



Summary of Qualitative Research from the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan Survey

January, 2023

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Executive Summary

The Chiefs-in-Assembly mandated the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), pursuant to resolution 79/2019, to address homelessness by advocating for evidenced-based reforms to programs and services. Pursuant to this mandate, the AFN has undertaken research to inform development of a **National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan** (NFNHAP or “Action Plan”).

The Action Plan aims to ensure First Nations jurisdiction over homelessness programs, and to promote homelessness programs and services that better meet the unique and specific needs of homeless First Nations peoples.

This report provides a summary of qualitative data and findings from a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan Survey (the “National Survey”) conducted by the AFN, as well as results from a series of interviews with representatives of homelessness service providers supporting First Nations people in urban and other locations.

The AFN National Survey and Interviews with Service Providers

The AFN conducted the National Survey in 2021. The survey, which was delivered online and distributed to all regions targeted three primary groups through separate survey “streams”.

1. First Nations members (in and out-of-community)
2. First Nations leaders, staff and technicians (primarily in-community), and
3. Service delivery organizations primarily, but not exclusively, serving out-of-community First Nations people.

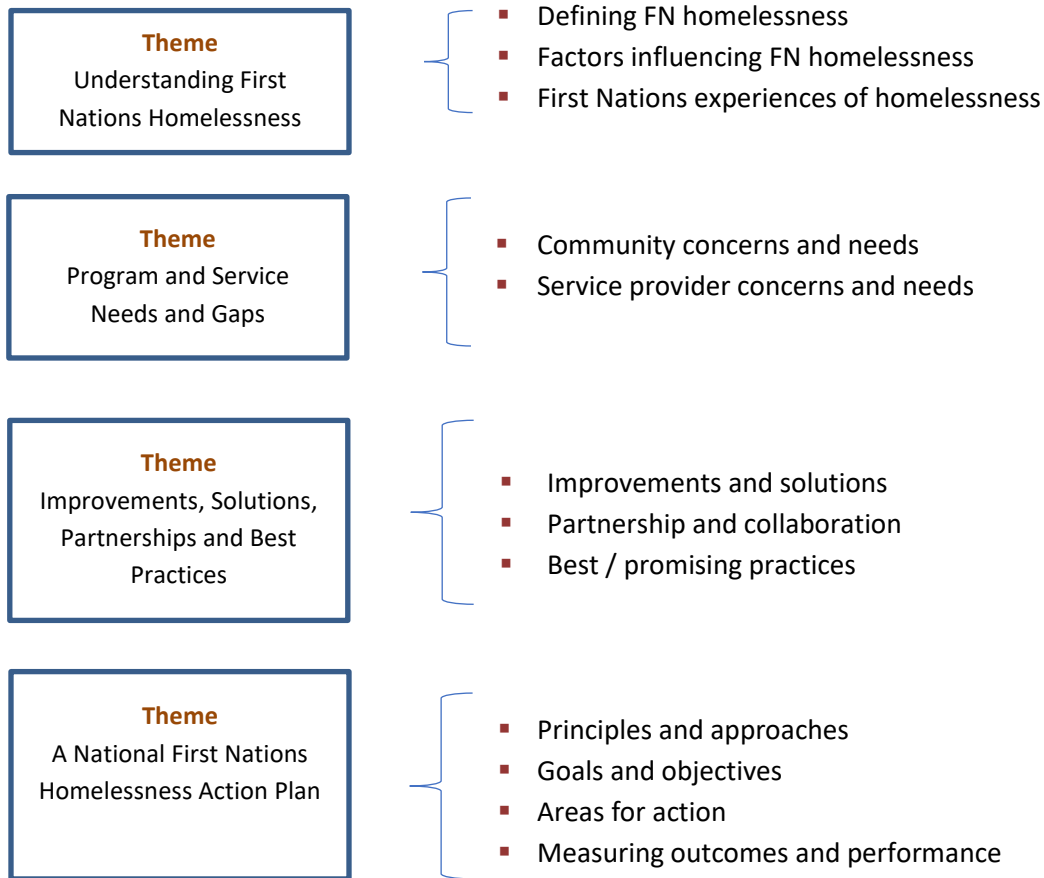
A total of 137 survey responses were received.

In parallel, the AFN conducted interview with homelessness service providers that focus on serving either First Nations or Indigenous peoples.

Approach to Qualitative Data Analysis

Overarching themes and sub-issue areas arising from the qualitative data collected through the survey and interviews were organized and analyzed within a research framework (depicted below).

Qualitative Data Analysis Framework



Qualitative data from the survey and interviews were analyzed within this framework, with the results of such analysis presented in this report.

Understanding First Nations Homelessness

First Nations understandings and definitions of homelessness are unique – they are distinct from understandings held by Western and mainstream society, and from those of other Indigenous peoples. Definitions of homelessness offered by First Nations people demonstrate that having access to a home or home ownership fails to correspond to First Nations meanings and understandings of “home”.

Definitions and understandings of First Nations homelessness offered by participants in the AFN’s National Survey centre around the idea that First Nations homelessness is often hard to see and quantify. First Nations community members, leaders, and service providers express a common view that First Nations homelessness is different than for any other population.

For First Nations people, different forms of homelessness exist concurrently. These are most commonly categorized as ‘visible’ and ‘hidden’ homelessness. Further, First Nations-specific homelessness definitions are commonly identified as needing to explicitly recognize the role and impacts of systemic racism caused by historic and ongoing colonial policies.

Program and Service Needs and Gaps

There are many program and service needs and gaps related to First Nations homelessness. The National Survey focused on needs across a range of areas, but most notably with respect to housing and infrastructure, and access to adequate social supports.

