housing.

Journey Map Insights:
This is the longest Sean has gone without employment, and he notes that enrichment activities with people his age would be a great support for integrating into the community in a meaningful and healthy way.

DAVID – Housing Hopeful

David is a 41-year-old Indigenous man originally from Saskatchewan, and a member of the Piapot First Nation. Despite his roots, David spent much of his life in Calgary, where he navigated various challenges and experiences.

After a few years in a small local town, where he worked and lived with a co-worker, David faced a setback when his coworker moved away David was left without housing. Shortly after this, David's car broke down, resulting in a lack of transportation to and from jobsite locations. The loss of both housing and employment led David to spend three years in a shelter in Vernon, where he longed for stability and a place to call his own.

David eagerly anticipates the prospect of securing affordable and stable housing, recognizing the significant barrier posed by the unaffordable housing prices in the region. His greatest need currently revolves around finding housing that he can afford on his own terms. Additionally, David aspires to regain his driver's license and access to a vehicle, which would offer him increased mobility and independence.

David is on his way to the John Howard Society for housing assistance through the STEP program, acknowledging the assistance he received from KGM and encouraging others to explore similar resources if needed. He notes that while resources in Kelowna are more abundant compared to Vernon, there is still room for improvement, particularly in terms of housing support services.

Journey Map Insights:
David eagerly anticipates the prospect of securing affordable and stable housing, recognizing the significant barrier posed by the unaffordable housing prices in the region.

Having experienced both positive and negative aspects of shelter living, David reflects on his journey with a mix of hope and frustration. While some days leave him feeling stagnant and uncertain about his future, he remains optimistic about the potential for improvement. David believes that shelters could be enhanced to better meet the needs of individuals like himself, fostering a more supportive and empowering environment for those seeking stability and a fresh start.

Indigenous homelessness in the Central Okanagan presents a multifaceted challenge shaped by systemic barriers and individual experiences. Discrimination, unaffordable housing, and limited access to supportive services emerge as prominent factors contributing to the precarious housing situations faced by Indigenous individuals in the region. From encountering discrimination and affordability barriers while navigating the housing market to experiencing displacement due to conflict, Indigenous people confront a range of obstacles in securing stable housing. Additionally, individuals with complex medical needs struggle to find affordable housing despite relying on essential medical services in Kelowna, underscoring the intersectionality of health and housing challenges. Furthermore, encounters with dismissiveness and discrimination when seeking support services highlight pervasive systemic issues of racial and cultural bias within service provision.

Self-medication leading to addiction, leading to homelessness:

SAMMY'S STORY

Sammy, an Indigenous youth, relocated to Kelowna to be closer to family but faces homelessness due to discrimination in housing and living expenses.

Reflecting on how he became homeless in Kelowna, Sammy notes the limited and poor housing conditions on his reserve. It is not easy for Sammy to reach out and go to services that he needs in Kelowna, especially as he does not want to ask for help. He has not accessed any kind of services in the past month. For this same reason, Sammy does not receive support from his nation or band.

Journey Map Insights:

Sammy's path into homelessness is characterized by a lack of stable housing on-reserve, limited supports in Kelowna, and discrimination in the housing market.

Sammy cannot think of any time he had a positive living situation. He expresses that his life would see the greatest improvement with sobriety, financial resources, and the ability to go home to his reserve. In the future, a hope for Sammy is to have housing that is “just a home”, with a fridge, stove, and somewhere to sleep, however his compounded experiences have left him hopeless about the possibility of change.

ISABELLE'S STORY

Isabelle, a Cree and Carrier woman, came to Kelowna for a change in scenery and was housed for the past year, sharing a rental with a friend. She was happy, making enough money to live, and experiencing positive changes to her mental health. This situation changed drastically upon experiencing conflict with the landlord, resulting in moving out to live with her partner instead. A seemingly good relationship soon became physically abusive, and she now faces homelessness and uncertainty about the future.

Now, her days are spent moving her belongings from her previous residence, though she faces challenges with transportation and storage fees. Discrimination, lack of references, and affordability have hindered her search for housing in Kelowna. While she navigates services relatively easily, Isabelle wishes for more publicity about affordable housing and legal aid for Indigenous peoples experiencing partner violence. Her immediate need is a place to sleep tonight, advocating for more indigenous multifamily homes and increased openness from landlords.

Journey Map Insights:

Isabelle's immediate need is somewhere to sleep tonight. She has stayed in a shelter once before, although it made her feel afraid, and she generally finds alternative places to stay.

GEORGE'S STORY

George, a 70-year-old Indigenous elder from Williams Lake, became homeless after a car accident three years ago left him hospitalized in Kelowna, where he requires ongoing medical care. Despite accessing services from the Kelowna Friendship Society and staying at Xast Wilten, affordable housing remains elusive due to his senior's pension and the high cost of living in Kelowna. However, George remains resilient, actively seeking support and maintaining his sobriety through regular AA meetings while preparing for treatment.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION

Based on the comprehensive engagement and data analysis conducted, the following actionable considerations are proposed to support Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness in the Central Okanagan:

Services & Care

Culturally Relevant Support Services:

- Develop and enhance support services tailored specifically to the cultural needs and preferences of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This could include culturally appropriate housing options, counseling services life skills, and employment programs.
- Community Care for Women: Women prioritize their family and friends, even when they are struggling to find or maintain their own housing. More care and supports for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes would reduce the pressure on women. Including shifting social norms to include cultural perspectives on multigenerational living.
- Mental Health Support: Provide continuous, accessible long-term mental health support and education to address trauma and promote emotional well-being among Indigenous individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness and social challenges.
- Impact of Decriminalization: Decriminalization efforts need to be accompanied by comprehensive services to address substance abuse effectively.
- Resource Awareness: Improve awareness of available resources and support services through effective communication and outreach efforts.

Trauma-Informed Care:

- Implement trauma-informed approaches in service delivery to address underlying trauma and mental health challenges among Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Train service providers to recognize and respond to trauma with sensitivity and compassion.
- Empathy Training: Provide training for staff and community members to enhance their understanding and empathy towards individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- Policy Review: Review and revise shelter rules and policies to ensure they are clear, consistent, and culturally appropriate, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts

- Advocate for and facilitate Indigenous cultural safety assessments to support building capacity of Indigenous service delivery and cultural safety within the housing, homelessness and adjacent sectors.
- Safety and Privacy: Ensure safety, privacy, and respect for individuals in temporary and supportive housing environments, particularly focusing on the unique needs of Indigenous individuals.

Long-Term Support Networks:

- Develop long-term support networks and mentorship programs to facilitate successful transitions out of homelessness for Indigenous individuals. Foster peer support, life skills and mentorship within the Indigenous community.
- Community Building: Foster community connections and support networks to combat isolation and provide a sense of belonging for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness.

Collaboration & Capacity Building

Collaboration with Indigenous Organizations:

- Foster partnerships and collaboration with local Indigenous organizations and leaders to co-design and implement initiatives addressing homelessness. Engage Indigenous communities in decision-making processes to ensure culturally respectful and effective interventions.
- Collaboration and Engagement: Prioritize collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities, interest holders, and decision-makers to ensure their needs and perspectives are prioritized in policy and program development.
- Advocate for First Nations organizations to receive funding to enable them to join conversations that support planning for and serving Urban Indigenous to support building substantive equality across jurisdictional boundaries imposed by colonial practices.

Capacity Building and Education:

- Provide opportunities in the housing and social serving sector for capacity building and education within the Indigenous community, including skills training, financial literacy programs, and access to educational resources. Empower individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and stability.
- Training and Awareness: Require the housing and social serving sector to participate in cultural safety training programs for service providers to enhance understanding and support

for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This should include trauma-informed care and education about Indigenous cultures and histories.

- Education and Awareness: Engage the housing and social serving sectors into conversations that further develop pathways to increasing education about Indigenous cultures, histories, and current issues to combat stereotypes and biases among service providers, community members, and policymakers. This could look like an Indigenous cultural safety assessments.
- Staff Training: Provide ongoing training for staff in shelters, supportive housing, and outreach services to enhance empathy, communication, and trauma-informed care.
- Empowerment: Empower Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness by involving them in decision-making processes and providing avenues for feedback and complaints.
- Employment Assistance for Women: Remove the obstacles for Indigenous women to get jobs, such as providing safe and affordable childcare, pathways out of intimate partner violence, and addressing stigma, to improve Indigenous women's financial, housing stability and wellbeing.

Community Engagement and Outreach:

- Strengthen community engagement and outreach efforts to build trust and rapport with Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Offer accessible and welcoming spaces for community gatherings and social connections.
- Resource Accessibility: Improve access to basic needs such as food, hygiene facilities, and storage for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness to enhance their quality of life and dignity.
- Upstream Interventions: There's a need to shift towards upstream interventions that assess the risks of homelessness and provide appropriate supports to prevent homelessness before it occurs. Service providers need to advocate for policy changes and implement early intervention programs within their organizations to address the root causes of homelessness.

Reconciliation & Cultural Preservation

Action Plans and Reconciliation:

- Emphasize more than land acknowledgment and celebrate genuine reconciliation efforts within homelessness services. Acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples is commendable, yet we recommend organizations create an action plan highlighting the concrete steps they plan to take to support Indigenous communities into the future.

Cultural Preservation and Pride:

- Promote cultural preservation and Indigenous pride among individuals experiencing homelessness through cultural activities, traditional ceremonies, and access to Indigenous language revitalization programs.
- Recognition and Respect: Acknowledge and honor Indigenous knowledge and culture in all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and governance. This can be actioned through ongoing cultural awareness initiatives, representation of First Nations and Indigenous artwork in public spaces and historical markers that share truth telling and the local context to recreate the narrative of Indigenous people belonging in community.

Advocacy & Data Rights

Advocacy for Housing Rights:

- Advocate for Indigenous housing rights and access to affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate housing options. Collaborate with policymakers and interest holders to address systemic barriers and inequities in housing.
- Advocacy and Empowerment: Encourage and support Indigenous individuals' efforts to advocate for themselves, access resources, and heal from past traumas. This could involve supporting initiatives that promote Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty.
- Supportive Housing: Increase access to supportive housing options that are culturally appropriate and respectful of Indigenous traditions and values.
- Policy Changes: Advocate for policy changes that address systemic discrimination and improve access to resources and support for Indigenous communities. This could include changes to housing regulations and increased support for individuals with criminal records.
- Advocacy for Funding and Resources: Service providers need more flexible and increased funding to provide holistic care and preventive support. This could be addressed by lobbying government officials, raising awareness about funding constraints, and collaborating with interest holders to secure sustainable funding solutions. Governments and funding bodies also need to recognize that more flexible funding programs can help prevent harm and save money in the long run.

Data Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Establish mechanisms for ongoing data monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of interventions and ensure continuous improvement. Use data-driven insights to refine and adapt support strategies over time.

These considerations for action aim to address the complex and multifaceted challenges faced by Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness in the Central Okanagan, promoting holistic approaches that prioritize cultural relevance, community collaboration, and long-term sustainability.

Project Advisory Committee Key Considerations for Action

Education, Culture, Language

Cultural Connection and Language Support:

- Collaborate with organizations like Westbank First Nation, Syilx Language House and The Enowkin Centre to support cultural connection and provide language programs aimed at reinforcing identity, particularly within schools and educational institutions.

Enhanced Resources for Indigenous Education:

- Advocate and allocate more resources to schools for learning Indigenous languages, while also incorporating cultural education into service provider training programs, such as the Indigenous Cultural Safety Assessment, to promote greater understanding and support for Indigenous communities.

Education and Empowerment Programs for Marginalized Groups:

- Advocate and provide education programs tailored to individuals who have experienced homelessness, including support for collaboration with colleges/universities, funding initiatives for young men and women, and training programs for advancement while supporting peers with lived and living experience.

Advocacy and Recognition:

- Advocate for public education programs aimed at humanizing the homeless population and fostering home ownership, alongside efforts to educate higher levels of government on the realities faced by marginalized communities. Implement paid life skills programs post-housing attainment to further empower individuals transitioning out of homelessness.

Enhanced Relationships

Family-Centric Support Approach:

- Reinstate traditional family roles within homelessness programs and promote intergenerational relationships, including fostering connections with grandparents and youth through culture and language programs. This could look like an Indigenous Housing First program.
- Encourage collaboration with Indigenous service groups and Nations/bands to address homelessness issues collectively, while also providing education and support for parenting to young men and women.

Community-Centered Trust Building:

- Implement a community-wide approach focused on building trust and faith in institutions. This involves regular meetings with all Indigenous service groups to ensure collective commitment to a common goal.
- Emphasize the importance of learning from individual stories to efficiently support people, particularly focusing on mental health and education. Additionally, convey the significance of First Nations organizations and urban partners in addressing homelessness.
- Develop an Urban Indigenous Action plan to address the needs within the Central Okanagan.

Mental Health & Housing Programming

Comprehensive Healing and Support Centers:

- Establish Healing Centers that cater to high demand, providing a holistic approach to healing and empowerment. These centers should offer traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language and parenting classes, and empowerment programs.
- Advocate for funding for housing on reserves to facilitate the return home of individuals seeking support, following LECoH's principles of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion.

Enhanced Cultural Safety and Access to Resources:

- Improve access to culturally safe shelters and services by standardizing practices and involving individuals from Indigenous communities in their design and operation. Increase community awareness of available programming and services.
- Develop culturally safe consumption sites and increase abstinence housing shelters.
- Invest in smaller supportive housing specifically for Indigenous individuals and prioritize the design of Indigenous-led housing and shelter initiatives.

Policy & Services

Integrated Healing and Support Centers:

- Establish integrated healing centers that cater to various needs, such as traditional healing circles with Elder involvement, language revitalization, parenting classes, and empowerment programs. These centers should adhere to LECoH's principles of Safety, Sense of Belonging, Healing, and Inclusion, while also addressing the lack of community awareness about available programming.
- Advocate for funding for housing on reserves to facilitate the return home of individuals seeking support.

Culturally Safe Infrastructure and Services:

- Build relationships with shelters and transitional housing providers to co-create solutions how to increase cultural safety within shelters and services, leveraging community relationships and education. This involves creating action plans, standardizing cultural safety practices, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives in shelter management.
- Expand abstinence housing options, improve transportation access, and integrate activities like sports, music, and arts into treatment programs.
- Prioritize smaller supportive housing initiatives specifically tailored to Indigenous communities and promote the design and implementation of Indigenous-led housing and shelter projects.

Data Coordination

Sustainable Funding and Resource Accessibility:

- Establish a comprehensive system for the collection and dissemination of available resources, programs, and funding to ensure consistent support for successful existing programs.
- Foster long-term commitment to employment and advocating for unity across Indigenous Peoples to secure housing and services.
- Develop co-operating models and extend the creation of a safety net with attached resources, utilizing a mixed model approach facilitated by development corporations.

Culturally Responsive Data Management and Advocacy:

- Prioritize culturally integrated services and a long-term support network, incorporating Elders and culturally appropriate elements like transportation to the land and decorating to reduce institutionalization.

- Advocate for distinction-based data collection and support Indigenous-led data collection and analysis. Establish culturally safe data collection tools and ensure that data is contextualized and shared transparently to inform decisions.

Strategic Task Force and Actionable Data Utilization:

- Formulate a task force focused on advocacy and the mandate for improving Indigenous housing, utilizing a regional model with concrete timelines to address complex needs and jurisdictional challenges.
- Build capacity in data management and recording methods that prioritize storytelling alongside numerical data. Review and support the implementation of coordinated access systems, while advocating for an Okanagan-based census and putting collected data into actionable use to avoid over-researching.
- Advocate for the relinquishing of government control over data to empower Indigenous communities in decision-making processes.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Project Advisory Committee List

Organization	Contact Name	Contact Email or Phone Number
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*Organizations, contacts, and contact information are subject to change.

The Project Advisory Committee will work together to determine the organizations that will contribute to the Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellness in the Journey Towards Home Project. The PAC will play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of any project by providing invaluable guidance and expertise throughout its lifecycle. By regularly reviewing project progress, offering cultural insights, and identifying potential challenges, the committee enhances project governance, fosters collaboration, and promotes accountability. The PAC's ability to anticipate and address issues in a timely manner enables agile adaptation to changing circumstances, ultimately leading to the successful delivery of projects that meet both expectations and objectives.

Appendix B: Interviews Guide

Indigenous People With Lived And Living Experience Of Homelessness

Before the interview starts, we will introduce ourselves and provide participants with information about the project, including how their information will be used. We will explain that all questions are voluntary and that they are welcome to skip any questions they don't want to answer. We will share that the purpose of this project is to better understand Indigenous experiences of homelessness with the goal of improving services and housing for Indigenous people in Kelowna. These questions provide our structure, but interviewers will be flexible and provide space for what participants want to share.

As part of our invitation, we will ask participants how best we can deliver their honorarium. We will also invite them to bring a friend, family member, or trusted service provider should they feel more comfortable having someone else present at the interview.

- What is your name? Can you tell us a bit about yourself? How old are you? If you've come here from another community, what brought you to Kelowna and when?
- Are you connected to a First Nations or Inuit community, or identify as a Metis citizen? If so, where is your home community and do you receive any support or assistance either formally or informally?
- Where do you call home, or what is your experience of housing within your community?
- Do you feel like your housing is stable or are you experiencing housing insecurity?
- If you are housed, what is your housing situation like today? What kind of housing do you live in? (e.g., rent own apartment, have roommates, supportive housing, etc.)
- If you are housed, how did you find your current place and how long did it take for you to find it?
- If not, where do you sleep? How long have you been without a home?
- What issues have you experienced when looking for a home in Kelowna? What do your days look like?
- Have you experienced discrimination while seeking housing or services? Has discrimination impacted your ability to find housing in the past?
- How easy has it been for you to find the services you need in Kelowna?
- Have you accessed any kinds of services or supports in the past month? If so, what kind? Are any Indigenous specific? Do you know about Indigenous services in your community? If participant says they do not access services or supports, skip the follow-up questions below.

- What services would you recommend to a friend who was at risk of homelessness or struggling to find housing?
- Are there some services or supports that you think work well? If yes, what works?
- Are there some services or supports that you think do not work or could work better? What doesn't work well?
- What services or supports do you think are needed in Kelowna and not currently offered?
- Have you stayed in a shelter before? If no: why not? (without probing) If participant says no, skip the follow-up questions.
- Was the experience positive or negative? What about your stay made it positive or negative?
- How could local/Kelowna shelters be improved?
- Have you ever gone to another community to access shelter or Indigenous specific services that you needed but couldn't find in Kelowna? What services were these?
- Follow-up question: Have you had to leave Kelowna to access shelter or services that you needed but couldn't find? Where did you go to? What services were provided?
- Describe an example of a housing situation that was really positive for you. What made that housing situation positive?
- Follow-up question: Did that positive housing experience impact other parts of your life? How?
- Describe an example of a housing situation that was really negative for you. What made that housing situation negative?
- Follow-up question: Did that negative housing experience impact other parts of your life? How?
- If your housing needs are not being met right now, what kind of housing would meet your needs today?
- What is your greatest need right now? What would make the biggest difference to your life right now?
- Is there anything else you would like to add? Anything you want to make sure we hear about the needs of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or housing issues in Kelowna?

INTERVIEW GUIDE - ORGANIZATIONS

Preamble

Hello, my name is [name, position, organization]. Thank you for making time to participate in this interview. We're working on behalf of the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society on the Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellness in the Journey Towards Home Project which is focused on better understanding Indigenous housing and homelessness in Kelowna.