Most commonly identified gaps relate to the types of supports available to homeless First Nations people and the housing insecure. This includes, notably, support for mental health, addictions, trauma and healing from intergenerational impacts of colonial policies. There is significant support for framing *all* program and service supports that are required within integrated and wrap-around service delivery models.

Responsibilities for homelessness are tied to the fiduciary duties and treaty obligations of the Crown, and extend beyond First Nations community land-based contexts to urban centres and other locations. First Nations rights to housing are portable and responsibilities and funding should follow these.

Funding remains a primary issue to be addressed in relation to First Nations homelessness programs and initiatives, and associated questions and concerns arise about government responsibilities - what these responsibilities are, who bears them, and how existing programs and resources can be made available on a First Nation-specific basis (i.e. distinctions-based) and administered through organizations that are directly accountable to First Nations.

Another theme is the need to provide information to First Nations members, especially those who are in transition from in-community to out-of-community living circumstances. This should include information on available programs, services, housing options and associated resources, and 'what to expect' when moving to an urban (or out-of-community) area. The need for service navigation systems was underlined by respondents to the Survey, as improvements in this area can support a more seamless transition for First Nations people from in-community to urban and other out-of-community living circumstances.

Improvements, Partnerships and Best Practices

Findings from the National Survey suggest a number of ways in which improvements can be made to systems addressing First Nations homelessness and housing insecurity. In addition to meeting fundamental needs through improved access to adequate and affordable housing, and enhanced supportive services as identified above, other areas of improvement present themselves. This includes the need to address the pervasive systemic and individual racism experienced by First Nations people seeking housing and shelter in urban and out-of-community environments. Second, the need for services to be provided in trauma-informed and culturally safe ways emerged as a predominant theme with respect to potential improvements and solutions.

There is significant support for centring solutions and models on rights-based approaches which emphasize human and Indigenous/treaty rights to housing, portability of rights, as well as self-government and self-determination. These approaches should also be grounded in distinctions-based

approaches that recognize First Nations' rights to exercise jurisdiction in housing and by extension homelessness, as well as associated authorities, responsibilities and funding. While pan-Indigenous service providers and services are valued and respected, they are not seen as a substitute for programs, services, organizations and institutions that are directly accountable to First Nations. A system governed and administered by First Nations that encompasses *the entire housing spectrum*, coupled with adequate housing for at-risk or homeless people would greatly benefit First Nations people and communities in all settings.

From the survey results it is clear that recommended pathways out of homelessness also include establishing better interconnectedness of existing service delivery systems and networks; systemic supports reflected in policies and systems free of racism; supports and capacities to overcome historical and ongoing trauma; and creating change in-community systems, services and supports.

There is a strong emphasis on the need for collaboration and partnership building at a number of levels, but especially between First Nations and organizations serving First Nations members living in urban and other out-of-community environments (i.e. First Nation-specific, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations). This can be achieved in a number of ways, including but not limited to better information exchange, and representation of First Nations on the boards and leadership structures of service organizations, as well as within service planning and coordination groups and processes.

A National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan

Many features of a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan were identified through the Survey and interviews with representatives of service provider organizations. These include principles that emphasize First Nations jurisdiction and control, culturally relevant and grounded approaches, a seamless approach to service delivery (and exercise of jurisdiction and authority) for homelessness both in- and out-of-community, and flexibility to offer services to different groups of First Nations people (e.g. youth, Elders, persons with addictions/in recovery, people in transition from correctional facilities, women fleeing violence, Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ people, and single parent-led families).

A system administered and governed by First Nations that encompasses the entire housing spectrum coupled with adequate housing for at-risk or homeless people could be a core feature of a National Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness.

Based on findings from the Survey, areas for action to be articulated within a National Action Plan should focus on First Nations jurisdiction and control, funding, land base/land back, wrap around services, expansion of First Nations service organizational capacity, and enhancement of pan-Indigenous models to ensure they meet First Nations needs and circumstances and are accountable to the First Nations whose members they serve.

Finally, establishing appropriate measures of success and the means to monitor, collect and interpret data should take place within a framework of First Nations data sovereignty and application of OCAP principles –a key component of a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan.

Terms and Phrases

A number of different terms are used throughout all research prepared for the AFN Homelessness Action Planning process and in this report. Below is a set of commonly used terms. These terms are not representative of official definitions. In some cases, they were provided in the AFN commissioned research itself.

Distinctions-based

Distinctions-based refers to legislation, policy, programs and services, as well as funding that is allocated based on the three constitutionally recognized Indigenous groups in Canada: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. This approach is taken to ensure that the unique needs, circumstances and right to self-determination of each group is recognized with respect to Indigenous policy and funding.

Indigenous-Led

Any program, service or initiative that is designed, managed and delivered by a government, organization or other entity that is led by and/or represents Indigenous peoples. This term is often used in the context of government programs and policies, and funding arrangements.¹

In-community or “on reserve”

Refers to geographic locations where First Nations peoples (or individuals) live on First Nations lands which may be reserve lands, lands set aside under Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, or lands recognized under constitutionally protected agreements involving First Nations and the Crown, including settlement lands.²

Out-of-community or “off reserve”

Refers to geographic locations where First Nations peoples or individuals live, which may be outside or “off” reserve land or other First Nations land bases as described in the definition above.

Pan-Indigenous refers to programs and services or organizations that are either targeted at two or more of the three groups of Aboriginal peoples recognized in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* (i.e. First Nations, Inuit and Metis). In the context of this report, this means a program, service or organization that is targeted to First Nations and other groups of Indigenous peoples, or that does not draw distinctions between service population or clients based on their Indigenous identity or affiliation.

¹ For example, it may be a requirement that in order to be considered eligible for government program funding, an organization must be “Indigenous-led” which normally will be defined as inclusive or a wide range of organizational situations.