As part of this work, we are currently conducting interviews with organizations to understand trends and factors that contribute to Indigenous homelessness in Kelowna, to identify programs for Indigenous people and how well they are being used, as well as service and housing gaps that are contributing to Indigenous homelessness in Kelowna.

I have a list of questions to ask you today and I'll be taking notes as we go along. After the interviews are completed, we will summarize all of the findings thematically. We will not attribute any specific comments to you. However, we will include a list of the individuals and organizations that were interviewed as part of this study in the final report.

Are you comfortable having your name and organization listed in our report?

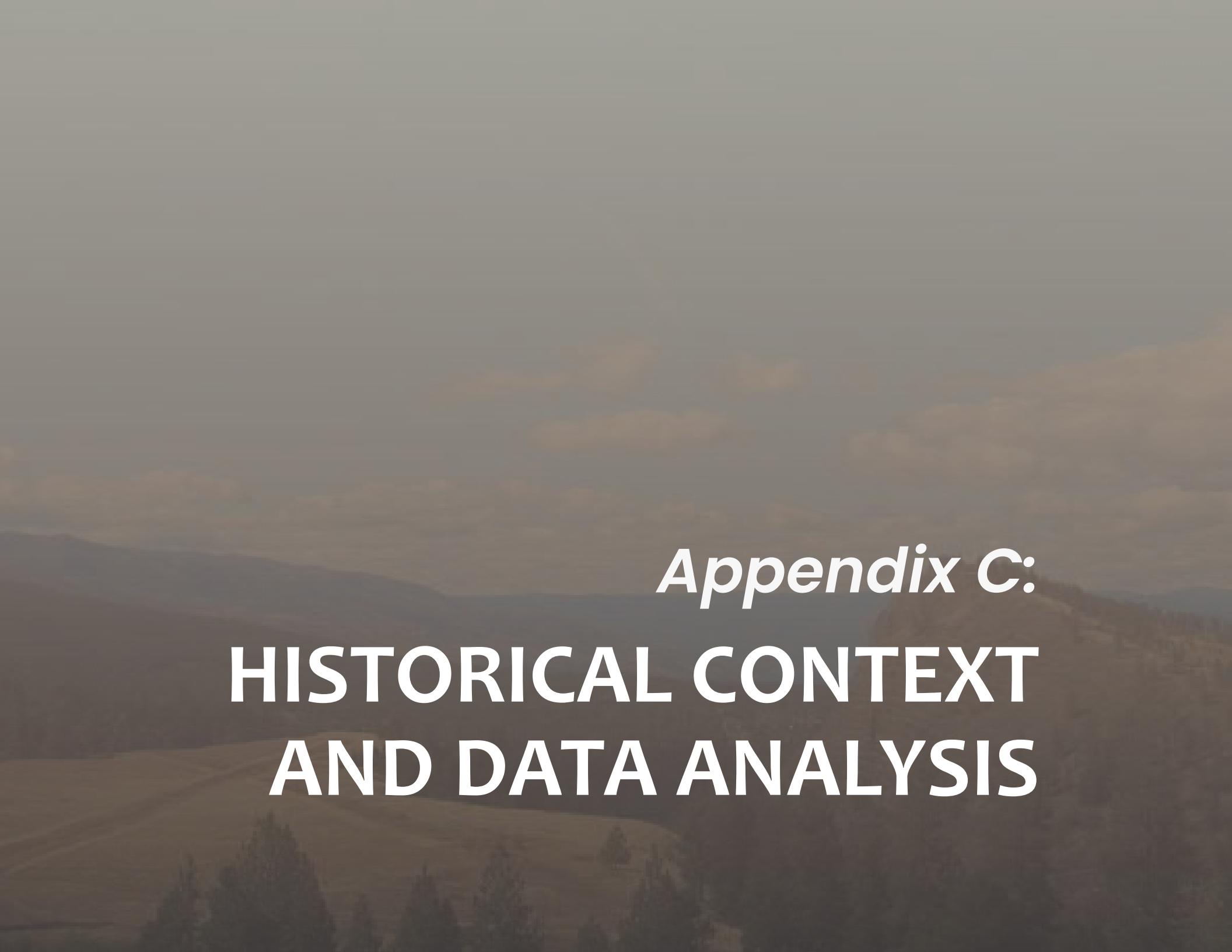
In terms of our interview, all our questions are voluntary and please let us know if we ask a question that you're unable to answer.

Do you have any questions about this interview or the project before we get started?

Interview Questions

- Please introduce yourself, your role, and your organization.
- What programs, services, resources, or other opportunities does your organization offer to support the well-being of Indigenous people, and Indigenous people experiencing homelessness?
- Do you have any programs or services specifically funded for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness? Are these available to all Indigenous people, or to certain groups?
- What pathways into homelessness are you observing with individuals your organization works with? What factors are contributing to an Indigenous person's risk of homelessness in Kelowna? Have these pathways changed over time?
- In your experience, what enables (or motivates) Indigenous people to participate in or use programs, services, events, resources, or other opportunities that are available to them?
- What has enabled your organization to create, deliver and/or sustain opportunities for people experiencing homelessness?

- In your experience, what, if any, barriers (real or perceived) prevent Indigenous people from participating in or using programs, services, events, resources, or other opportunities that are available to them? Are there certain demographics (e.g., youth, Elders, mothers) who experience additional barriers?
- What, if any, challenges have your organization experienced in creating, delivering and/or sustaining opportunities for Indigenous people?
- Prompt: Are there programs, services, events, resources, or other opportunities that were popular, but you are no longer able to offer because of these challenges?
- What do you believe are gaps in the programs, services, events, resources, or other opportunities available to support the well-being of Indigenous people in Kelowna?
- What do you think is needed to better Indigenous people experiencing or “at-risk” of homelessness in Kelowna?
- Do you have any Indigenous staff within your organizational or strategies in place that support meeting the needs of Indigenous people?
- What do you need to better support Indigenous people experiencing homelessness?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know?



Appendix C: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND DATA ANALYSIS

Supporting the Journey Towards Home: An Overview of Historical and Current Indigenous Housing Precarity in the Okanagan

PREPARED FOR: KI-LOW-NA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

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May 6, 2024

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GLOSSARY

Aboriginal: Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples including Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples. The term “aboriginal” is used in a legal context.

Affordable housing: Housing that costs no more than 30% of household income before taxes.

Colonization: The process by which a dominant group establishes control over a territory and its inhabitants, often resulting in the exploitation and marginalization of indigenous peoples.

Complex trauma: The exposure of children to multiple traumatic events, often involving interpersonal harm, and the extensive, enduring consequences of such exposure. These events, which commonly include severe and pervasive forms of abuse or neglect, typically occur during early developmental stages, profoundly disrupting various aspects of a child's growth and the establishment of self-identity.

Core housing need: A private household that falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds and spend 30% or more of its total pre-tax income to pay the median rent. Housing indicator thresholds include:

- Adequate housing is reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs.
- Affordable housing has shelter costs equal to less than 30% of total before tax household income.
- Non-family households with at least one maintainer aged 15 to 29 attending school are considered not to be in 'core housing need' regardless of their housing circumstances. Attending school is considered a transitional phase, and low incomes earned by student households are viewed as being a temporary condition.

A **culturally safe** environment is the desired outcome and can only be defined by the Indigenous person receiving care in a manner that is safe and does not profile or discriminate against the person but is experienced as respectful, safe and allows meaningful communication and service. It is a physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually safe environment, without challenge, ignorance or denial of an individual's identity. To be culturally safe requires positive anti-racism stances, tools and approaches and the continuous practice of cultural humility.

First Nation: First Nations people include both status and non-status “Indians” under the Indian Act.

Homelessness: Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.

Household: A group of people who live together and share common living arrangements, such as a family or group of roommates.

Housing vulnerability: The susceptibility of individuals or households to housing-related risks, including eviction, displacement, and homelessness, often due to factors such as poverty, discrimination, or inadequate housing conditions.

Indian: The Government of Canada uses the term “Indian” because it has a legal meaning in the *Indian Act*. This term is defined in the *Indian Act* as a person who is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.

Indigenous: Refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists.

Indigenous Homelessness: Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships.

Inuit: The literal translation of Inuit is “The People” and refers to all Indigenous peoples living in arctic regions.

Intergenerational trauma: The transmission of trauma from one generation to the next, often resulting from experiences of violence, oppression, or discrimination.

Metis: Indigenous peoples who are descendants of combined First Nation and European ancestry, people who have continued ties to a historical Métis community and are accepted as such by that community. Métis identity is also adopted by some non-status Aboriginal peoples and others who have mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, yet are not connected to a contemporary Métis society. Others use *Métis* as a blanket term to identify anyone with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, regardless of how that person may self-identify.

Non-market housing: Housing that is provided or subsidized by the government or non-profit organizations, often targeting low-income or vulnerable populations.

OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession): A framework developed to assert Indigenous rights to data and information, emphasizing principles of ownership, control, access, and possession over data collected by external researchers or institutions.

Point-in-Time (PiT) count: A method used to estimate the number of homeless individuals or households within a particular geographic area at a specific point in time, typically conducted through a survey or census.

Post-majority care: Support services and resources provided to individuals who have aged out of the foster care system or other forms of youth care, often aimed at assisting with the transition to independent living.

Substantive Equality: A concept emphasizing genuine equality in outcomes, addressing systemic discrimination and structural inequalities to ensure equitable opportunities for all individuals and groups. When substantive equality does not exist, inequality remains.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report delves into the complexity of the Indigenous experience of homelessness in Canada, with a particular focus on the Central Okanagan region. It begins by providing an overview of the data available and context within Central Okanagan and the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, the organization central to this study. The report then delves into the historical roots of Indigenous homelessness, tracing its origins to colonialism and examining its enduring impacts on Indigenous communities.

Key sections of the report explore access to data on Indigenous homelessness, the historical events contributing to the crisis, and the intersecting issues of Indigenous peoples within the institutions and systems. The report also highlights contemporary efforts toward truth and reconciliation, examining concepts such as cognitive imperialism, epistemic privilege, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

A demographic analysis offers insights into Indigenous population and household demographics in the Central Okanagan, providing crucial context for understanding the scope of the issue. The report concludes by emphasizing the importance of addressing Indigenous homelessness and offers considerations for action to guide future efforts in combating this pressing social issue.

Throughout, this report aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Indigenous homelessness in Canada and to inform meaningful action toward reconciliation and social justice.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Housing and homelessness are complex and increasingly critical issues for Kelowna's Indigenous population. Indigenous residents experience homelessness disproportionately as evidenced by the number of Indigenous individuals at local shelters and applicants for the supportive housing registry; however, according to local Indigenous service providers, point-in-time (PiT) counts likely highly underestimate the proportion of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness, and the depth of these experiences. The experience of homelessness is complex for Indigenous people and is not reflected in a contemporary enumeration of being without a home, but also is more fully described as isolation from family, communities, lands, water, kinship, animals, language and culture. Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness do not have opportunities to connect culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships.

Current economic forces are further increasing pressures on housing prices, inflation, and cost of living. Vulnerable Indigenous residents in Kelowna are experiencing these pressures through challenges related to affordability and cost of living more acutely than ever before (Projecting Demand for Supportive Housing in Kelowna, 2022). This, combined with a housing and service system that is often colonial in nature, means that the leadership of Indigenous partners is critical to moving towards more positive housing outcomes for Indigenous residents in the Central Okanagan.

Enumeration of Indigenous people and their experiences, within the unsheltered population has not been a primary focus of national or local efforts to address homelessness. Due to limited census data, the local capacity of support organizations to highlight Indigenous needs has often been a lower priority and under resourced. For example, while the City of Kelowna's Housing Needs Assessment recognizes the underrepresentation of the Indigenous community within available studies, that missing data has contributed to a lack of funding and a lack of understanding about some of the root causes behind Kelowna's unsheltered Indigenous population.

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, with support from Urban Matters CCC, has received funding through the National Housing Strategy (NHS) Research and Planning Fund program of research activity stream to explore research, and make connections that will fuel and support the implementation of future culturally responsive programs addressing the housing needs of Indigenous residents in the Central Okanagan.

INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

Due to a variety of factors, which are touched upon in this report, Indigenous peoples have a disproportionately higher rate of homelessness across Canada. Research shows that Indigenous homelessness in major urban areas range from 20-50% of the total homeless population.

A 2013 study into Indigenous homelessness found that 1/ in 15 Indigenous peoples in urban centres experience homelessness compared to 1/ in 128 for the general population (or 8 times more likely to experience homelessness).

ABOUT THE DATA

The 2021 census data in this report was provided upon request to the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society by Statistics Canada (StatsCan). The data covers the Central Okanagan Census Division, and provides an Indigenous focus on household status, core housing need, shelter to income ratios, and demographics.

Census data may not accurately reflect the Indigenous population for several reasons:

Undercounting: Indigenous populations may be undercounted in census data due to factors such as distrust of government authorities, cultural differences in understanding census questions, or logistical challenges in reaching remote or rural Indigenous communities.

Data Collection Methods: Traditional census methods, such as door-to-door surveys or mailed questionnaires, may not effectively reach Indigenous populations living in non-traditional housing arrangements, such as on reserves or in urban areas.

Self-Identification: Census data relies on individuals self-identifying their Indigenous status. However, historical and ongoing discrimination, social stigma, or mixed ancestry may lead some Indigenous individuals to not identify themselves as such on census forms.

Geographical Mobility: Indigenous populations often have higher rates of geographical mobility compared to the general population. This mobility can make it difficult for census data to accurately capture the true size and distribution of Indigenous communities.

Cultural Sensitivity: Census questions may not be culturally sensitive or relevant to Indigenous communities, leading to reluctance or confusion in responding accurately.

Overall, these factors contribute to the challenge of accurately representing Indigenous populations in census data, highlighting the need for alternative data collection methods and approaches that prioritize cultural sensitivity and community engagement.

The BC Housing data was provided upon request to the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society by BC Housing. The data focuses on non-market Indigenous housing.

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society asserts that the data is Indigenous owned, and considers the use of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles as an equitable evaluation best practice. This approach ensures that the information gathered about Indigenous peoples as part of this project is returned to the community.

ACCESS TO AND COORDINATION OF DATA

Data stewardship refers to the responsible management and oversight of data assets within an organization or community. It involves establishing policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that data is handled ethically, securely, and in compliance with relevant regulations and standards. Data stewards are individuals or teams responsible for overseeing the lifecycle of data, including its collection, storage, usage, sharing, and disposal. They play a crucial role in maintaining data quality, integrity, and accessibility while balancing the needs of various stakeholders.

Data sovereignty, on the other hand, refers to the concept of asserting control and ownership over one's data. It emphasizes the rights of individuals, organizations, or nations to determine how their data is collected, processed, stored, and shared. Data sovereignty is particularly relevant in the context of digital information crossing geographical boundaries, where concerns about data privacy, security, and jurisdictional authority arise. It often involves implementing laws, regulations, or contractual agreements to protect data from unauthorized access or exploitation by external parties. Additionally, data sovereignty may entail efforts to localize data storage or processing infrastructure to ensure that data remains subject to local laws and governance frameworks. Overall, data sovereignty aims to empower individuals and communities to assert control over their data and protect their rights in an increasingly interconnected and data-driven world.

There has been, and continues to be, work underway between Infrastructure Canada, BC's Ministry of Housing, the Indigenous Community Entities the non-Indigenous Community Entity and the City of Kelowna to launch HIFIS. HIFIS is the acronym for the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System and is a comprehensive software that was created by the federal government to track the progress of federal funding for homelessness initiatives. The situation in BC is complicated, with privacy requirements between governments being different, and coordinated access to housing through BC Housing leaves out all of the non-housing service providers. Both Community Entities are now funding the City of Kelowna to undertake the broader coordinated access function instead of the Central Okanagan Journey Home Society.

From an Indigenous perspective, data stewardship and data sovereignty take on additional dimensions related to self-determination, cultural preservation, and Indigenous rights. Data stewardship involves respecting Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural protocols, and community values when managing data related to Indigenous communities. It requires establishing protocols for data collection, storage, and usage that prioritize Indigenous self-governance and community consent. Data stewards within Indigenous communities may include knowledge keepers, elders, or community leaders who ensure that data practices align with traditional values and benefit the community as a whole.

Data sovereignty, from an Indigenous perspective, asserts the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to govern their own data and control how it is used, shared, and accessed. It recognizes that Indigenous data is not only a resource but also a reflection of Indigenous identity, history, and self-determination. Data sovereignty empowers First Nations communities to determine the terms under which their data is collected, managed, and utilized, including the right to withhold consent or negotiate agreements with external parties.

Key considerations for data sovereignty from a First Nations perspective include:

Cultural Protocols: Respecting cultural protocols and traditional knowledge systems when collecting and managing data, including obtaining free, prior, and informed consent from Indigenous communities.

Community Governance: Empowering First Nations communities to govern their own data through community-driven processes and decision-making structures.

Capacity Building: Building capacity within First Nations communities to manage data effectively, including training community members in data management, analysis, and governance.

Data Access and Control: Ensuring that First Nations communities have control over who can access their data and under what conditions, including mechanisms for protecting data privacy and confidentiality.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Fostering partnerships and collaboration between First Nations communities, governments, researchers, and other stakeholders to support Indigenous-led research, data governance, and knowledge exchange initiatives.

WHAT THE DATA TELL US

The 2021 StatsCan data offer valuable insights into the state of Indigenous housing and homelessness in the Central Okanagan. It reveals that a significant proportion of Indigenous households in the region, accounting for 45%, are renters, a stark contrast to the 28% of non-Indigenous households in the same category.

While the age distribution among Indigenous and non-Indigenous renters is comparable, Indigenous individuals between 15-44 are more likely to rent. Despite Indigenous households boasting a higher median income, this statistic is somewhat skewed by the larger average household size of 2.9 persons compared to 2.3 persons in the Central Okanagan. The larger average size of Indigenous households indicates the need for larger units to provide adequate housing to the Indigenous population in the Central Okanagan.

Indigenous renters are predominantly comprised of one family households across all categories, highlighting a distinct housing trend. Additionally, while median income in core housing need is lower for

Indigenous lone-parent households, it is comparable to non-Indigenous couple and non-family households.

The rate of core housing need among Indigenous renter households increases as the age of the primary household maintainer advances. Despite similar rates of core housing need between Indigenous and non-Indigenous households in the Central Okanagan, Indigenous renter households exhibit a higher proportion of core housing need compared to Indigenous owner households, which is also comparable to non-Indigenous households. Generally, renter households have higher core housing need due to lower average income, and instability of the rental market.

Indigenous individuals constitute a disproportionate percentage of the homeless population, as evidenced by the PiT Count Report from 2020. Given the subsequent rise in homelessness since 2020, it is likely that Indigenous peoples remain overrepresented in the homeless community in the Central Okanagan. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address Indigenous housing insecurity and homelessness in the region.

In summary, there are significant and distinct housing needs for the Indigenous community in the Central Okanagan. Indigenous households are more likely to rent, more likely to be lone-parents, and live in larger households with similar or less income than smaller non-Indigenous households. These factors impact the likelihood of experiencing core housing need, and when combined with current rental market conditions in the Central Okanagan (low vacancy rates, low availability, and increasing cost of rentals) put Indigenous renters at risk of housing vulnerability.

Overall, data stewardship and data sovereignty from a First Nations perspective center on the principles of self-determination, Indigenous rights, and respect for cultural autonomy, with the goal of empowering Indigenous communities to control their own data and use it to advance their collective interests and well-being.



INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. ABOUT THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

The Central Okanagan is a region of interior British Columbia that is comprised of the municipal boundaries of Peachland, West Kelowna, Kelowna, and Lake Country. The region is located upon the unceded, and vast traditional and ancestral territory of the Syilx Okanagan People whose culture and ways of knowing have been shaped by the land and passed down generationally since time immemorial. Pre-colonization, an estimated 12,000 people lived and thrived in the Okanagan valley and surrounding areas. Colonization disrupted Syilx Okanagan ways of meeting fundamental needs like shelter and food and put family systems under enormous strain. Colonial assimilation policies designed to disrupt connection between Indigenous families, communities, and the land had devastating impacts on Syilx Okanagan communities, and the impacts continue to be seen and felt as symptoms of intergenerational trauma. Despite the ongoing impacts of colonization, Syilx People continue to be caretakers of the land and waterways in the Central Okanagan, advocating for environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and strengthening of community ties. Today the Syilx Okanagan People continue to assert their jurisdiction and responsibility over the stewarding of their land, resources, and quality of life of their citizens.

The population of the Central Okanagan was 222,162 according to the 2021 Census. In the 2021 Census 13,420 individuals indicated Indigenous identity, or approximately 6% of the total population. In the last century, the Central Okanagan has been a location for Indigenous Peoples of other regions to migrate following displacement due to the impacts of colonialism, the temperate climate and agricultural industry was once a key industry for employment, and now is a resource hub for healthcare, education, social services and economic opportunities. The Okanagan is also known for its stunning natural beauty, with its lakes, vineyards, and recreational opportunities, which makes it an attractive destination for both tourists and those seeking a high quality of life. Additionally, the region's relatively mild climate compared to other parts of Canada makes it appealing for retirees and those looking to escape harsher weather conditions. Furthermore, the Okanagan has experienced significant population growth in recent years, driven by factors such as immigration, interprovincial migration, and urbanization, which has increased demand for housing. This growing population, coupled with limited land availability and strict zoning regulations in certain areas, has led to a tight housing market and rising property prices, making the Okanagan a sought-after location for real estate investment.

1.2. ABOUT THE KI-LOW-NA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (KFS) was founded in 1974 as a non-profit society that provides urban Indigenous people advocacy for, and access to the vital services they need to succeed in an urban setting. KFS has been the Indigenous Community Entity responsible for facilitating the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Strategy Indigenous funding in the Kelowna Area since 2022 and has been leading culturally safe services for Indigenous homelessness programming since approximately 2005. This newly established leadership positions allow the organization to support and build Indigenous

capacity within the homelessness sector, and provide leadership and advisory support to community, while upholding Indigenous values and cultural sensitivity.

KFS is often the first point of contact to access culturally based socio-economic programs and services related to:

- **Culture:** Language, Cultural Activities, Arts
- **Family Supports:** Childcare, Anti-Violence, Youth, Homelessness
- **Health:** Mental Health, Disability, Illness, Sport & Hobbies
- **Social Support:** Food Security, Transportation, Justice, Finances
- **Development:** Education, Employment, Life Skills, Training

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, with support from Urban Matters CCC, has received funding through the National Housing Strategy Research and Planning Fund program of research activity stream to explore research, and make connections that will fuel and support the implementation of future culturally responsive programs addressing the housing and intersecting needs of Indigenous residents in Kelowna.

1.3. ABOUT THIS REPORT

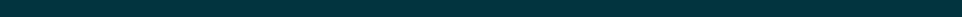
Housing and homelessness are complex and increasingly critical issues for Kelowna's Indigenous population. Indigenous residents experience homelessness disproportionately as evidenced by the number of Indigenous clients at local shelters and applicants for the supportive housing registry; however, according to local Indigenous service providers, point-in-time (PiT) counts likely underestimate the proportion of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. Current economic forces are further increasing pressures on housing prices, inflation, and cost of living. Vulnerable Indigenous residents in Kelowna are experiencing these pressures through challenges related to affordability and cost of living more acutely than ever before (Projecting Demand for Supportive Housing in Kelowna, 2022). This, combined with a housing and service system that is often colonial in nature, means that the leadership of Indigenous partners is critical to moving towards more positive housing outcomes for Kelowna's Indigenous community.

Enumeration of Indigenous people within the unsheltered population has not been a primary focus of national or local efforts to address homelessness. Due to limited census data, the local capacity of support organizations to highlight Indigenous needs has often been a lower priority and under resourced. For example, while the City of Kelowna's Housing Needs Assessment recognizes the underrepresentation of the Indigenous community within available studies, that missing data has contributed to a lack of funding and a lack of understanding about some of the root causes behind Kelowna's unsheltered Indigenous population.

This report seeks to compile the relevant available data on Indigenous housing and homelessness on a regional scale and compare the findings to the information available at a provincial/national scale and explore conclusions that can be used to better understand the issues in the Central Okanagan. By merging this quantitative data with qualitative information gleaned through interviews with PWLLE (People with Lived and Living Experience) and local support organizations, a clearer picture will emerge of what steps must be taken in the journey towards home.

REVIEW OF HISTORICAL COLONIALISM

And It's Impact on the Indigenous
Experience of Housing



REVIEW OF HISTORICAL COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE OF HOUSING

1.4. HISTORICAL ROOTS OF INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

Homelessness in Canada is a complex and multifaceted issue that affects individuals and communities across the country. While homelessness can arise from a variety of factors such as economic instability, mental health challenges, and substance abuse issues, Indigenous peoples in Canada are disproportionately represented among the homeless population, which is directly tied to colonization, discrimination, and racial oppression.

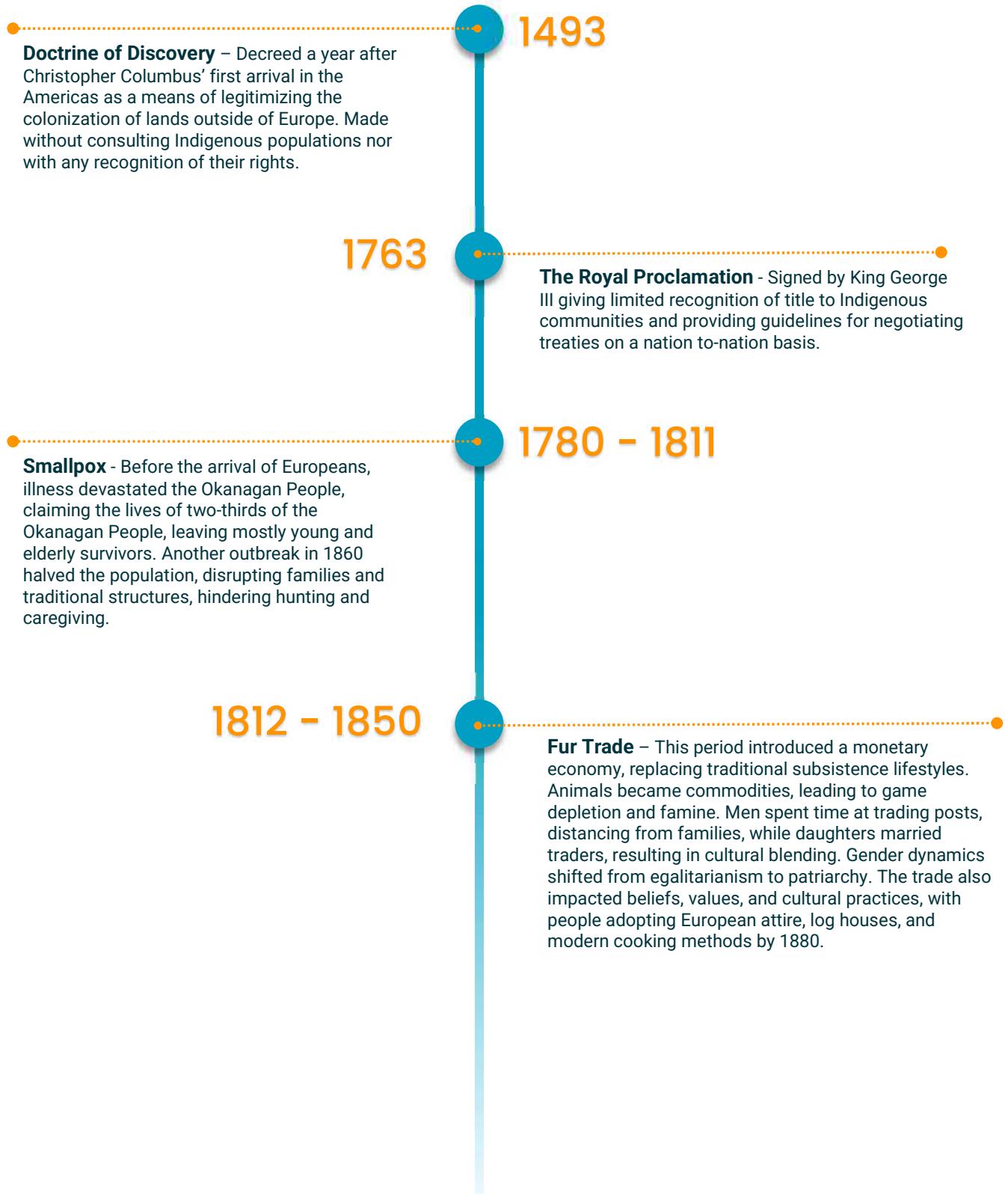
Ongoing circumstances such as colonization, displacement from traditional lands and resources, and the intergenerational trauma resulting from the residential school system, the child welfare and justice systems have contributed significantly to the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canada's homeless population. These systemic injustices have erased culture, language, family relationships, and created barriers to housing, employment, and social services for Indigenous communities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and homelessness.

Research shows that Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by homelessness within urban settings. Across Canada, 1/15 Indigenous individuals experience homelessness within urban settings compared to 1/128 of the general population on any given night. Limited local data highlights a similar disproportionate trend in Kelowna.

In Canadian society, the concept of "home" is viewed from a Western and colonial perspective and significantly differs from an Indigenous understanding of home (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, & Distasio, 2015). A Western perspective recognizes home as an "...animate social force that was generative of proper gender roles, work habits, and domestic ways" (Homeward Trust Edmonton et al., 2015) and is often considered to be a "brick and mortar building" (Thistle, 2017), while the Indigenous community highlight networks of responsibilities and connections when considering home (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, & Distasio, 2015). These differences in the definition of "home", and the ongoing and historical factors that have led to disproportionate Indigenous homelessness and are the lenses that the qualitative and quantitative research will use throughout the *Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellness in the Journey Towards Home* project.

Efforts to address Indigenous homelessness emphasize the importance of Indigenous-led initiatives, culturally sensitive supports, and an approach that prioritizes reconciliation.

1.5. TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS



1850 – 1900

Settlers Arrive in the Okanagan - During the gold rush, settlers, including farmers, ranchers, and missionaries, flocked to the region, encroaching on First Nations lands. This led to reduced reserve sizes and dietary changes among Indigenous peoples, with the introduction of alcohol exacerbating disparities and social inequality. Despite challenges, intermarriages promoted cultural blending and peaceful coexistence, albeit overshadowed by individualism replacing communal values.

1867

British North America Act (now known as Constitution Act, 1867) Colonial responsibility for Indigenous peoples and lands is transferred to the new federal government.

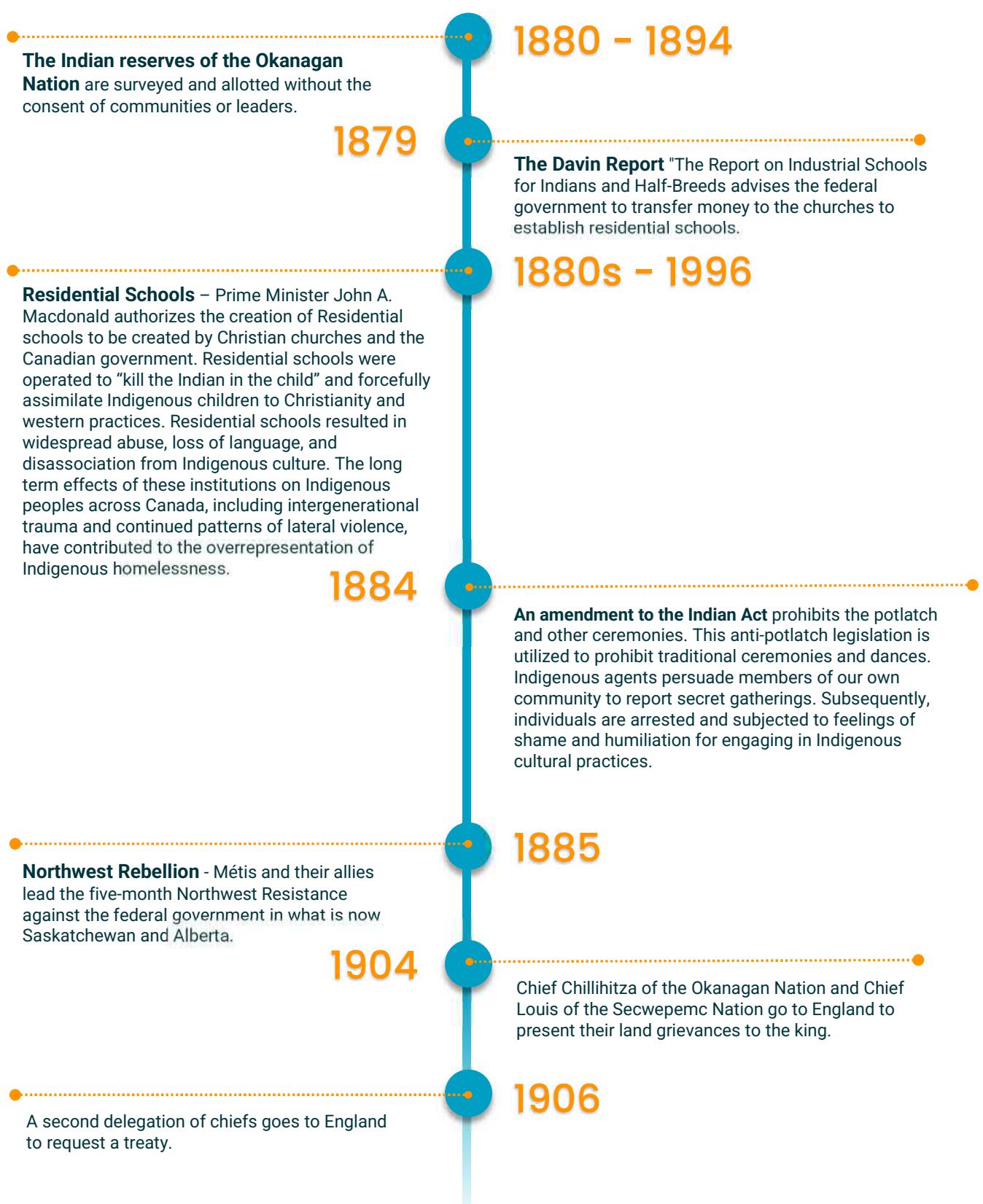
11 Numbered Treaties facilitated European settlement by opening Indigenous territories for European settlement. Indigenous peoples received reserves, cash payments, and rights to agriculture, hunting, and fishing in exchange. However, the government consistently disregarded the treaties' spirit and intent resulting in territory loss with minimal benefit to Indigenous peoples.

1876

1871 – 1921

The Indian Act, passed by the Canadian parliament, aimed at assimilating Indigenous peoples by regulating their economic, social, and political aspects. Key restrictions include:

- banning hereditary chiefdoms and other forms of governance
- expropriating reserve lands for public purposes
- requiring permission to leave reserves
- prohibiting cultural practices like the potlatch and sun dances
- mandating attendance at Residential Schools
- revoking Indian status upon enfranchisement
- necessitating government consent for legal representation in land claims
- disenfranchisement and disempowerment of Indigenous women upon marrying non-Indigenous individuals”



1909

Interior Salish Nations form the political organization Interior Tribes of BC.

1910

The chiefs of the Interior Tribes submit a declaration to Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, rejecting British Columbia's land policies and advocating for a just settlement. Although Laurier expresses sympathy, his tenure is short-lived as he loses the election. Subsequently, the incoming Conservative government further diminishes Indigenous land by allocating more territory for railway construction and mining purposes.

1916

Delegation of Interior Tribes travels to Ottawa to assert territory and reject the mandate of the McKenna-McBride Commission as unfair.

1950s & 60s

Sled dogs are killed as part of the **Sled Dog Slaughter**, a government assimilationist initiative to force the Inuit of Northern Québec to deny their nomadic lifestyle and move them away from their traditional lands.

Three newly formed Friendship Centres emerge in Canada: the North American Indian Club in Toronto, the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club in Vancouver and the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre in Winnipeg.

1951

Indian Act is revised; ban on potlatch is lifted and the prohibition regarding the pursuit of land claims is removed.

1953

Inuit Relocation - The federal government forcefully moves Inuit from Inukjuak in northern Québec to Ellesmere and Cornwallis Islands as a tool to assert Canadian territorial claims in the Arctic. Following public pressure, the federal government created a program to relocate the Inuit back to northern Quebec which led to further fracturing of generational lines.

1960

Status Indians receive the **right to vote** in federal elections, no longer losing their status or treaty rights in the process.

1960s

The Sixties Scoop - An estimated 20,000 Indigenous babies and children are taken from their families and placed in residential schools or foster homes of middle-class Euro-Canadian families. The 2015 TRC report addresses the effects of the Sixties Scoop on Indigenous communities:

- Resulted in generational and historical trauma negatively impacting parenting skills, social values, economic conditions, and future success.
- Contributed overwhelming rates of suicide, homicide, depression, substance abuse, alcoholism, child abuse, domestic violence, struggles with self-identity, and other social problems.
- Prejudicial attitudes toward Indigenous parenting skills and poverty, leading to disproportionately high rates of child apprehension among Indigenous people.

1968

The American Indian Movement (AIM) is established with the goal of advocating for Indigenous sovereignty. In 1973, AIM orchestrates an armed confrontation with federal authorities at Wounded Knee, which persists for over two months.