² While the term “on-and-off reserve” is used in AFN Resolution 79/2019 re: *Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off-Reserve*, feedback from communities has indicated that the terms “on reserve” and “off reserve” may be limited as it is not inclusive of First Nations land bases in Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

Wrap-around Services

A holistic approach that makes all the services that a person might need available in a mutually supportive and in some instances integrated way. In the case of homelessness, wrap-around services are provided so as to stabilize and house a homeless person, and often include a range of supports e.g. for housing, income support, health and wellness, addictions and trauma, child and family support services, cultural and traditional activities etc..

Summary of Qualitative Research from the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan Survey

1. Context

The Chiefs-in-Assembly mandated the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), pursuant to resolution 79/2019, to address homelessness by advocating for evidenced-based reforms to programs and services. An overriding objective is to achieve greater alignment with First Nations' needs, preferred approaches, rights, interests and the unique circumstances of homeless First Nations people. The AFN is collaborating with regional/territorial organizations across Canada in developing approaches for the Action Plan that will better serve First Nations homeless populations whether living in or away from their communities.

To complete this work, the AFN has undertaken a comprehensive round of research to inform development of a **National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan (NFNHAP)**. The Action Plan aims to ensure First Nations jurisdiction over homelessness programs, and promote homelessness programs and services that better meet the unique and specific needs of homeless First Nations peoples.

To date, the research work supporting development of the Action Plan has included:

- A National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan Survey (the Survey);
- One-on-one interviews with representatives of homelessness service delivery organizations serving First Nations people in urban and other locations (Interviews)
- A literature review
- An environmental scan
- A systems mapping exercise
- Regional engagement sessions held across the country

Research Supporting the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan

With completion of the National Survey and additional research listed here, as well as further analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data collected through various methods, the AFN is poised to embark on the process of developing a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan.

This report provides a summary of the findings and results of the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan Survey and interviews with service providers.

2. Summary of Qualitative Research

2.1 Objectives and Outcomes

NVision Insight Group was contracted by the AFN to undertake data analysis and synthesis of the qualitative data collected through the Survey and the interviews with service providers. The objective of the project has been to synthesize and analyze, in an integrated way, all of the qualitative data gathered by the AFN through these two research methods, and prepare a summary report of findings.

The anticipated outcomes of this qualitative data analysis project can be combined together with the findings from *other* research methods employed by the AFN (i.e. regional engagement sessions, literature review and environmental scan) to contribute to broader objectives to establish a National Action Plan on First Nations Homelessness that addresses evidence-based reforms to federal programs and services and alignment with First Nations needs, rights and preferred approaches to addressing homelessness.

2.2 The Survey and Survey Response

The AFN's Housing and Homelessness Sector undertook the National Survey on Homelessness in 2021. The survey was delivered online and distributed to all regions and to geographic locations including both in and out-of-community. It was delivered in both English and French. The survey invited a range of respondents to participate. This included three primary groups to which the survey was directed through three separate survey "streams".

1. First Nations members (in and out-of-community)
2. First Nations leaders, staff and technicians (primarily in-community), and
3. Service delivery organizations primarily, but not exclusively, serving out-of-community First Nations people.

The AFN-delivered survey is included as **Appendix A**. While a common set of survey questions was established as a foundation for the Survey, not all of the above-listed groups were asked to respond to all, or the same set of questions. A breakdown of which groups of respondents were asked to respond to which questions is provided in the table included as **Appendix B**.

A total of 137 responses were received by the AFN from the Survey. Analysis of survey responses received are summarized in Tables 1 to 5 below for:

- Responses by region
- Number of responses by type of respondent
- Respondents by in and out-of-community

- Respondents experience of homelessness (yes/no)
- Type of respondent when completing the survey as a “Service Provider”

Highlights

Regions: The largest number of responses was received from British Columbia and Ontario (38 and 32 respectively). The fewest responses were received from Yukon Territory, NWT, and the Atlantic region. Response rates were also low in Quebec, Labrador and Manitoba.

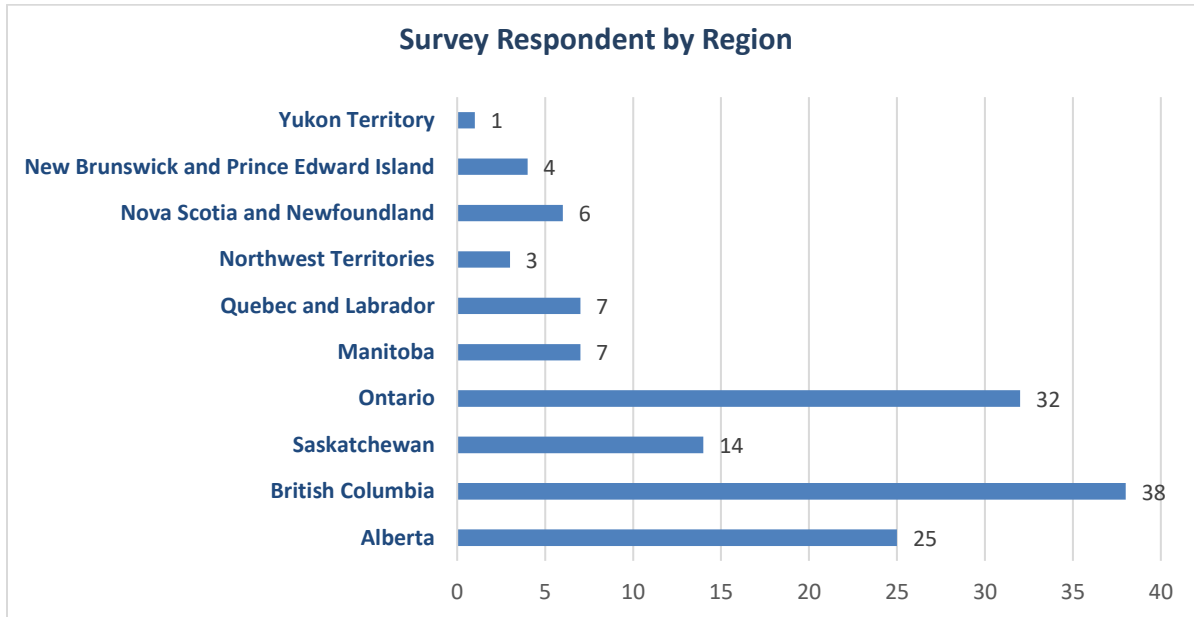
Survey respondent type: Amongst survey respondents, the largest number of responses were received by First Nations members living both in and out-of-community (91). The fewest number of responses were received from First Nations leaders, staff and technicians (13).