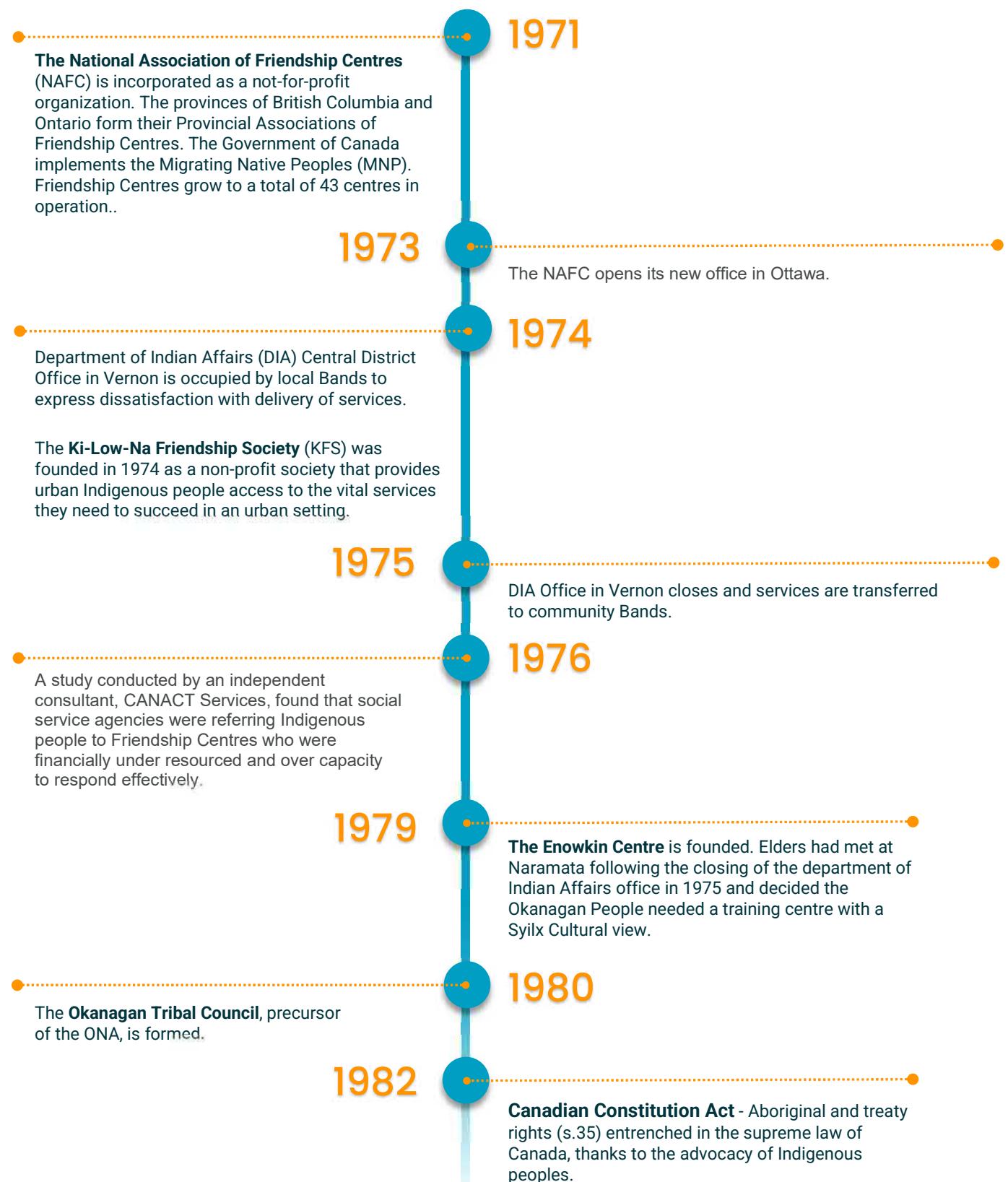
Friendship Centres reach a total number of 26 Centres in operation.

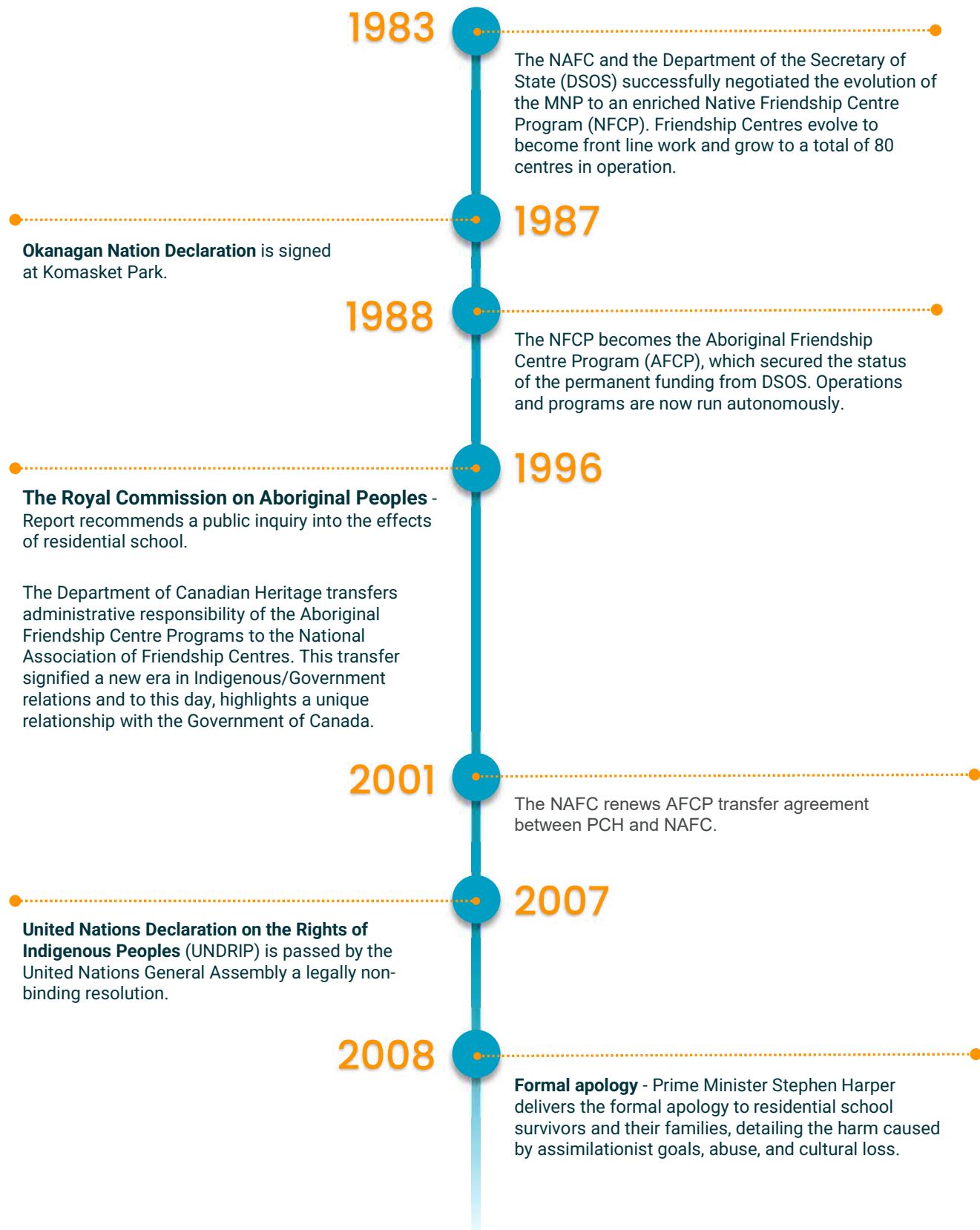
Friendship Steering Committee established to examine the feasibility of a national body to represent Friendship Centres.

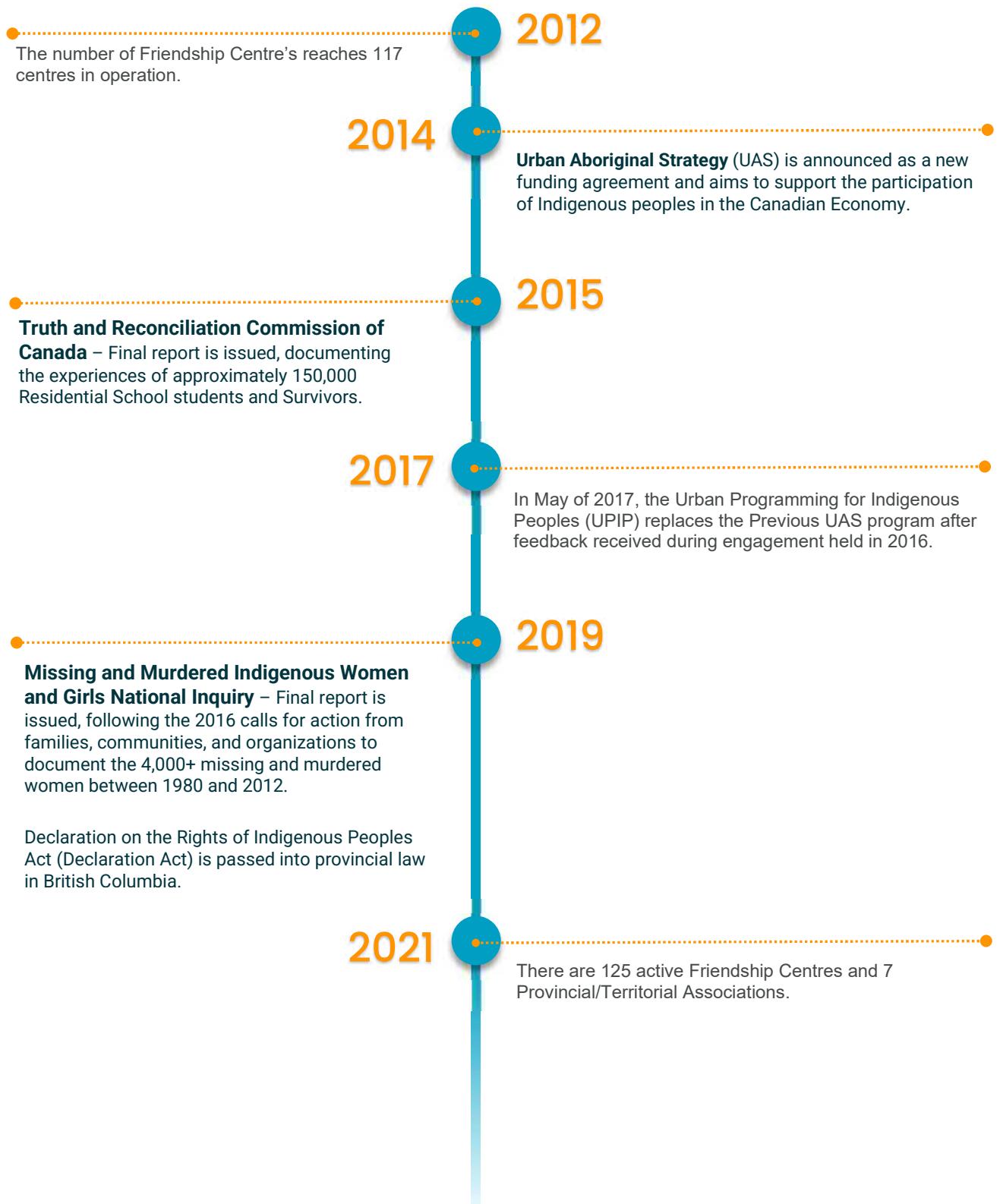
1970

1969

Starting in 1970, a period of Indigenous protest and returning strength spread across the USA and Canada, promoting the resurgence of Indian culture as well as protesting injustice with roadblocks and demonstrations. This period marked an important reclaiming of political and personal responsibility.







1.6. IMPACTS OF HISTORICAL LEGACY ON INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The historical legacy endured by Indigenous communities has left enduring impacts that are passed down through generations and shape contemporary realities. Rooted in colonization, these legacies encompass the deliberate dismantling of cultures, languages, and traditions, leading to a loss of identity and connection to land. These legacies are seen in disparities in healthcare, education, and socio-economic status, reflecting a struggle with embedded discriminatory practices. Understanding these historical legacies is essential for genuine reconciliation and equity for Indigenous communities.

1.6.1. LOSS OF CULTURE

Indigenous peoples in Canada have endured an erasure of culture as a result of the historical legacy of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the ongoing millennial scoop, where children were forcibly removed from their families and communities. These policies aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples and communities into mainstream Canadian society by severing their ties to language, lands, culture, and identity, resulting in intergenerational trauma, loss of traditional knowledge, and fractured community structures among Indigenous populations. On an individual level, Indigenous people experience shame and guilt for their experiences, which negatively impacts confidence and self-worth. Urban Indigenous people typically have less access to cultural resources and supports that can support them to heal, let alone meet their basic needs and maintain a substantive equality.

1.6.2. SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION

Systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples in Canada permeates nearly every aspect of society, including financial, political, legal, education, health and education systems:

Financial Systems:

Indigenous communities face systemic barriers in accessing financial resources and opportunities for economic development. Historical dispossession of land and resources, limited access to capital, and discriminatory lending practices have hindered Indigenous economic self-sufficiency and perpetuated cycles of poverty and dependency.

Political Systems:

Indigenous peoples often encounter systemic discrimination within political structures, where their voices and perspectives are marginalized or ignored. Limited representation in decision-making processes, inadequate consultation on policies affecting Indigenous rights and interests, and persistent colonial attitudes within government institutions perpetuate power imbalances and undermine Indigenous self-determination.

Legal Systems:

Indigenous peoples continue to experience systemic discrimination within legal frameworks, where their rights and sovereignty are often disregarded or violated. Historical injustices such as the Indian Act,

discriminatory laws and policies, and unequal access to justice contribute to disparities in legal outcomes and perpetuate cycles of injustice and marginalization within Indigenous communities.

Religious Systems:

Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices have been historically suppressed and denigrated by colonial religious institutions. Forced conversion efforts, the imposition of Eurocentric religious practices, and the suppression of Indigenous cultural expressions have undermined Indigenous spirituality and cultural autonomy, contributing to intergenerational trauma and loss of identity.

Health:

Indigenous individuals often face barriers to accessing quality healthcare due to historical and ongoing inequalities, including limited access to healthcare facilities, culturally inappropriate services, and discrimination within healthcare settings. Systemic discrimination contributes to poorer health outcomes among Indigenous populations, including higher rates of chronic diseases, mental health disorders, and substance abuse issues. Socio-economic disparities, such as lower income levels and higher rates of unemployment and poverty, further exacerbate health inequities within Indigenous communities.

Education:

Indigenous students continue to face numerous challenges within the education system. These challenges include inadequate funding for Indigenous schools, lack of culturally relevant curriculum and resources, and a shortage of Indigenous teachers and educational leaders. Discrimination and racism within schools also contribute to lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates among Indigenous students. Geographical barriers, such as remote and isolated communities, further exacerbate disparities in access to education, with limited resources and infrastructure hindering educational opportunities for Indigenous youth.

Systemic discrimination is upheld through a combination of historical legacies, institutional practices, and societal attitudes towards Indigenous peoples. Discrimination is reinforced through inadequate funding for services, unequal access to resources, and prejudices that shape interactions with Indigenous communities.

1.6.3. INEQUITY

Indigenous peoples in Canada, and within a global context, face immeasurable inequities, rooted in historical and systemic injustices, that are deeply woven within resource extraction, and capitalism, which manifests across various facets of life:

Poverty:

Indigenous communities experience disproportionately high rates of poverty compared to non-Indigenous populations. Historical dispossession of land, restricted access to resources, and discriminatory policies have contributed to economic marginalization and limited opportunities for socioeconomic advancement.

Housing Instability:

Indigenous peoples often endure inadequate and overcrowded housing conditions, with a significant portion of communities lacking access to safe and affordable housing. Historical displacement, inadequate funding for housing initiatives, and jurisdictional challenges have perpetuated housing instability and homelessness among Indigenous populations. Indigenous people face racial discrimination, stigmatization and prejudice across the housing spectrum,

Higher Morbidity and Mortality:

Indigenous peoples in Canada face higher rates of morbidity and mortality compared to the general population, with disparities evident across various health indicators such as life expectancy, chronic disease prevalence, and mental health outcomes. Limited access to culturally safe healthcare services, historical trauma, and social determinants of health contribute to these disparities, as does a deep mistrust of systems that are meant to help but historically have caused harm.

Decreased Employment Opportunities:

Indigenous communities experience disproportionately high rates of unemployment and underemployment compared to non-Indigenous populations. Structural barriers such as inadequate education and training opportunities, geographic isolation, and systemic discrimination in the labour market hinder Indigenous peoples' access to meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities.

Addressing these inequities requires comprehensive and culturally sensitive approaches that prioritize Indigenous self-determination, equitable access to resources and services, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities in policy development and implementation.

Stigma is described as the negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency. A stigma implies social disapproval and can lead unfairly to discrimination against and exclusion of the individual. Indigenous peoples, and communities well understand stigma, stereotypes and misconceptions as barriers to advancing economically.

1.6.4. LEGACY AND OUTCOMES

Intergenerational Trauma

The transmission of trauma and its impacts across generations within Indigenous communities, stemming from historical injustices such as colonization, forced assimilation policies, and cultural genocide is referred to as intergenerational trauma. This trauma manifests in various forms, including psychological distress, substance abuse, family dysfunction, and socio-economic disparities, continuing cycles of adversity and hindering healing and resilience among Indigenous peoples.

Internalized Shame and Lateral Violence

In environments marked by oppression, such as those shaped by colonization and particularly influenced by legislation like the Indian Act, the likelihood of abuse is high, from both those wielding power and those subjected to the oppressive conditions. In the struggle for survival, individuals frequently direct aggression inward, internalizing the shame and trauma imposed upon them, while simultaneously

projecting violence and mistreatment onto those in their surroundings. This is the reality for Indigenous communities in Canada, as they navigate the enduring repercussions of historical injustices, grapple with intergenerational trauma, and confront the persistent manifestations of colonialism in its various forms, all while striving for healing and truth before reconciliation.

Substance Use

Historical events, from early European trade practices to the implementation of strict alcohol prohibitions under the Indian Act in 1884, have deeply influenced substance abuse patterns within Indigenous communities in Canada. These measures, intended to control Indigenous behavior and labor, instead fostered black-market practices, and exacerbated existing challenges faced by Indigenous communities. Despite nationwide prohibition efforts from 1918 to 1920, alcohol accessibility persisted through illicit channels, coinciding with the return of first- and second- generation Indian Residential School survivors back to their communities. Experiencing profound shame, trauma, and detachment from their families and cultural roots, many survivors resorted to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as alcohol consumption to alleviate their suffering. As Indigenous children continued to be forcibly separated from their communities through mandatory enrollment in Indian Residential Schools, the conditions within these communities deteriorated. Upon their return, subsequent generations observed the persistence of substance use and misuse, including the toxic poisoning crisis that is taking Indigenous lives at an extraordinary rate. The absence of culturally protective elements exacerbates challenges, fueling a cycle of substance use and amplifying the long-lasting effects of intergenerational trauma. Consequently, many Indigenous individuals sought solace in urban environments, only to find themselves disconnected from the support and belonging offered by their communities.

Homelessness

The reality of homelessness among Indigenous peoples today is intricately linked to the disruption of traditional ways of life and cultural practices caused by colonial policies. The Indian reserve system severely restricted Indigenous peoples' ability to travel freely and maintain their traditional lifestyle. This disrupted community patterns of sustenance and economic independence, contributing to food insecurity and economic marginalization. Additionally, the imposition of Western values and structures, including capitalist economies, further eroded Indigenous social support systems and cultural cohesion, exacerbating the challenges faced by Indigenous communities. Feelings of displacement and disconnection continue to be a legacy for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness due to disconnection from traditional ways of life and associated disconnection from community and family members.

Continued Involvement of the Child Welfare System

Indigenous communities grapple with the disruption of family systems due to the Child Welfare system, which continues to displace Indigenous children on child protection grounds. Many former children-in-care age out of the system, disconnected from their families and communities, leading to increased vulnerability to homelessness. Indigenous approaches to child rearing emphasize communal responsibility, diverging from the Western nuclear-family model. However, Canada's child welfare systems often fail to align with Indigenous practices, severing ties to Indigenous Nations. Consequently, Indigenous youth aging out of care face significant challenges, including unstable housing, limited education and employment prospects, and mental health struggles. Cultural disconnection compounds

these issues, exacerbating feelings of isolation and identity crisis. Persistent systemic barriers rooted in colonial legacies further marginalize Indigenous youth, perpetuating inequalities in access to healthcare, social services, and justice. Research indicates that Indigenous youth transitioning out of care fare better if they maintain connections to their Indigenous community and family (Fast, Trocmé, Fallon & Ma, 2014). However, once Indigenous youth enter the Canadian child welfare system, their ties to their Indigenous Nation are often severed. Predictably, 80% of Indigenous youth aging out of care fail to complete high school and are at heightened risk of suicide, homelessness, substance abuse, and incarceration (Blackstock et al., 2007).

Urban Migration of Indigenous People

The migration of Indigenous peoples to urban centers in Canada is driven by various factors, including economic shifts, with traditional subsistence lifestyles marginalized and seen as socially inferior. This has driven Indigenous individuals to pursue employment opportunities in urban areas. Smaller bands with limited on-reserve prospects and higher education levels also contribute to higher migration rates. Historical mobility patterns and survey data highlight ongoing trends of Indigenous movement within and between communities. However, the impacts of off-reserve growth rates on urban Indigenous homelessness are complex. While policies like Bill C-31 have increased the off-reserve population, recent trends indicate a return to reserves. As Indigenous individuals transition to urban areas, they rely on provincial and municipal services, necessitating culturally appropriate support to address housing, employment, and healthcare needs effectively.

Indigenous Resilience and Healing

Indigenous resilience and healing are deeply anchored in enduring cultural values that have weathered historical challenges and are rejuvenated through identity reformation. The revitalization of language, culture, and spirituality plays a pivotal role in self-expression, fostering collective unity, and promoting healing.

1.7. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE CANADIAN JUSTICE SYSTEM

Indigenous individuals are disproportionately represented in the Canadian criminal justice system, both as victims/survivors and as accused/convicted individuals (Boyce 2016). For instance, in 2014, a significantly higher percentage of Indigenous people in Canada (aged 15+) reported being victimized in the previous year compared to non-Indigenous individuals (28% vs. 18%) (Boyce 2016). Additionally, in 2016/2017, Indigenous adults comprised 30% of provincial/territorial custody admissions, 27% of federal custody admissions, and 27% of the federal in-custody population, despite constituting only 4.1% of the Canadian adult population (Malakieh, 2018). Similarly, Indigenous youth represented 50% of custody admissions while making up only 8% of the Canadian youth population. These disproportions have been on the rise for over a decade.

For more than three decades, the Supreme Court and numerous commissions of inquiry have recognized systemic discrimination within the criminal justice system, encompassing policing, court proceedings, and corrections, as a significant concern. This longstanding acknowledgment underscores the pervasive nature of biases and inequities faced by marginalized communities, including Indigenous peoples.

The consequences of systemic discrimination within the criminal justice system extend beyond incarceration rates, impacting the well-being and livelihoods of Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples experience significant social and economic marginalization as a result of their interactions with the justice system, further exacerbating systemic inequalities. Addressing these entrenched issues requires comprehensive reforms aimed at dismantling systemic discrimination, enhancing cultural competency within the justice system, and empowering Indigenous communities to actively participate in shaping policies and practices that affect their lives.



CONTEMPORARY EFFORTS

Toward Truth and Reconciliation

CONTEMPORARY EFFORTS TOWARD TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

1.8. COGNITIVE IMPERIALISM & EPISTEMIC PRIVILEGE

Eurocentric thought asserts that European knowledge, thought processes, and art are able to progress and evolve, while Indigenous peoples and their ways knowledge keeping are of the past. This dominant societal norm has caused Indigenous peoples to be viewed as benefactors of western knowledge, with little to offer in return. Centuries of systemic mistreatment, executed through programs like residential schools, have aimed to strip away Indigenous knowledge, culture and language with the hopes of assimilation into western society. Only in recent history has there been a concerted effort by Indigenous scholars to recognize and capture Indigenous knowledge before it is lost.

This Eurocentric view of knowledge is known as "cognitive imperialism" and is a form of manipulation used to discredit other forms of knowledge. Cognitive imperialism is perpetuated through a dominant societal group through education systems, government policy, and societal discourse, which means that the systems Indigenous people access, and that do not work for them are increasingly difficult to change because Indigenous ways of healing, helping and being are not credited or valued as legitimate. As a result, Indigenous peoples are indoctrinated through these systems to believe that due to their status as an outsider to society their collective societal challenges can be attributed to race, which becomes a cyclical ideology and a form of oppression. (Battiste, M. 2005)

The process of breaking this cyclical ideology is started when Canadian society, including Indigenous peoples, recognize the impacts of cognitive imperialism and seek to alter discourse and empower Indigenous peoples to elevate their knowledge.

Knowledge, the theory of knowledge, and how we come to know things is basis of epistemic theory. The methods of building knowledge and passing it to the next generation form the building blocks of epistemology. Western scholars and scientists have a different standard of proof than the Indigenous Eder (Hickey, 2020). The source of knowledge and the process of determining its validity over time are vastly different processes in western and Indigenous culture. Both Indigenous and western epistemology, and their methodologies hold valid truths, and each can benefit from the knowledge of the other. However, epistemic privilege is the underlying belief that the dominant (western) methodology of compiling knowledge is the superior form. Meaning that many non-Indigenous people, are not willing to learn or unlearn what they believe to be true about Indigenous perspectives, histories, ways of being and knowing and consider western ideals as the truth. Sadly, Indigenous people can also have this experience of westernized perspective as truth, which is the epitome of intended impact of colonization. The modern effect of epistemic privilege to Indigenous peoples cannot be pinpointed to a certain event in Canadian history but has instead become pervasive due to culturally destructive colonial programs and policies such as residential schools, and the Indian Act. These institutions, and polices, among other programs,

attempted and in many ways succeeded in indoctrinating generations of Indigenous to view their own epistemic knowledge as less valuable than that of the colonizer. The decolonization of Indigenous knowledge has begun through the process of reconciliation and includes rebuilding the equity of that knowledge in Indigenous society.

1.9. UNDRIP

1.9.1. WHAT IS UNDRIP?

UNDRIP stands for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is a document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, representing a comprehensive framework for the rights and protections of Indigenous peoples around the world.

UNDRIP establishes a set of fundamental human rights principles specifically tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by Indigenous peoples. These rights include the right to self-determination, the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct cultures, languages, and traditions, and the right to participate fully and effectively in decisions that affect their lives and communities.

The declaration also outlines protections for Indigenous peoples' lands, territories, and resources, affirming their rights to ownership, control, and use of these resources in accordance with their own customs and traditions. It prohibits discrimination against Indigenous peoples and calls for the prevention of forced assimilation or removal from their lands.

UNDRIP is not legally binding, but it carries significant moral and political weight, serving as a critical tool for advocacy and accountability in the promotion and protection of Indigenous rights. Many countries, including Canada, have endorsed UNDRIP and committed to implementing its principles into their domestic laws and policies, although challenges remain in fully realizing its objectives.

1.9.2. WHY IS UNDRIP IMPORTANT?

UNDRIP is important to Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the Central Okanagan for the following reasons:

Recognition of Rights: UNDRIP affirms the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination, autonomy, and cultural preservation. It recognizes Indigenous peoples' right to maintain and strengthen their distinct cultures, languages, and traditions, which have been historically threatened by colonial policies.

Land and Resource Rights: UNDRIP recognizes Indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories, and resources. This is particularly significant in Canada, where Indigenous land rights have been subject to ongoing disputes, encroachments, and dispossession. UNDRIP reinforces the rights of Indigenous communities to own, control, and manage their traditional lands and resources according to their own customs and traditions.

Participation and Decision-Making: UNDRIP emphasizes the importance of Indigenous peoples' participation in decisions that affect their lives and communities. It calls for meaningful consultation and

consent on matters that impact Indigenous lands, resources, and rights. This is crucial for addressing power imbalances and ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard and respected in policy-making processes.

Recognition of Historical Injustices: UNDRIP acknowledges the historical injustices and harms inflicted upon Indigenous peoples, including colonization, forced displacement, and cultural genocide. By recognizing these injustices, UNDRIP provides a framework for reconciliation and redress, fostering healing and healing and promoting mutual respect and understanding.

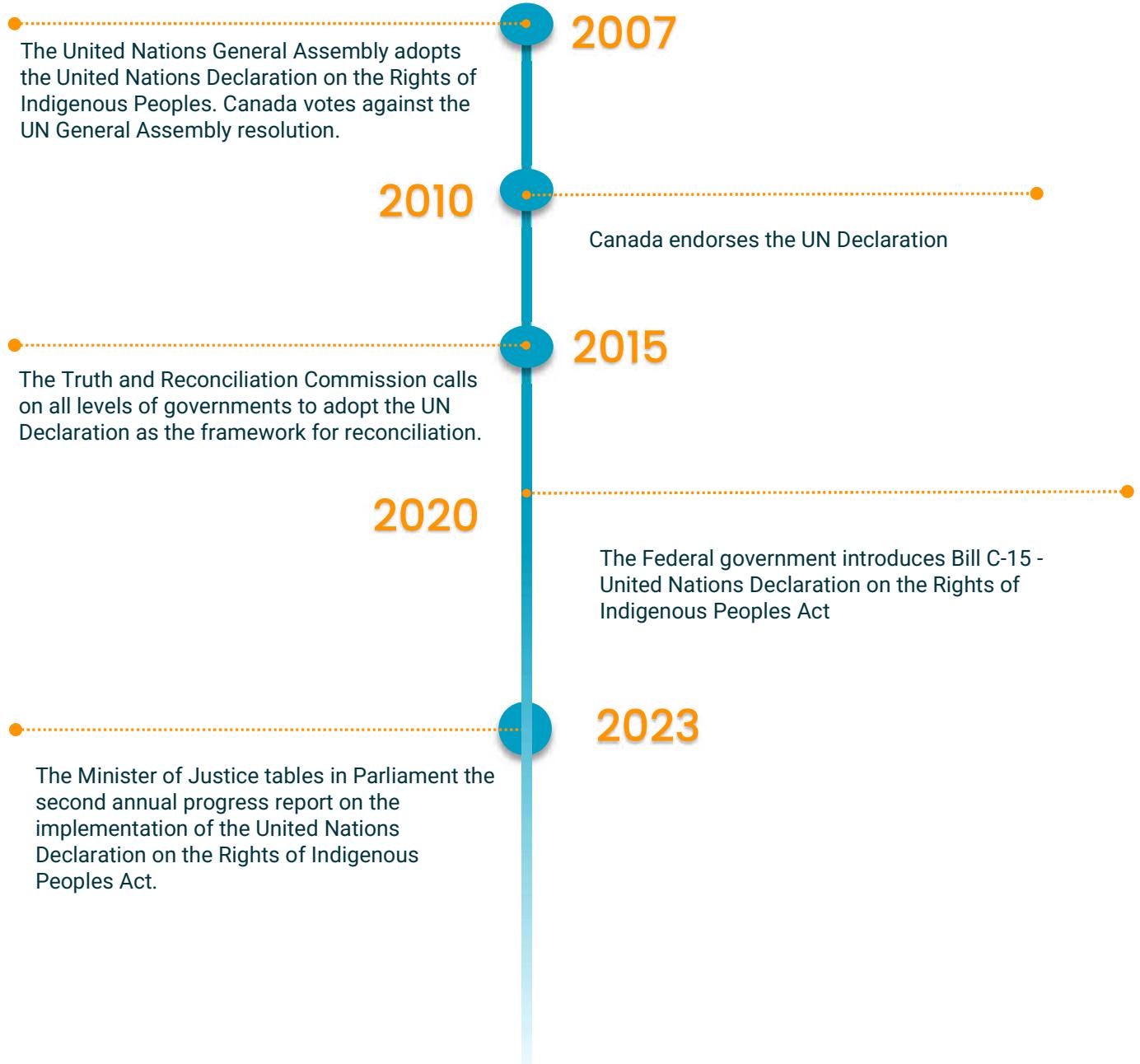
Legal and Political Advocacy: UNDRIP serves as a powerful advocacy tool for Indigenous peoples in Canada, providing a framework for asserting their rights and holding governments accountable for their obligations. Indigenous communities and organizations can use UNDRIP to advocate for policy changes, legal protections, and resource allocation that uphold Indigenous rights and promote reconciliation.

1.9.3. DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

The provincial government of British Columbia passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act) in November 2019. The Declaration Act marks the first jurisdiction in Canada to have passed legislation to formally adopt the standards of UNDRIP. The Declaration Act mandates the government to align provincial laws with the UN Declaration and to develop and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous Peoples.

The Declaration Act Action Plan, released in March 2022 as a supporting document to the Declaration Act, includes 89 tangible actions in the areas of self-determination and self-government, rights and title, ending anti-Indigenous racism, and enhancing social, cultural and economic well-being.

1.9.4. TIMELINE OF UNDRIP IN CANADA



1.10. Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Canada was established as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which was reached between the Government of Canada, Indigenous organizations, and survivors of residential schools. The agreement, finalized in 2006, included compensation for survivors, support for healing initiatives, and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The commission's mandate included gathering testimonies from survivors, hosting public hearings across the country, and producing a final report with recommendations for reconciliation.

Over the course of its mandate, the TRC heard from thousands of survivors and their families, as well as from community members, experts, and other stakeholders. The commission documented the experiences of survivors, including the abuse, neglect, and cultural suppression they endured while attending residential schools.

In 2015, the TRC released its final report, titled "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future," which included 94 calls to action aimed at addressing the legacy of residential schools and advancing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The Yellowhead Institute releases yearly status update reports on the reconciliation efforts of the Canadian government. The 2023 report notes that in the eight years since the release of the 94 Calls to Action, 81 Calls remain unfulfilled. Notably, zero Calls to Action were completed in 2023 and if Canada continues at the current pace, it will take another 58 years until the Calls to Action are completed.

The Yellowhead Institute identifies the five main challenges to Reconciliation as:

Paternalism: Deep-rooted, ongoing restrictive attitudes and behaviours of politicians, bureaucrats, and policy-makers, giving rise to a "Canada knows best" approach which prevents Indigenous peoples from leading on issues with their own solutions;

Structural Anti-Indigenous Discrimination: Canada asserts legal myths to justify the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous lands and the subsequent impoverishment of Indigenous peoples;

"The Public Interest": Policy-makers and Canada's legal teams use the economic interests and apathy of a non-Indigenous Canadian public to shore up justification for exploiting Indigenous lands;

Insufficient Resources: While there is no shortage of promises, ongoing and chronic funding inequities mean that meaningful reconciliation will always be out of reach;

Reconciliation as Exploitation or Performance: In the cases where "reconciliation" purportedly occurs, exploitative or predatory behaviour is rampant as in the case of "economic reconciliation"; performative measures and actions serve as window dressing to manage Canada's reputation.



DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In order to better understand the current conditions of the Indigenous population in the Central Okanagan an analysis was undertaken of custom data sets from Statistics Canada and BC Housing. The data provides an insight into the housing and demographics of Indigenous population of the Central Okanagan, but it is only one part of the housing story. The data analyzed in this report does not tell the full story of Indigenous housing precarity in the Central Okanagan, as census data does not capture the homeless population, the hidden homeless and shelter population. The data sharing infrastructure that is needed to capture these entities continues to be developed between Infrastructure Canada, BC's Ministry of Housing, the Community Entities and the City of Kelowna to launch HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System).

To supplement and expand on the demographic analysis of this report, a qualitative analysis has been developed in tandem. The *What We Heard Report* employs qualitative research methodologies to delve into the underlying causes and effects of Indigenous homelessness in the Okanagan. The report illuminates the firsthand experiences of Indigenous individuals affected by homelessness while pinpointing avenues for systemic transformation and community-led interventions.

The following demographic analysis is a representation of the data that is available at this time.

1.11. OVERVIEW OF INDIGENOUS POPULATION & HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 1 shows that in 2021 the population of the Central Okanagan was 222,162 and 13,420 (6%) identified as Indigenous. 5.8% of British Columbia's, and 4.9% of Canada's population identifies as Indigenous.

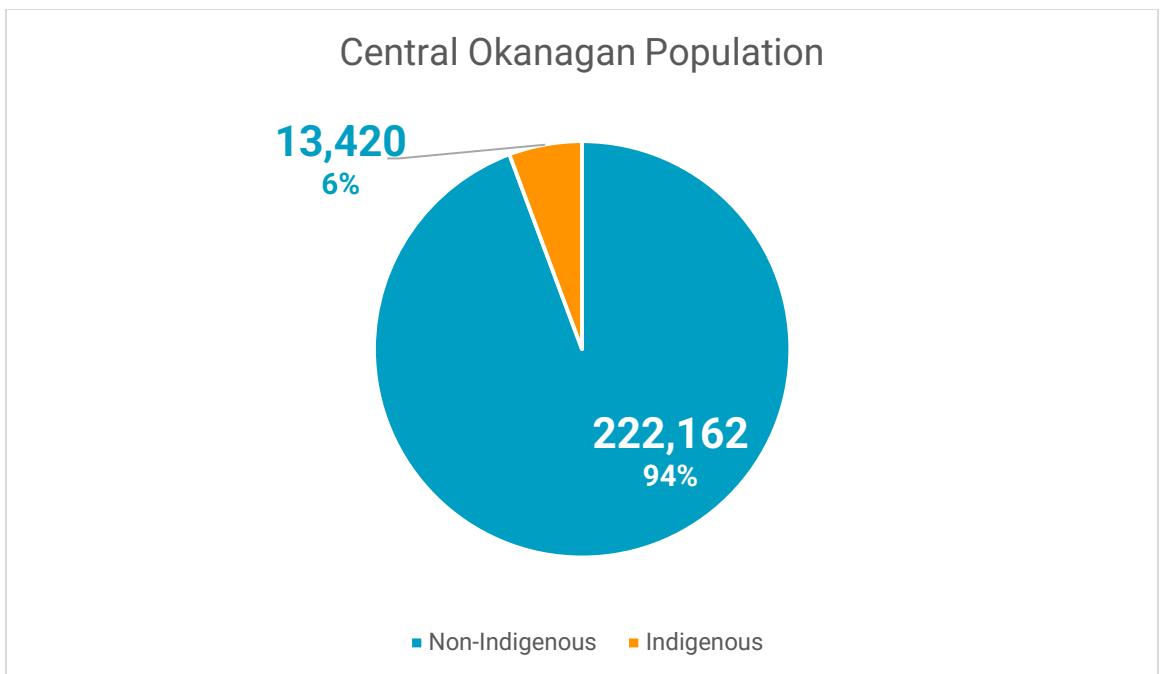


Figure 1- Central Okanagan Population by Indigenous Identity, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 2 shows that in 2021, Indigenous households made up 7% of the total private households in the Central Okanagan, or 6,140 households.