First Nations member respondent by location: The majority of First Nations member respondents (76%) reported living out-of-community.

Experience of homelessness: Among First Nations member respondents 60% reported they had not experienced homelessness. While those who have experienced homelessness were a minority, the response rate (40%) suggests those with lived experience have a vested interest in ensuring their views and perspectives are reflected in the Action Plan.

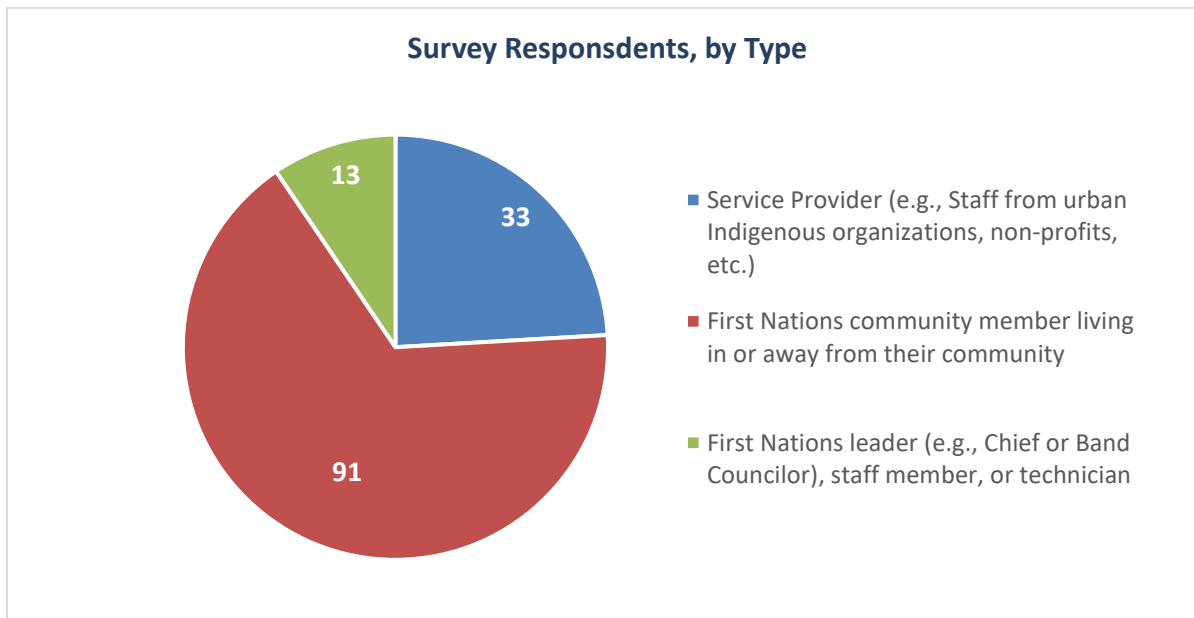
Service providers: Among the 33 respondents who identified they were a ‘service provider’, the largest number (12) identified as being either an Indigenous service provider not associated with a First Nations or a First Nations service provider (8). Several also identified as a non-Indigenous service provider (6) which was assumed to mean “not Indigenous or First Nation-specific” but serving Indigenous people as part of a broader population served.

Table 1 – Number of Survey Responses, by Region



Total Responses: N = 137

Table 2 - Number of Survey Responses, by Respondent Type (First Nations Members, Leaders/Technicians, Service Providers)



Total Responses: N = 137

Table 3 - Survey Respondents by Location (First Nations Members only)

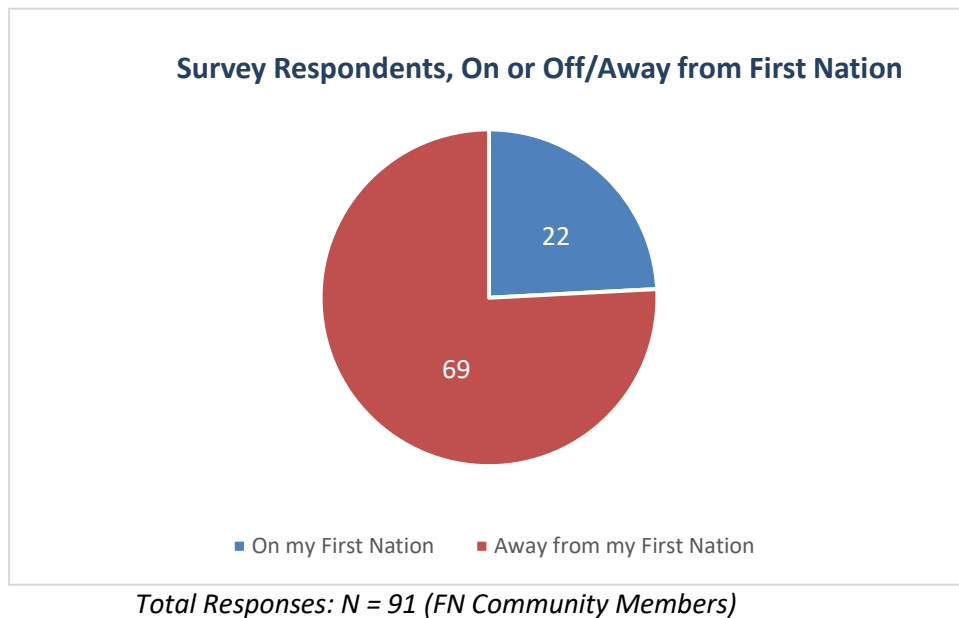


Table 4 - Experiences of Homelessness (First Nations Members only)

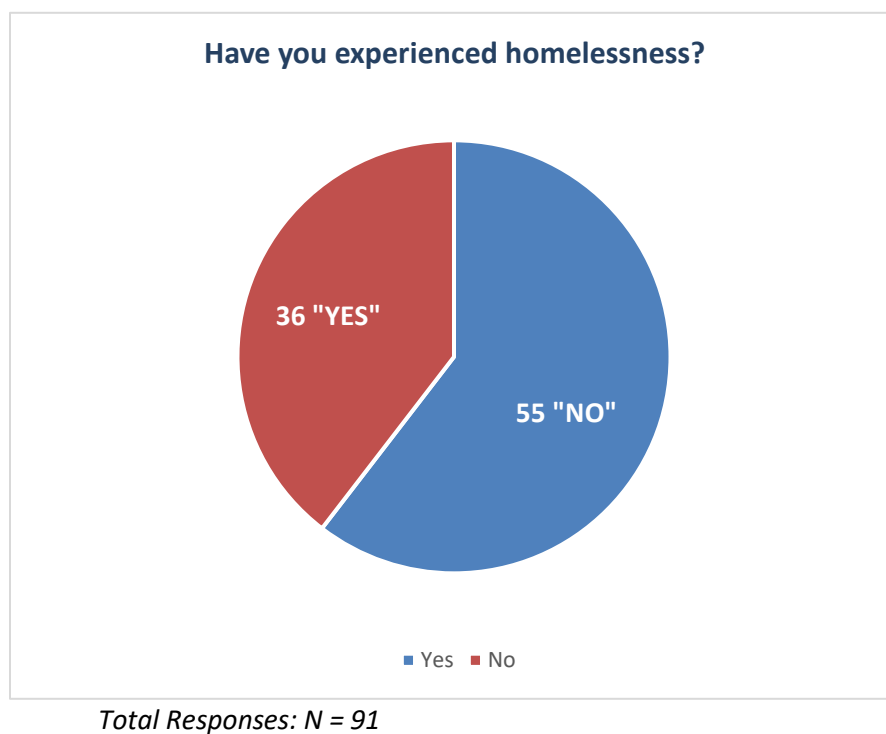
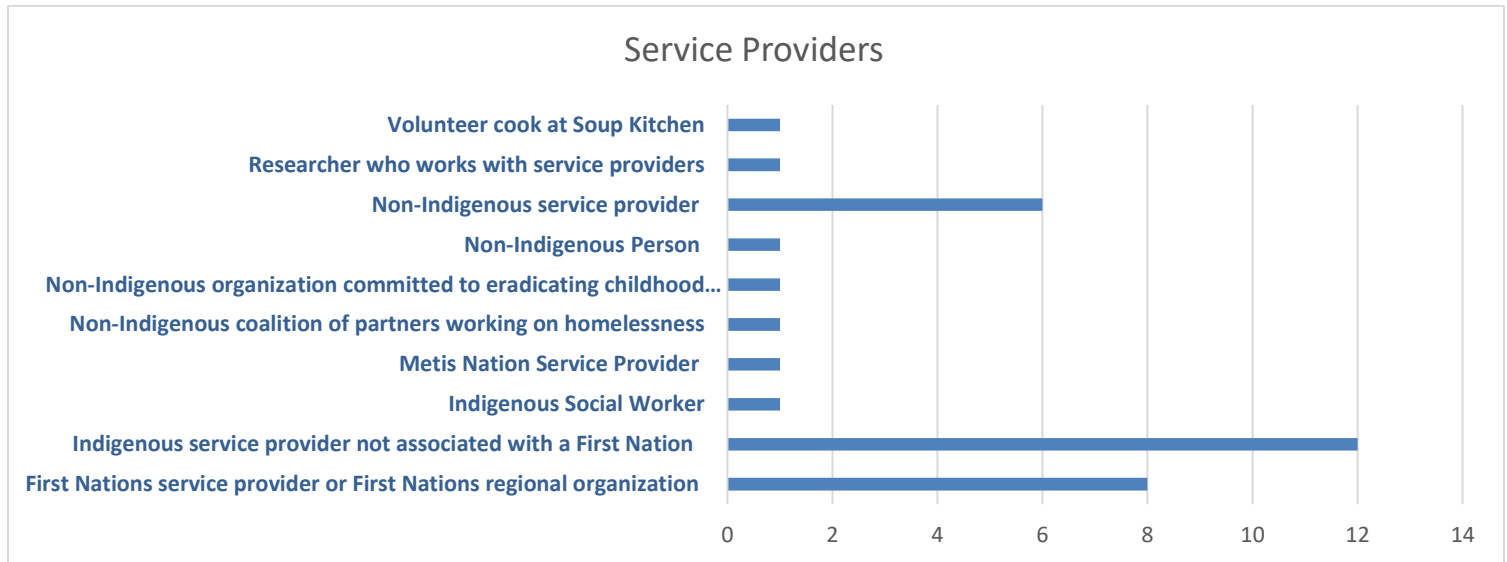