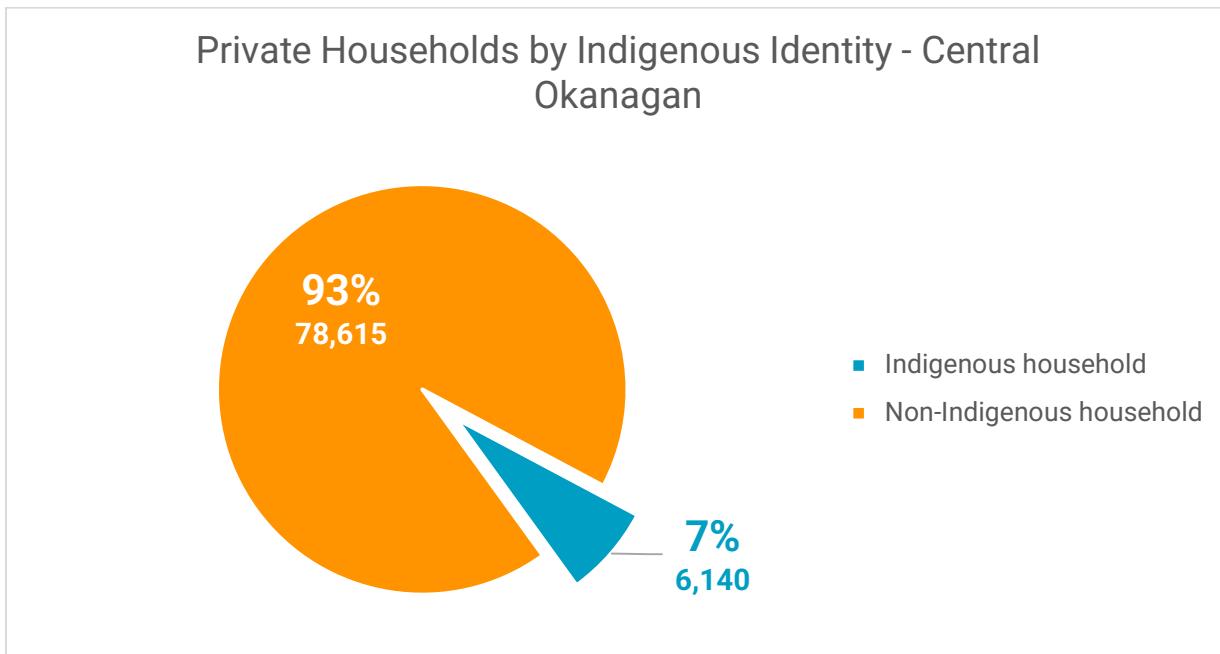


Figure 2 - Private Households by Indigenous Identity, Central Okanagan, 2021

45% of Indigenous households in the Central Okanagan were renters in 2021, compared to 28% of non-indigenous households who are renters. This means that 12.5% of all renter households in the Central Okanagan are Indigenous, while representing only 7% of private households.

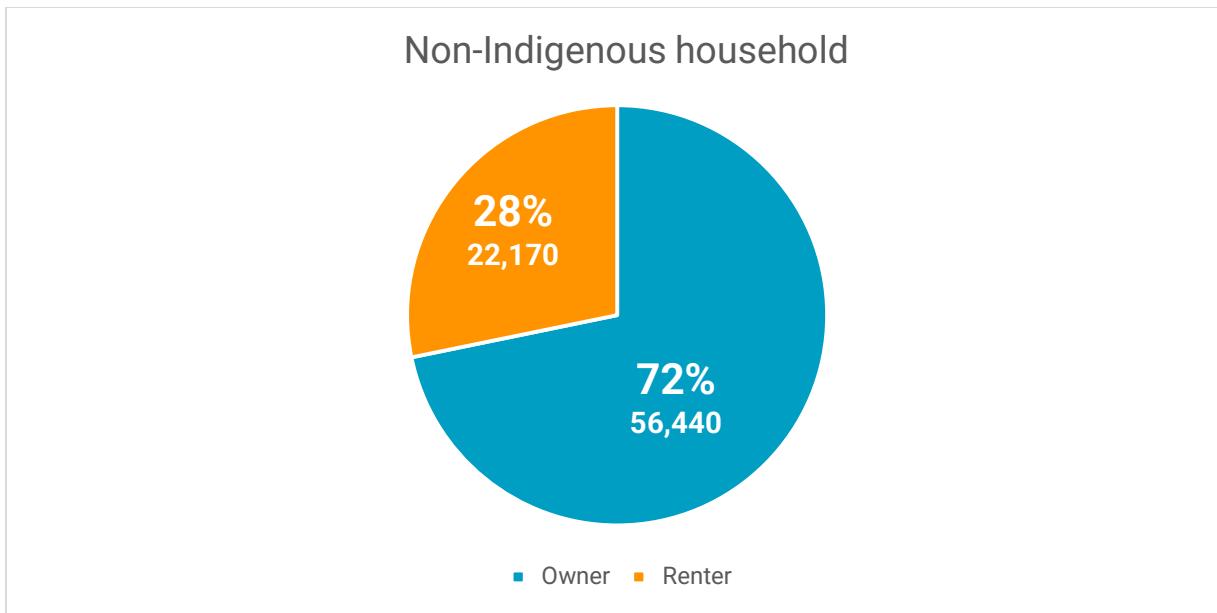


Figure 3 - Indigenous Household By Tenure - Non-Indigenous Households, Central Okanagan, 2021

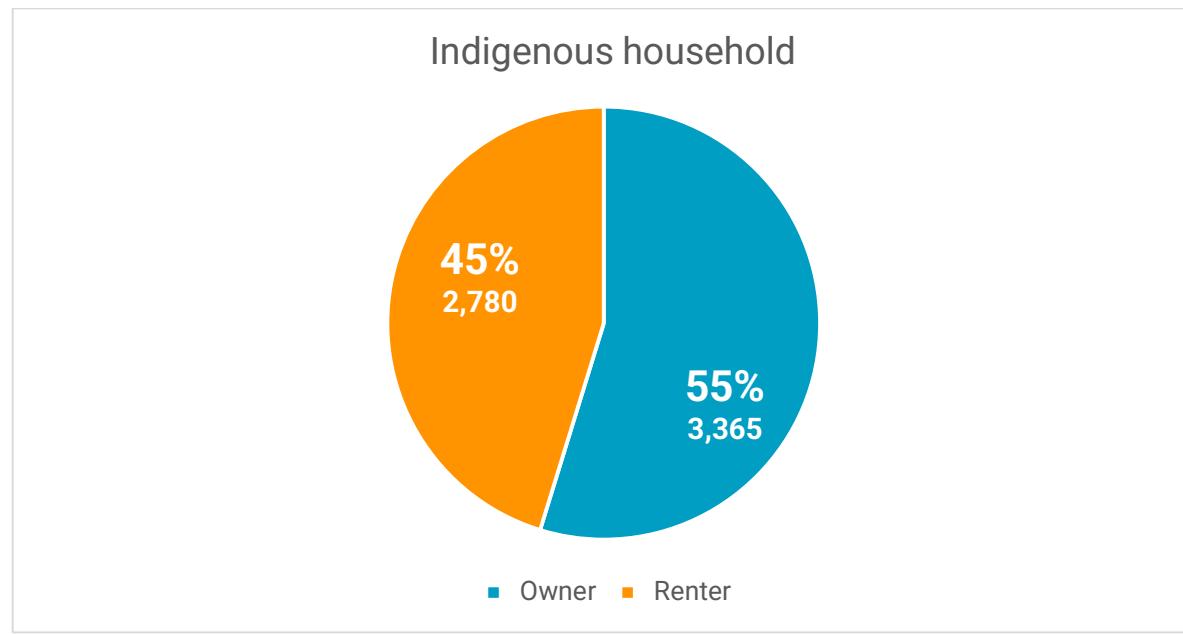


Figure 4 - Indigenous Household By Tenure - Indigenous Households, Central Okanagan, 2021

1.11.1. INDIGENOUS HOUSING IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

In 2023 there are 5,008 non-market housing units affiliated with BC Housing in the Central Okanagan. Of these, 348 non-market housing units were dedicated for Indigenous households (6.9%). Of those units, 89% (309 units) are dedicated for low-income Indigenous families. As shown in Table 1 below, the total number of Indigenous supportive housing applicants is disproportionately larger than the representative Indigenous population of the Central Okanagan. This leaves a glaring gap for both Elders and youth seeking affordable housing and highlights a need for more housing for these demographics.

BC Housing has shared anecdotally, that locally they have a commitment to allocating 25% of their supportive housing units to Indigenous people, we are unsure how many of these units are filled by Indigenous people, what the relationship is with First Nations Communities and Indigenous organizations and if the most vulnerable Indigenous people are making it to the Coordinated Access and Assessment, as that data is not currently available.

Indigenous Applicants for Non-Market Housing – Central Okanagan					
	People with Disabilities	Family	Senior	Single	Wheelchair Modified
Indigenous Applicants	20	61	39	21	11
% of Total Indigenous Applicants	13%	40%	26%	14%	6%
% of Total Applicants in Central Okanagan	12%	25%	9%	32%	21%

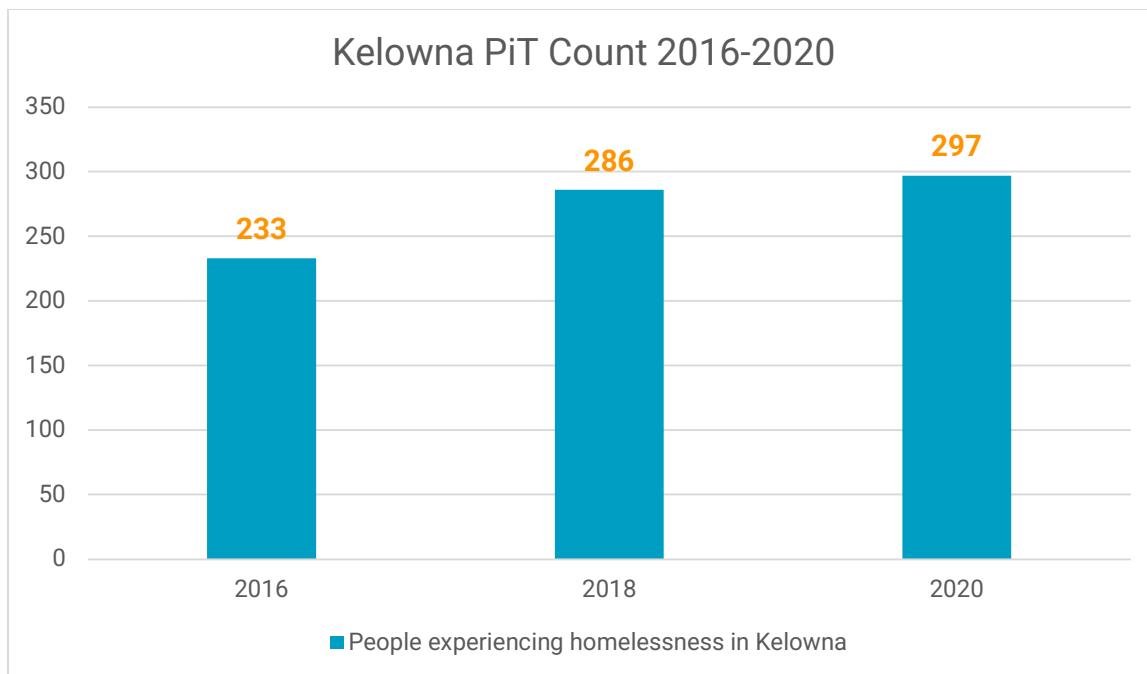
Table 1 BC Housing Indigenous Non-Market Housing, Central Okanagan, 2023. Source: BC Housing, 2023

1.11.2. HOMELESSNESS BY INDIGENOUS IDENTITY IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

The findings from the 2020 Point-in-Time (PiT) Count in the City of Kelowna recorded a minimum of 297 individuals experiencing homelessness, One in five (21%) identified as Indigenous or had Indigenous ancestry. Indigenous people are overrepresented in the population of those who are unhoused in the City of Kelowna, and likely the Central Okanagan. It is widely accepted that for a variety of reasons these counts generally underrepresent the actual number of those in need. Additionally, anecdotal evidence indicates that Indigenous community members may also be more likely to experience 'hidden homelessness' such as couch surfing and be precariously housed, living in unsuitable or unsafe housing and be at risk of homelessness.

Since the 2020 PiT report the number of individuals experiencing homelessness has seen a sharp increase, due in part to the rise in the cost of housing and inflation at a national scale. The increase in homelessness is largely anecdotal, as a PiT count has not been undertaken since 2020.

Between February and May 2023, the Central Okanagan Journey Home Society collaborated with the Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness (LECoH) and the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society to conduct the 2023 Community Survey on Homelessness, which compiled data from over 280 visibly homeless individuals. Results showed that Indigenous peoples accounted for 33% of the surveyed population, indicating a 12% increase of Indigenous representation in Kelowna's homeless community since the 2020 PiT. This data does not include individuals experiencing hidden homelessness.



1.11.3. A PROFILE OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS RENTER HOUSEHOLDS IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

This section provides an analysis of First Nations renter households in the Central Okanagan in order to compare these groups both to Indigenous renters as a whole, and to non-Indigenous renters.

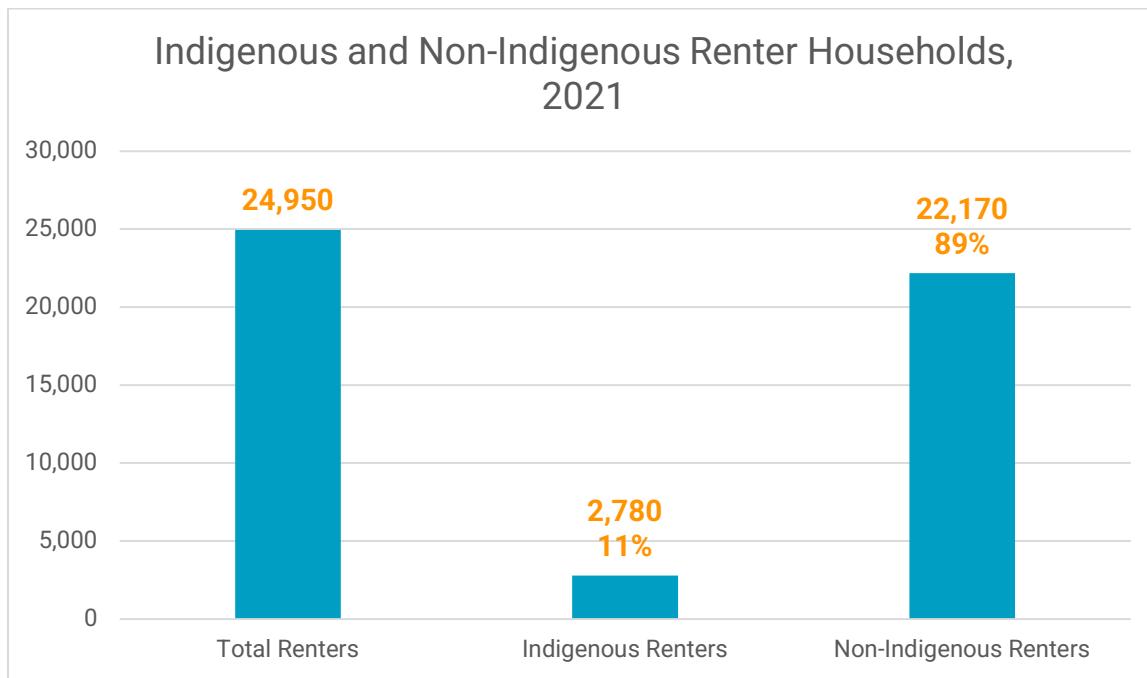


Figure 5 - Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Renter Households, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 5 shows a comparison of various age cohorts for renters in the Central Okanagan by Indigenous identity. Indigenous renters tended to have a higher proportion of youth renters (aged 15 to 29) and young adult renters (aged 30 to 44) than non-Indigenous renting households. Overall, Indigenous renters also saw a lower proportion of older renters than non-Indigenous renters. Notably, Indigenous renters are shown to be younger than non-Indigenous renters.

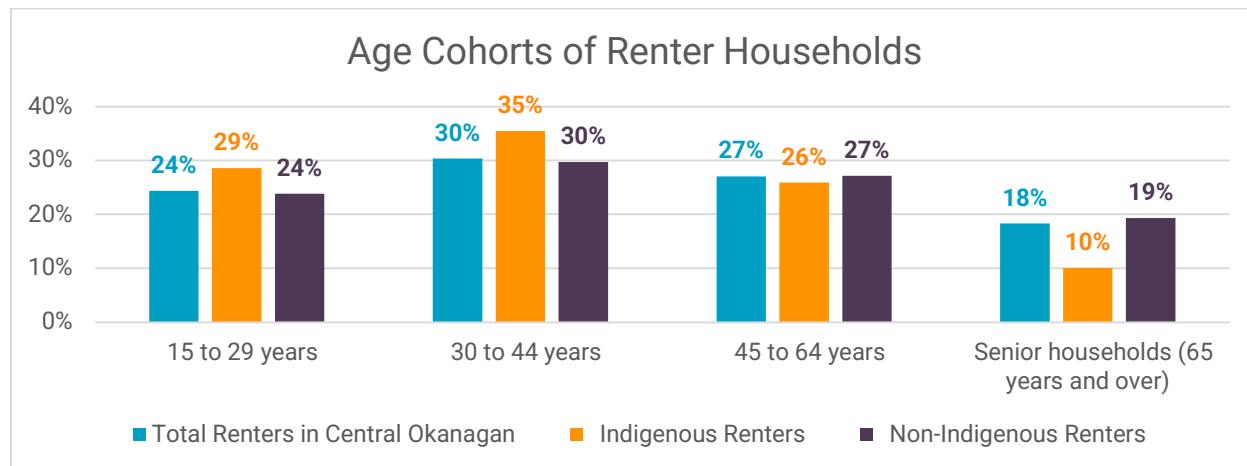


Figure 6 - Age Cohorts of Renter Households, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 6 shows income by renter group in the Central Okanagan. Indigenous renters had a higher median income than non-Indigenous renters. Indigenous households earned \$3,500 more than non-Indigenous households. A factor in these figures is the larger average size of Indigenous households which accounts for more income earners per household, as shown in Figure 6.

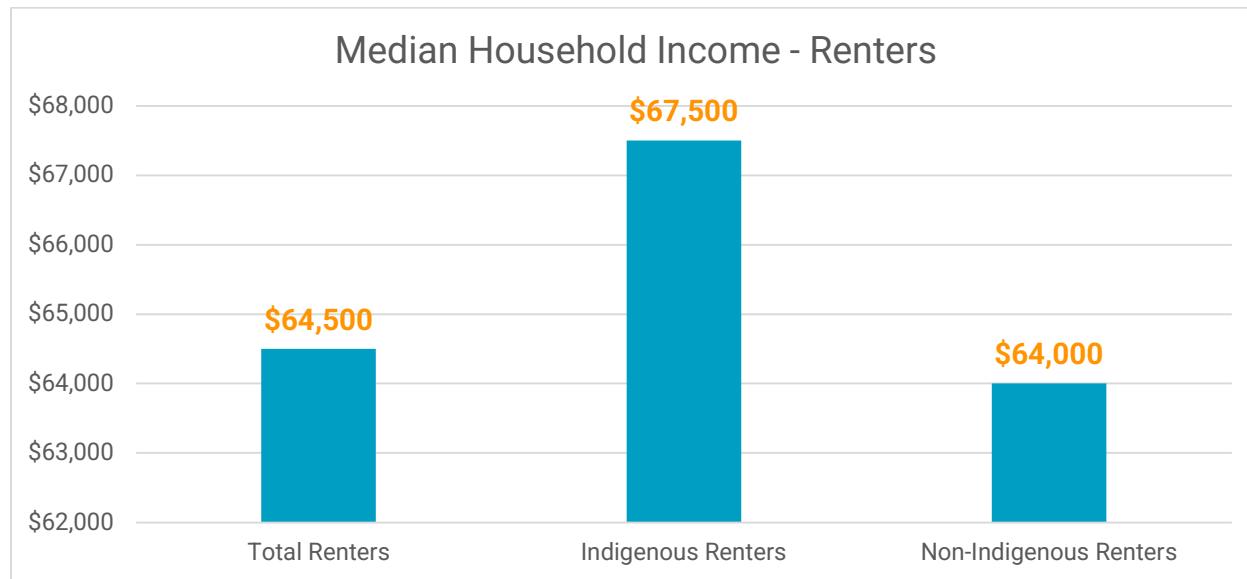


Figure 7 - Median Income for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Renters, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 7 shows income by owner group in the Central Okanagan. Indigenous owners had a higher median household income than non-Indigenous owners. Indigenous households earned \$18,000 more than non-Indigenous households. A factor in these figures is the larger average size of Indigenous households

which accounts for more income earners per household, as shown in Figure 7. It is notable that the median household income of Indigenous owners is \$51,500 more than the median household income of Indigenous renters.