Table 5 - Service Provider Type (Service Providers only)



Total Responses: N= 33

2.3 Interviews with Service Providers

Interviews were also conducted by AFN Housing & Homelessness staff with representatives of six (6) service providers, all of which focused on serving either First Nations or Indigenous people.³ These interviews generally involved one or more representatives in an open-form discussion, and focused on the same topics covered in the Survey. The results and findings from these interviews and discussions are also included in this report. While the number of interviews AFN staff were able to conduct was lower than originally anticipated due to limited uptake, the quality of the discussion and feedback generated meant that these interviews still provide meaningful and significant insight into community needs and priorities to help inform the Action Plan. AFN Housing & Homelessness staff continue to meet with homelessness advocates, service providers, and others through a more informal process with the intent of building networks, sharing information and continuing to gather input into the development of the Action Plan. Although only 6 interviews could be analyzed within this report, they do not represent the full extent of AFN's outreach and engagement which is still active and ongoing.

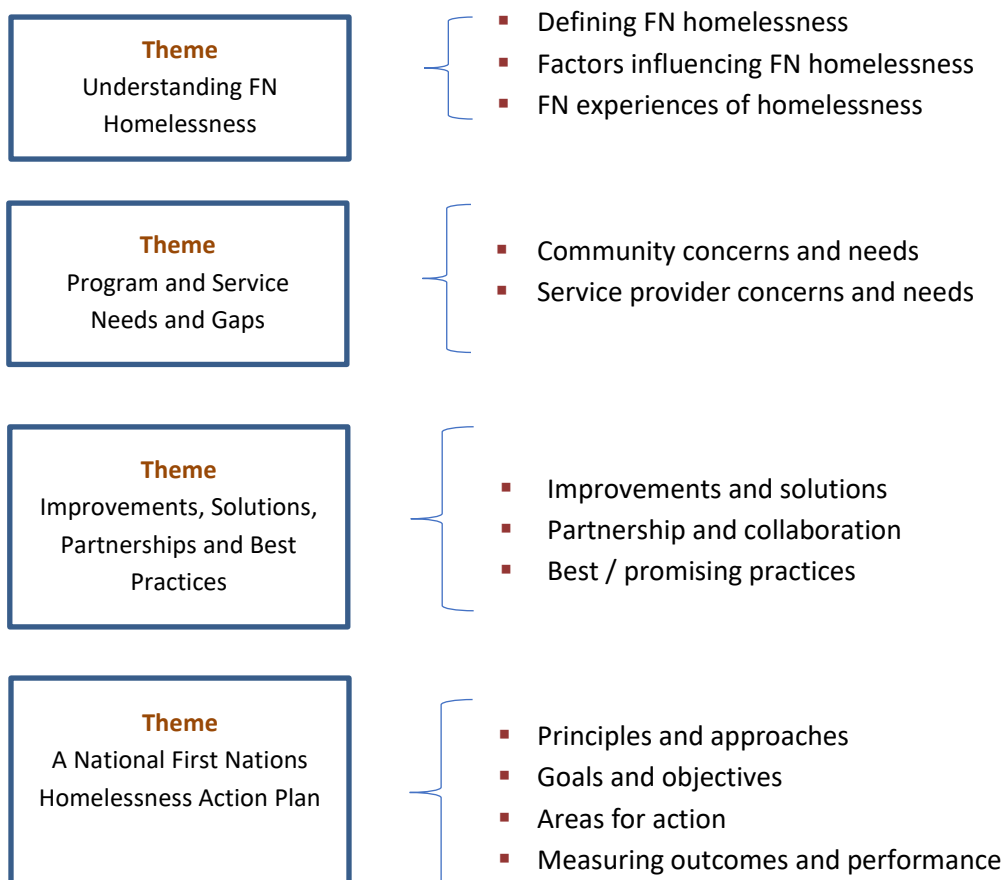
2.4 Qualitative Data Analysis Framework

The project involved, as a first step, review of the Survey instrument and data collected, and establishment of an overarching *Qualitative Data Analysis Framework*. The Framework is organized by several inter-related, overarching themes and sub-issue areas related to First Nations homelessness.

³ Interviews conducted with Eagle Urban Transition Centre (Winnipeg, MB), End Homelessness Winnipeg (Winnipeg, MB), Niginan Housing Ventures (Edmonton, AB), Native Men's Residence (Toronto, ON), Homeward Trust (Edmonton, AB) and the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (Victoria, BC).

These themes are depicted in Figure 1 below. The Framework also provided for the further disaggregation of survey data based on individual survey questions, as well as type of respondent and location (e.g. in and out of community).

Figure 1 - Qualitative Data Analysis Framework



Appendix C includes more detail from the Framework on the primary theme areas, sub-topics or issue areas for analysis, and sources used to support further analysis and interpretation of the available qualitative data.

Following disaggregation of data, an analysis and interpretation of the qualitative survey data was undertaken. The results of the application of this strategy are presented in this report and underpin the way in which findings from the qualitative data are organized. These are generally reported by theme area, sub-issue and survey question, further disaggregated (as appropriate and as the data allowed), according to type of Survey respondent.

The remainder of this report provides a summary of the qualitative data obtained through the Survey and interviews with service providers, as well as a summary of findings.

3. Understanding First Nations Homelessness

3.1 Defining First Nations Homelessness

A National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan must be responsive to and centred on First Nations experiences of homelessness, and associated descriptions, understandings, and definitions utilized by First Nations people, governments and organizations.

Results from the Survey and interviews make it clear that First Nations understandings and definitions of homelessness are unique – they are distinct from those held by Western and mainstream society, and even from those of other Indigenous peoples.