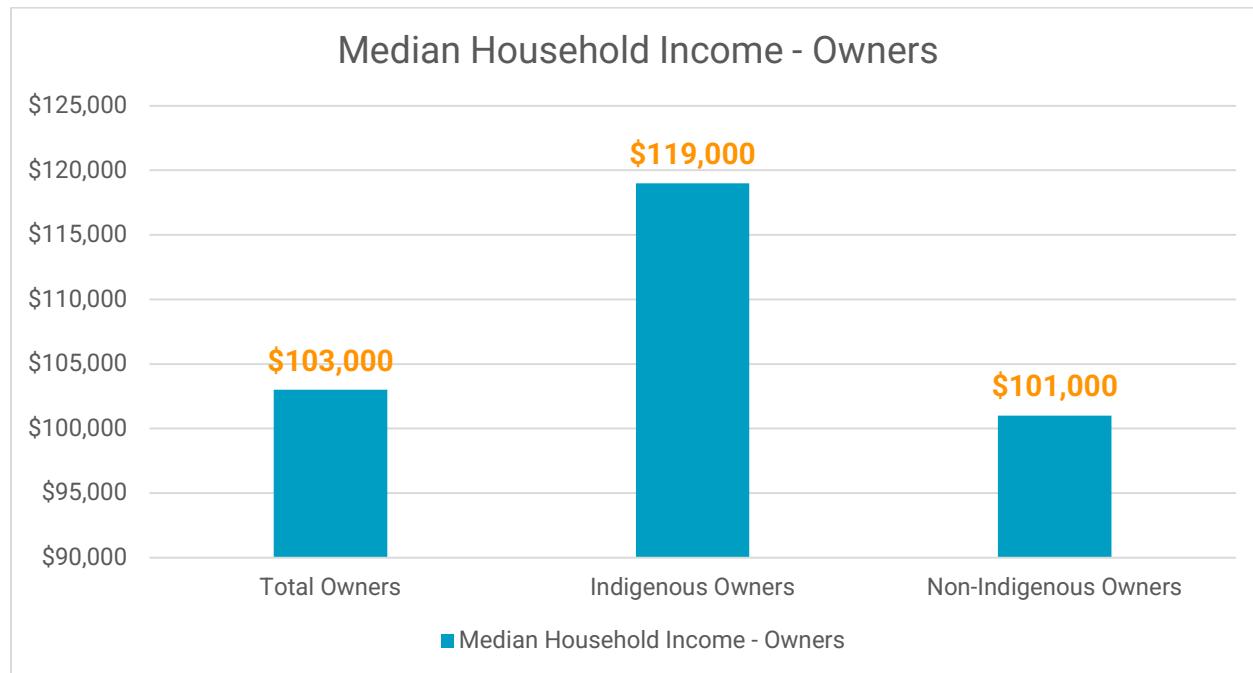


Figure 8 - Median Income for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Owners, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 9 shows that the average Indigenous household size of 2.9 persons is larger than the comparable family size in the Central Okanagan of 2.3 persons. The Central Okanagan average has 16% more households with 2 persons or less than Indigenous households.

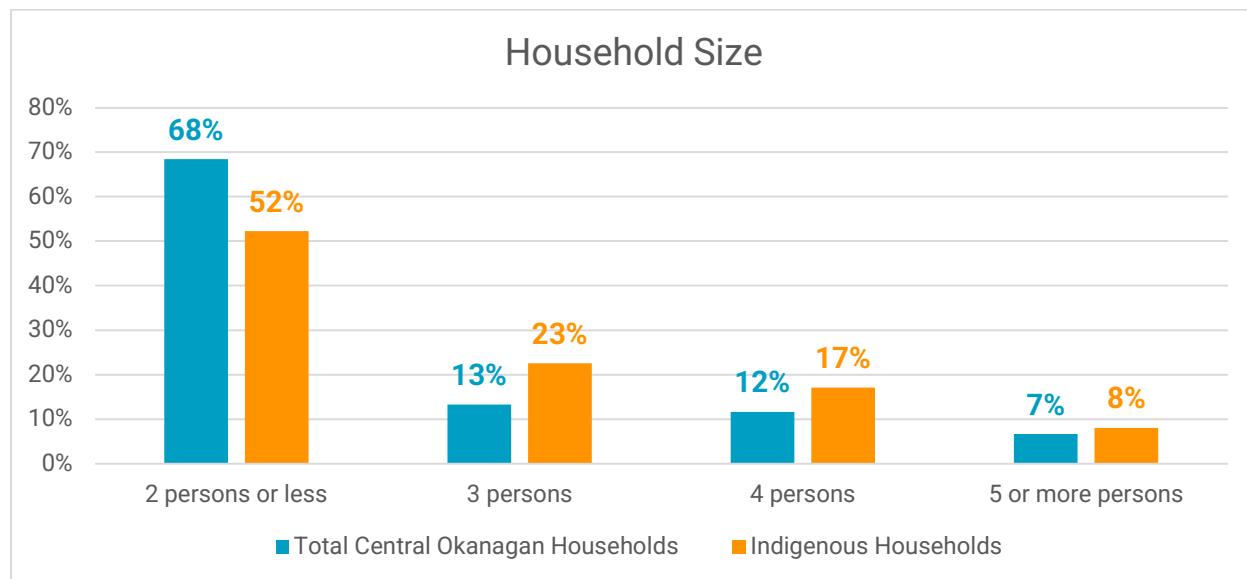


Figure 9 – Central Okanagan & Indigenous Household Size, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 10 shows one family households (that is no unrelated person, related extended family or multiple households). Each household type is shown as a proportion of the total by Indigenous identity (e.g. one family households represent 65% of all Indigenous renters, and couples without children represent 18% of all Indigenous renters). Note that the represented data of 'Couples with children' and 'Couples without children' are subsets of the 'One family households' data.

Indigenous renters had a higher proportion in all categories, compared to non-Indigenous renters, highlighting that Indigenous renters are more likely to be part of a family than non-Indigenous renters.

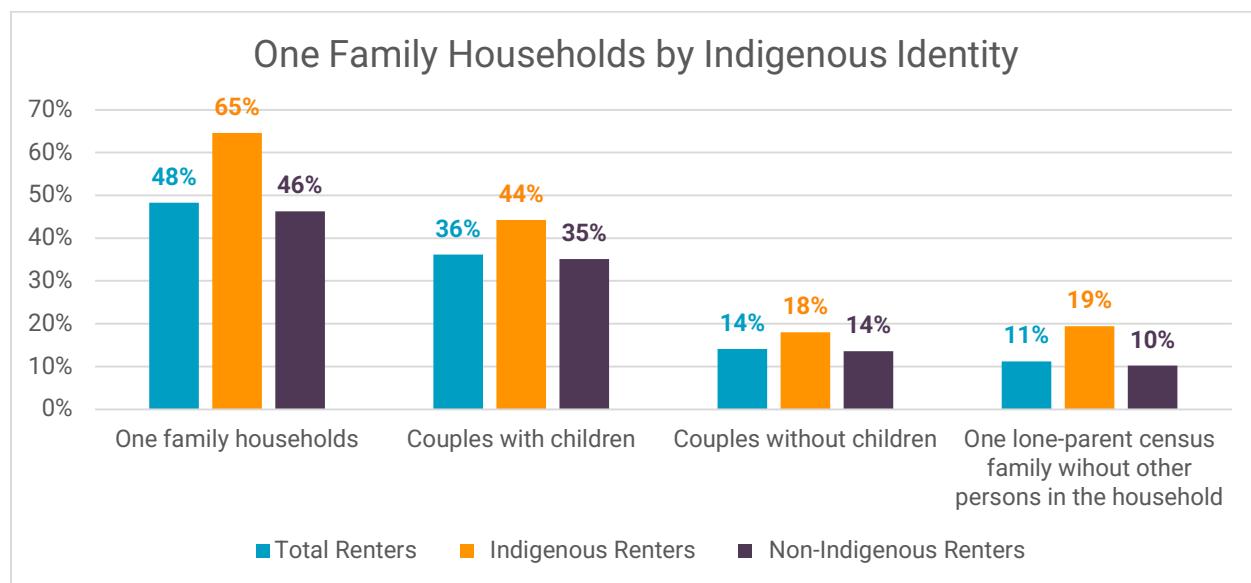


Figure 10 - One Family Households by Indigenous Identity, Central Okanagan, 2021

1.11.4. DEEP DIVE INTO CORE HOUSING NEED FOR INDIGENOUS RENTER HOUSEHOLDS IN THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

Renter households are the focus of deeper analysis due to the higher rate, and high number, of households in core housing need when compared to owner households. Renter households in market and non-market households represent those more likely to be at risk of housing precarity.

Core housing need is a measure developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to identify households who need housing assistance. The assessment evaluates whether a household:

- Lives in acceptable housing (i.e. meeting adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards)
- The before-tax income is sufficient to access acceptable local housing.

While Indigenous households make up just 7% of all households in the Central Okanagan, the rate of core housing need for Indigenous households is marginally higher than for non-Indigenous households.

Indigenous households in core housing need are living in precarious situations with little income left to cover other living expenses.

The proportion of renters facing rental need is typically much higher than owners. The 2021 data on the affordability standard must be read with caution as income supplements introduced as a COVID-19

pandemic response were still in place and may have temporarily inflated incomes. There is not enough evidence to suggest that housing issues are truly on a downward trajectory. As pandemic restrictions eased and interest rates remained low through 2021 and most of 2022, housing demand increased rapidly. Broader trends indicate that affordability and supply issues are much worse today than in 2021; for example, CMHC's 2022 Rental Market Survey reported the lowest Canada-wide rental vacancy rate in two decades.

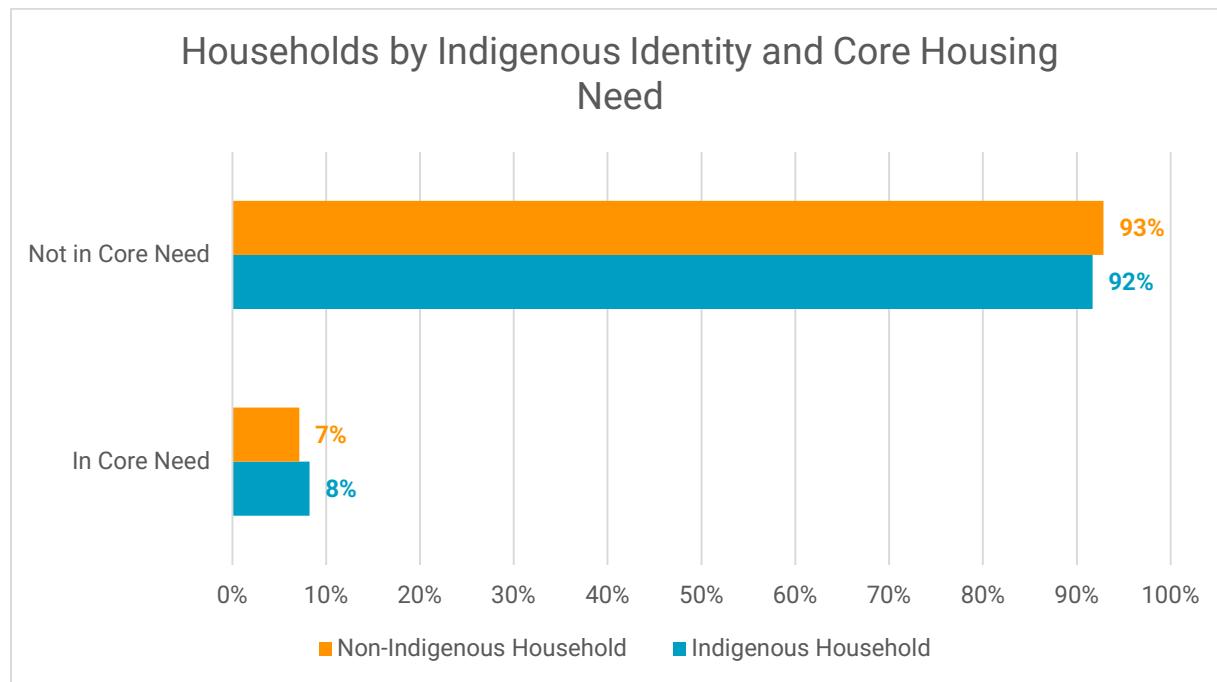


Figure 11 - Households by Indigenous Identity and Core Housing Need, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 11 shows Indigenous households by tenure type (owners and renters) who are in core housing need. Renters typically experience core housing need at a higher rate than owners; however, for Indigenous households in the Central Okanagan, Indigenous renter households are three times more likely to experience core housing need than Indigenous owners.

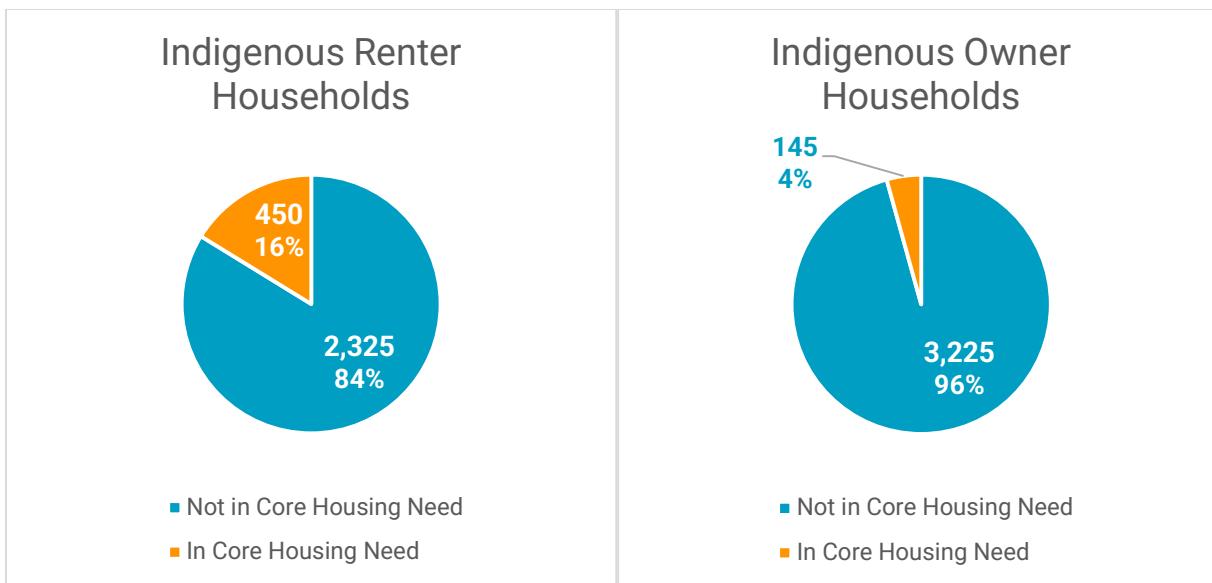


Figure 12 - Indigenous Households in Core Housing Need by Tenure, Central Okanagan, 2021

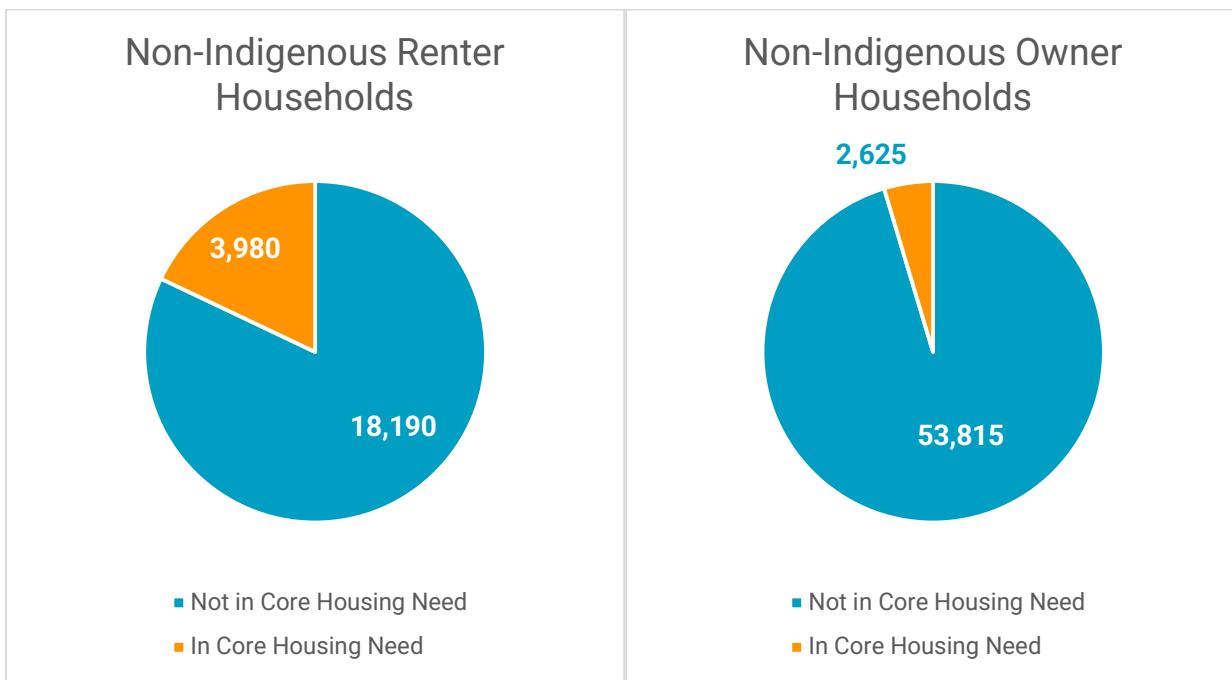


Figure 13 - Non-Indigenous Households in Core Housing Need by Tenure, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 14 shows the proportion of renters in core housing need by age group. The group with the largest number of households in core housing need are households led by 65+ year olds (58% of households in core housing need, 75 renter households). The rate households in core housing need increases with age.