Definitions and understandings of First Nations homelessness offered by participants in the Survey and interviews centered around the idea that First Nations homelessness is often hard to see and quantify. All three streams of the Survey included the following question on the definition of First Nations homelessness in Canada:

“Does homelessness have a different definition for First Nations than for other populations in Canada? If so, what would that definition include?”.

The responses received varied across sectors and respondent types, however there was a common view expressed that ***First Nations homelessness is different than for any other population***. The most common theme identified in the survey responses was the need to recognize the role and impacts of systemic racism caused by Canada’s colonial history and policies. Some of the written comments provided by Survey respondents provide further insight into this:

“Not having a connection to our lands, language and culture affects our identity. Being displaced from homelands due to colonial and genocidal actions furthers Indigenous peoples from connecting to our roots.”

“The definition needs to include the impact of Canada's historical [sic] history, and the current systematic racism - no access to the services they should receive, and no acknowledgment of their lands that they have no access to.”

Mainstream/Western Definitions of Homelessness

Homelessness in Canada is often described as a spectrum that encompasses individuals who are un-housed, as well as people living in unstable or uncertain housing conditions.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) defines homelessness as “...the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it”.

This definition of homelessness is deeply rooted in Western concepts of the home, resulting in the definition being more closely tied to the concept of “houselessness” or the absence of a physical structure in which to live.

Source: Jessica Rumboldt and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2021). *Endaamnaan: Homes for all Nations. A First Nations Homelessness Literature Review*, p.17

“May include lack of connection to First Nations community and less access to culturally appropriate resources.”

“Homelessness is defined as having a lack of structure of habitation, however, with indigenous populations this could also include a lack of culture, relationship to the land, water, family, and language.”

“Disconnection, failure, not good enough, not educated enough, poverty, unemployed, addicted, returning from incarceration and no where to return to.... DISCONNECTION to land, language, belonging, community, wealth/abundance, family, supports, food, education, spirituality...”

“...homelessness has a different definition for First Nations than for other populations in Canada. The definition should include lack of protection of First Nations people and isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities.”

Interview participants (service providers) frequently shared that in the communities they serve, homelessness is oftentimes invisible, with homeless First Nations individuals relying on family or extended family for support.

a) Forms of Homelessness

The Survey also confirms that there are different forms of homelessness that exist concurrently. For First Nations people these are most commonly categorized as ‘visible’ and ‘hidden’ homelessness, and both exist in both “in-community” and out-of-community settings.

Visible homelessness is more closely tied with Western and mainstream understandings and perceptions, which primarily views the homeless as people who are unsheltered or who reside in emergency shelters. This form of homelessness is easy to identify, see and track with formal systems.

Hidden homelessness is much broader, but is severely underreported as it is more difficult to track and measure. Hidden homelessness speaks to the larger, systemic/societal barriers that exist for First Nations people, and includes issues such as extreme overcrowding, unfit housing, and insecure housing – often manifest in the form of “couch surfing”.

Findings from the Survey confirm that hidden homelessness is often tied to continuous movement, migration or relocation, and as a result it is difficult for First Nations and service providers to extend supportive programs and services.

b) Factors Influencing First Nations Homelessness

While First Nations peoples’ experiences of homelessness are diverse, so too are the factors influencing and underlying First Nations homelessness. From the Survey and interviews it is clear that the social determinants of health (e.g. housing and income) and the root causes of poor health outcomes (e.g.

colonial policies, land dispossession) are major underlying factors. Participants in the Survey often singled out for attention individual elements (e.g. colonialism, housing crisis, social and health/mental health conditions) in an attempt to pinpoint the causes of First Nations homelessness of both in and outside First Nations communities.

The Survey responses identified factors related to colonialism and impacts of colonial policies as well as demographic trends influencing homelessness.

Table 6 - Factors Influencing Homelessness

Factors Influencing Homelessness	
General Approach / Questions	The survey included questions on defining homelessness and describing unique experiences, but did not specifically ask respondents to identify factors contributing to homelessness. However, a question about the “potential impacts related to causes and consequences of homelessness” elicited survey respondents’ views on major factors influencing homelessness.
Colonialism, racism and discrimination	Survey respondents identified factors influencing homelessness as inclusive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic racism • Intergenerational trauma • Adverse childhood effects • Genocide and oppression • Unbroken cycles of trauma and lack of healing • Racism and stereotypes in housing situations
The Housing Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of housing / affordable housing / life-cycle appropriate housing • Land tenure arrangements • Lack of access to safe housing places when out-of-community
Social Determinants of Health	Survey respondents frequently identified the social determinants of health (collectively/combined or individual determinants) particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Addictions • Food security • Income/income assistance • Employment, training and education • Child development • Language and culture • Disconnections and disassociations from family and community due to geographic distances, geographic dispersion, community bans etc. • Complex care requirements (e.g. disabilities, addictions)
Age, Gender, Identity, Geography and Regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted by many that homelessness is different in and out-of-community, and in rural versus urban areas. • Also, there are differences in larger urban centres with significant First Nations populations (e.g. in Saskatchewan, Manitoba).
Access to funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding for housing and infrastructure

Factors Influencing Homelessness	
Access to Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of wrap-around and integrated programming • Language barriers especially for Elders • Lack of programming in relation to addictions, trauma and mental health/wellness

Highlights

From the Survey it is evident that the major factors that are perceived to be contributing to homelessness include the following:

- The housing crisis;
- Access to services and barriers to service;
- The history of colonialism, colonial policies and their inter-generational impacts;
- Socio-economic factors (such as employment, income, physical and mental health, disabilities, safety and violence);
- Age, gender, identity, and geography; and
- Racism and discrimination.

c) Regional Perspectives and Perspectives by Respondent Type

There are geographic dimensions as it concerns definitions and factors influencing homelessness, as well as different perspectives on defining homelessness held by First Nations members and First Nations leaders, staff and technicians. These are summarized in Table 7 below.