Rate of Core Housing Need in Indigenous Renter Households by Age of Primary Household Maintainer

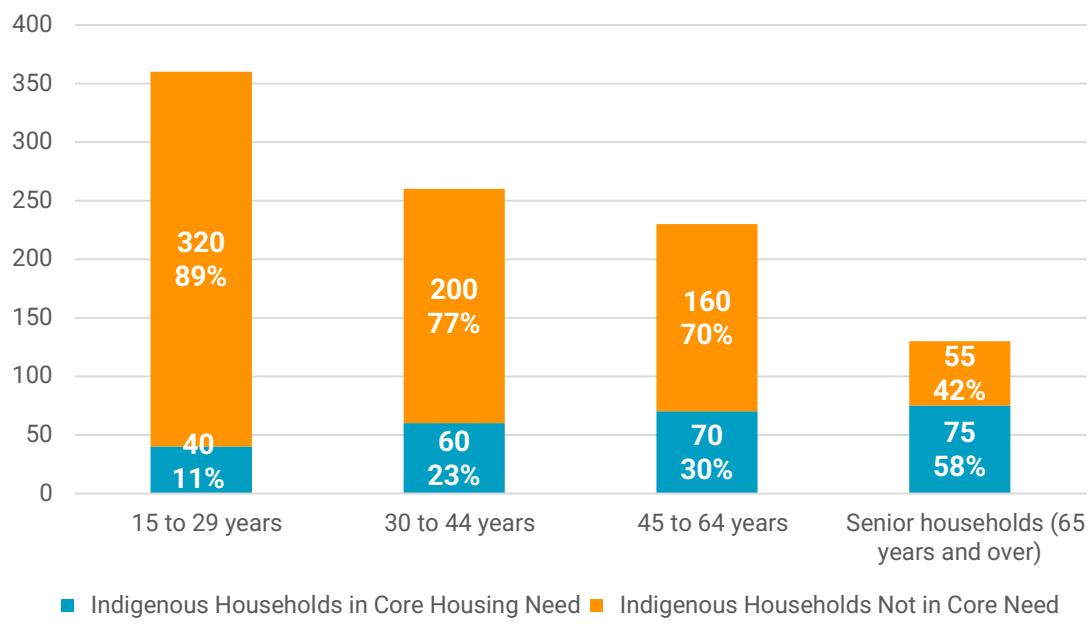


Figure 14 - Rate of Core Housing Need in Indigenous Renter Households by Age of Primary Household Maintainer, Central Okanagan, 2021

Median earning Indigenous lone-parent families earned nearly \$5,000 per year less than their non-Indigenous counterparts. This means that Indigenous lone-parent families who are renting and in core housing need have \$113 less each month to spend on shelter costs than their non-Indigenous counterparts. This gap is less pronounced for couples with children and non-family households, Indigenous households have a marginally higher income in those household types.

Median Household Income by Indigenous Households in Core Housing Need and Family Type

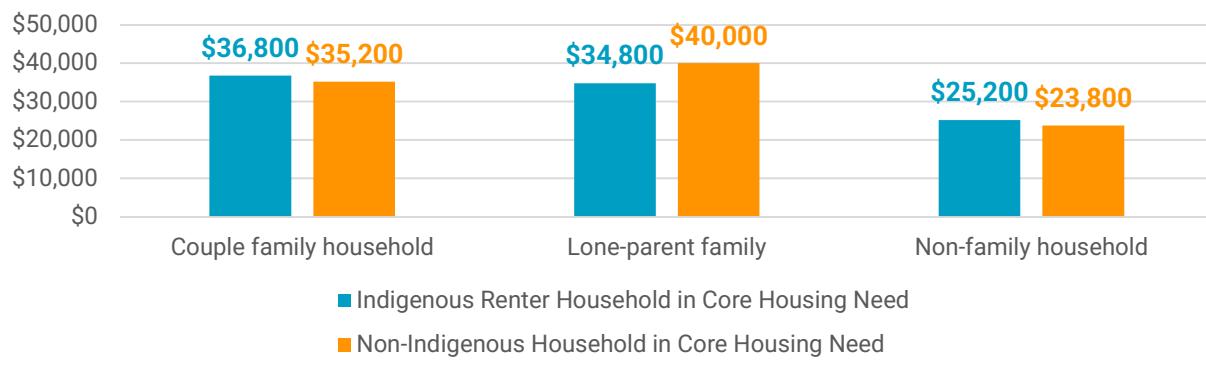


Figure 15 - Median Household Income by Indigenous Households in Core Housing Need and Family Type, Central Okanagan, 2021

Figure 16 shows rates of core housing need by household type for Indigenous renter households. Among non-family households that rent, one in four households were experiencing core housing need, representing 7.5% of all Indigenous renters. The second largest group after lone parent families in core housing need was lone-parent family households, with one in five households experiencing core housing need.

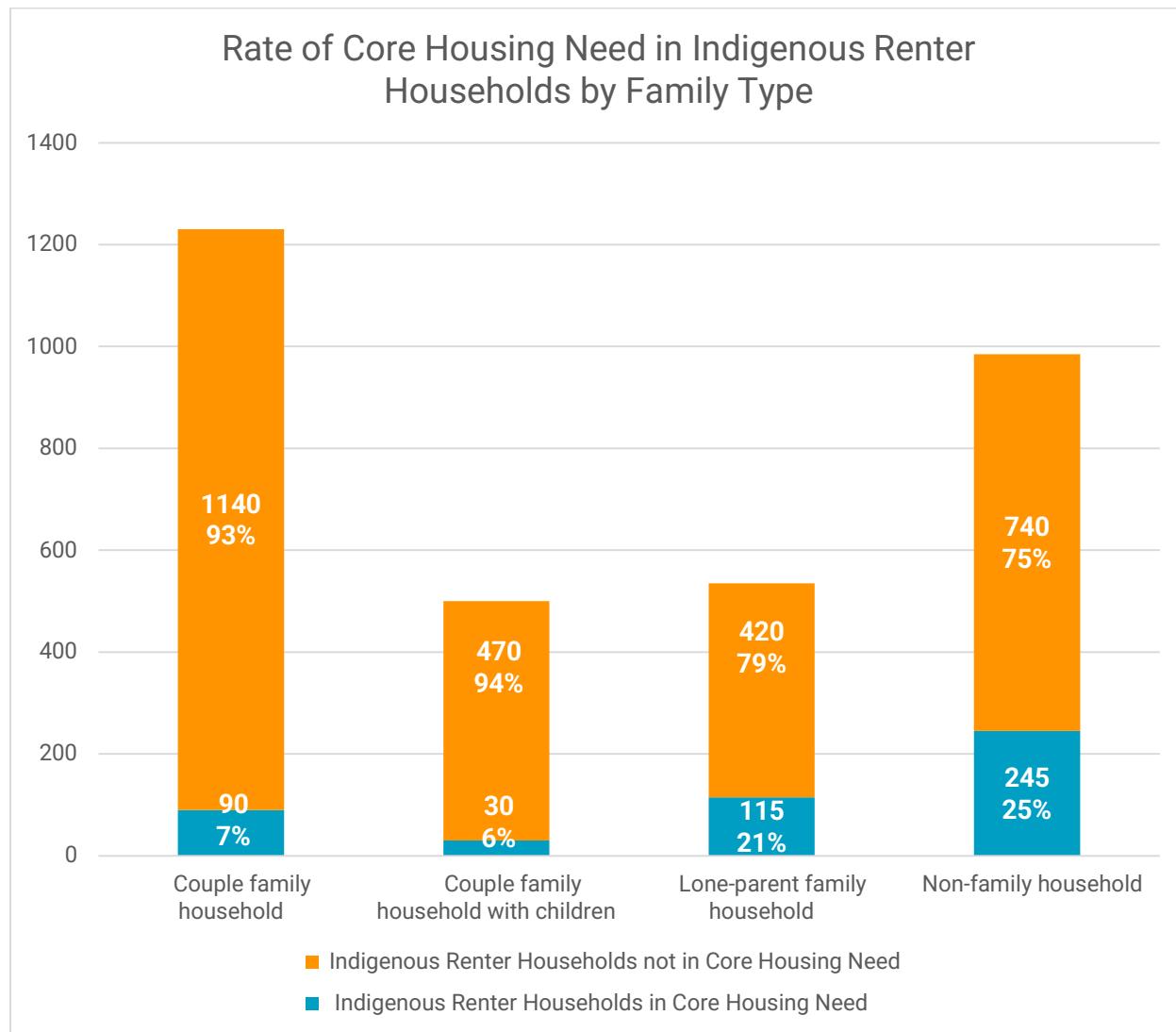


Figure 16 - Rate of Core Housing Need in Indigenous Renter Households by Family Type, Central Okanagan, 2021

1.11.5. WESTSIDE UNIQUE IDENTIFIER COUNT

From October 19th to November 18th, 2022, service agencies across the Westside, including Westbank First Nation and the City of West Kelowna, collaborated on a unique initiative aimed at gauging the extent of homelessness, housing instability, and associated support needs within the community. This endeavor involved facilitating survey completion by individuals accessing services provided by support agencies. Funded by the City of West Kelowna, the project adopted a methodology outlined in the "Step-by-Step

Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness" by the Alberta Rural Development Network in 2020. By leveraging this model, the project sought to delve deeper into understanding the demographics of those experiencing housing challenges, including individuals who are provisionally housed or at risk of homelessness. In total, 279 survey respondents participated in this data collection effort, marking a significant step towards revealing a clearer picture of homelessness and housing instability on the Westside.

The key implications following data analysis include:

- Of those who are experiencing housing insecurity, 25% Identify as Indigenous.
- People are still in need of support services even when they are secure within their housing.
- People are choosing between paying their mortgage/rent or buying groceries and meeting their basic needs.
- Residents may be unaware of social and recreational opportunities provided within the community.
- Individuals feel stigmatized labelling themselves as housing insecure and therefore may not be connecting with preventative services.
- The need of Support Services within the Westside continues to increase.
- The representation of Indigenous Westside individuals experiencing homelessness has decreased by 19% since 2018.
- Far more individuals have accessed emergency shelters and far fewer are sheltering outdoors since 2018, increasing access to services beyond a place to sleep.
- Food insecurity is experienced at a high rate on the Westside and is the most accessed form of social support in the community.
- Individuals who are not from the Westside are more likely to need support services and experience housing instability than those originally from the community.
- Individuals aged 46-64 are the most at-risk age group for housing instability and homelessness.

1.11.6. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 45% of Indigenous households in the Central Okanagan were renters in 2021, compared to 28% of non-Indigenous households who were renters.
- Age distribution across Indigenous and non-Indigenous renters was comparable, with Indigenous between 15-44 having a higher proportion of renters.
- Indigenous households have a higher median income; however, this is due to the average Indigenous household size being 2.9 persons compared to 2.3 in the Central Okanagan.
- Indigenous renters had a higher proportion in all categories of one family households, compared to non-Indigenous renters.
- Median income in core housing need was lower for Indigenous lone-parent households, but comparable to non-Indigenous couple and non-family households.
- The rate of core housing need in Indigenous renter households grows as the primary age of the household maintainer ages.
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous households have similar rates of core housing need in the Central Okanagan, with Indigenous renter households having a higher proportion of core housing need than Indigenous owner households.

- Indigenous peoples made up a disproportionate number of individuals experiencing homelessness in 2020 as per the PiT Count Report. Homelessness in the Central Okanagan has seen a sharp increase in the years since 2020, and there is a high likelihood that Indigenous peoples continue to be overrepresented in the homeless community.

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

Indigenous households in the Central Okanagan are more likely to rent than to own, and this group is more vulnerable to housing challenges as indicated by the rates of core housing need. Indigenous housing need is not defined by any single renter demographic group, however there is a more pronounced need in lone-parent households, and households where the primary household maintainer is 65 or older. Larger Indigenous households, consisting of extended relatives and friends, require affordable housing with enough bedrooms to ensure that children and families are not separated from one another.

The findings in this report demonstrate there are differences among Indigenous renter households in the Central Okanagan in terms of Indigenous identity, age, household composition and income. However, housing in the Central Okanagan (and most urban communities) is not typically designed or managed with the distinct needs of urban Indigenous peoples in mind. Currently, the National Occupancy Standards which non-market housing providers must abide to, do not align well with larger Indigenous households. Further, although there are at least 348 non-market housing units that are dedicated to Indigenous peoples in the Central Okanagan, the actual need is much higher.

Previous studies and stakeholder engagement show that Indigenous households face a range of very real issues that cannot be quantified by data alone, and many of which are systemic or historical in nature, including discrimination, systemic racism, mental health issues, and distinct cultural needs. The findings from this report highlight the importance for housing to be designed for Indigenous peoples and with the appropriate supports and programming suited for groups by Indigenous identity, gender, ability, age, health, and household structure.

The data presented in the report further underscores the pronounced disparities faced by Indigenous peoples in the Central Okanagan, particularly in relation to their housing situation. Indigenous renters experience disproportionately high rates of core housing need (CHN), reflecting systemic barriers to accessing safe, adequate, and affordable housing. This disparity is not merely a matter of housing policy but is deeply rooted in historical injustices, including the dispossession of Indigenous lands, discriminatory housing policies, and inadequate government support for Indigenous housing initiatives. As a result, Indigenous renters are disproportionately affected by housing insecurity, homelessness, and overcrowded living conditions, exacerbating social inequalities and contributing to broader patterns of socio-economic marginalization.

The intersectionality of Indigenous experiences with housing insecurity and involvement in the criminal justice and child welfare systems highlights the interconnected nature of systemic injustices faced by Indigenous communities in Canada. Addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in systems requires holistic approaches that recognize and redress the historical injustices, systemic discrimination, and socio-economic disparities that continue to shape Indigenous peoples' experiences today. This includes ensuring access to culturally appropriate support services, investing in Indigenous-led community initiatives, and implementing policies that prioritize reconciliation, self-determination, and Indigenous rights.



CONSIDERATIONS For Action

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION

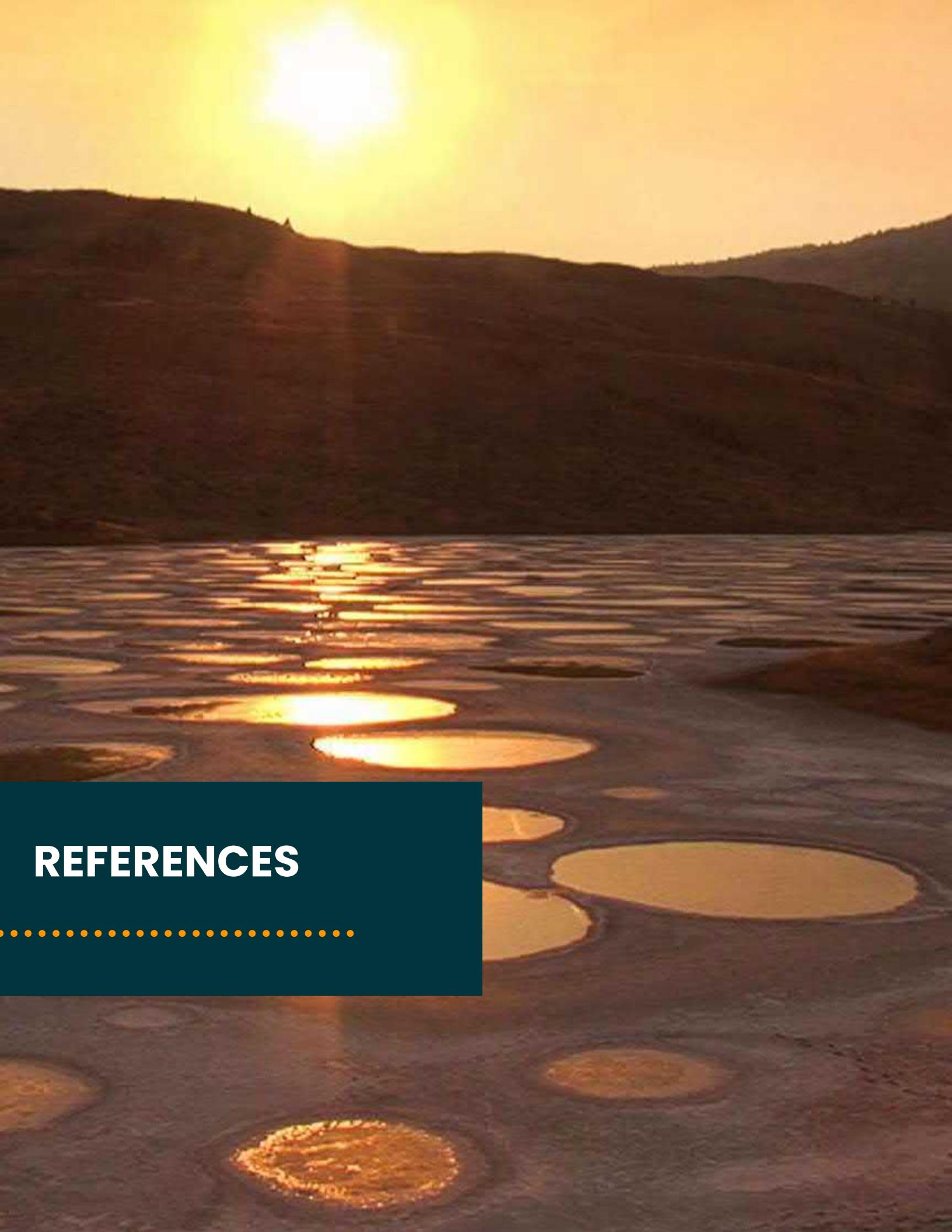
The following recommendations are provided to guide future actions and initiatives focused on Indigenous housing and homelessness in the Central Okanagan. The recommendations are based on the findings of the data analysis contained in this report. Further recommendations based on the qualitative analysis are provided in the accompanying What We Heard Report.

- **Regional Advocacy:** Work with regional local governments to create a Regional Indigenous Advocacy Task Force to collaborate on Indigenous focused housing policy direction.
 - **Collective Advocacy:** Collectively advocate and work alongside to local and senior levels of government to raise the profile of the housing crisis Indigenous peoples are facing in the Central Okanagan in order to gain additional housing and support.
 - **Indigenous Seniors:** Indigenous seniors in the Central Okanagan have a high risk of experiencing core housing need. Social service providers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous must develop assistance programs and initiatives that partner, target and support the Central Okanagan's Indigenous senior population. Coordinated advocacy to senior levels of government is also needed.
 - **Renter Protections:** Due to the high proportion of Indigenous renters in the Central Okanagan, advocate to local and senior levels of government for stronger renter protection laws, and the ability to address discrimination and human rights issues. To address the stigma that Indigenous households face in the rental market, an awareness and education campaign may be developed.
- **Housing Development:** As Indigenous households have higher than average household size, the construction of additional housing for the region's Indigenous population is needed. Encourage the development of additional culturally appropriate housing through:
 - Development of educational forums and capacity building workshops to move the Indigenous housing sector forward.
 - Promotion of partnerships between the development community, local First Nations communities, Councils, and Indigenous organizations.
 - Collaborate with financial institutions, local and senior government to secure a range of funding sources for affordable housing.
- **Site Identification:** Develop regional mapping tools for First Nations governments and Indigenous organizations to better understand the existing land base and identify potential sites for affordable housing. Establish a set of criteria that can be used to assess and evaluate potential sites for affordable housing.
- **Coordinated Access Data Sharing:** Ensure that Indigenous partners are embedded in data sharing conversations, and advocate for OCAP® principals to be understood by data sharing partners. Support data sovereignty by ensuring that data collection strategies align with the practices and culture of the Indigenous Nation, community or Peoples who are represented in the data.
- **Access to Relevant Data:** Ensure that there is coordinated Indigenous representation at the local and provincial levels to assert Indigenous data sovereignty for all data that is collected from Indigenous sources.
- **Impact Assessments:** Develop culturally appropriate evaluation tools that measure impact Indigenous housing and homelessness initiatives.
- **PiT Counts:** Point in Time (PiT) Count Reports are a snapshot of visible homelessness and are used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs targeting homelessness and the proportion of

Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. The last PiT count was conducted in 2020. Do Indigenous housing and service providers see the PiT count as a valuable tool? Are there other ways of gathering this information with a stronger cultural lens?

During the development of this quantitative analysis the overwhelming sentiment expressed by the Project Advisory Committee was the desire for bold actions that spur tangible change related to Indigenous homelessness. The recommendations aim to provide the framework for Indigenous service providers and First Nations governments to come together with a bold collective vision, supported by comprehensive data analysis, to collaboratively address Indigenous housing challenges in the region.

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