Table 7 - Definitions of Homelessness: Regional and Respondent Types

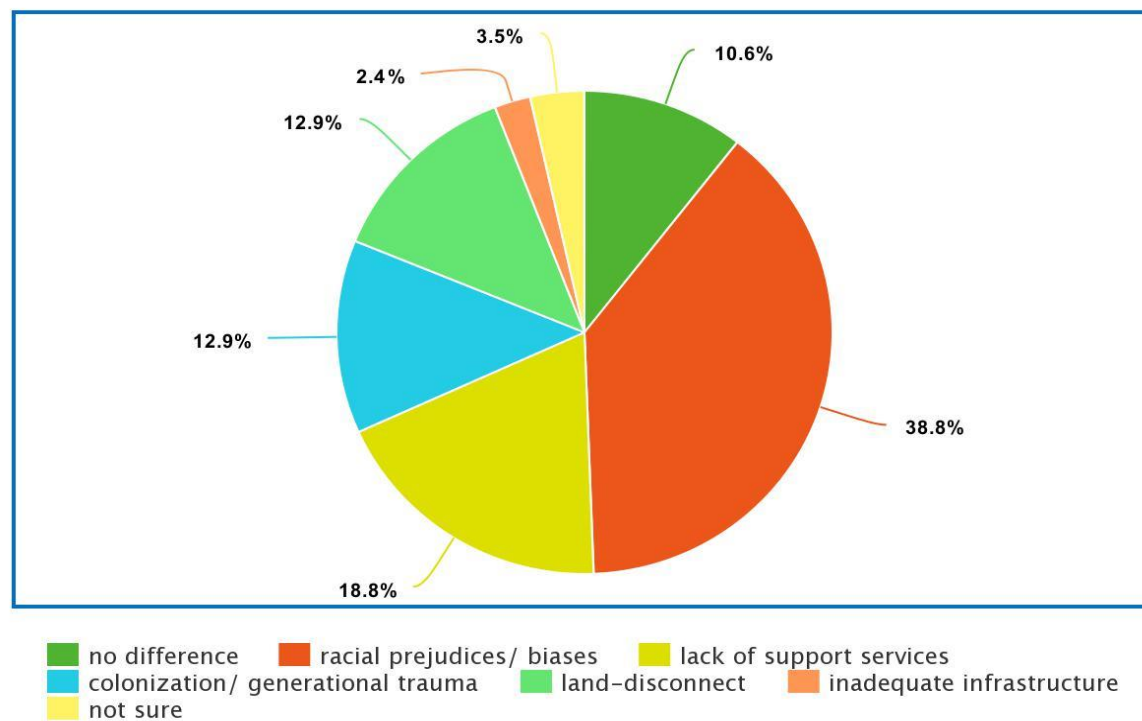
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians
British Columbia	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/ 26 respondents were not sure if there are different definitions. • 2/26 respondents saw no differences in definitions for FN and other populations in Canada, but both believed that FN had a different experience than non-Indigenous people. • 8/26 respondents described racial bias as being a decisive and divisive factor for not receiving equal treatment regarding housing, underscoring the belief that the definition of homelessness is different for FN. • 3/26 responses noted the key words of <i>displacement</i>, <i>colonialism</i> and <i>genocide</i> as pertinent factors to FN homelessness. • 5/26 respondents noted the lack of support systems, services and timely administration for First Nations people in relocating and finding housing, therefore creating a different and inequitable experience than non-Indigenous. • 2/26 responses identified ‘couch-surfing’ because of lack of services and timely responses to urgent housing needs. • 2/26 responses also noted that ‘aging out’ of youth care systems played a role in displacing vulnerable youth without support. • 4/26 respondents noted that physical, spiritual and cultural disconnection from ancestral land due to non-Indigenous laws and rules creates a different definition due to the fact that First Nations people live physically on the land, but are “homeless in the homeland”. • 4/26 respondents mentioned that due to drug and alcohol abuse within communities, the experience of homelessness was different from non-Indigenous people because Indigenous people were faced with prejudices and biases, leading to unequal treatment with allocation of services or inadequate help response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ respondents found no difference between FN homelessness and non-Indigenous homelessness. • ⅔ respondents believed that there was a different definition for FN. • Respondents note discontent with the treatment of First Nations people by government, with specific notation made of land dispossession.
Alberta	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4/15 respondents noted the keywords of trauma, assimilation, residential schools and destroyed relations to the land as points of difference between definitions of homelessness 	

First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4/15 respondents described racial biases as being a decisive and divisive factor for not receiving equal treatment regarding housing; underscoring the belief that the definition of homelessness is different for First Nations. • 6/15 respondents noted the lack of support systems, services and timely administration for First Nations in relocating and finding housing, therefore creating a different and inequitable experience compared with non-Indigenous people. 	
Saskatchewan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7/9 respondents agreed that there was a difference in homelessness definitions for FN than for non-Indigenous • 2/9 respondents note Inadequate housing facilities and lack of resources as major obstacles to FN housing security. • 2/9 respondents note that trauma from residential schools is integral to the First Nations experiences of homelessness. • 4/9 respondents noted the removal from ancestral lands and ways of life have created a disconnect between First Nations people and identities. Therefore, when a First Nations person leaves their lands, they are homeless. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ respondents were not sure • ½ respondents believed that there was a different definition for FN. • Survey notes lack of employment as a point of difference.
Manitoba	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All respondents agreed that there was a difference in homelessness definitions. • 1/4 respondents noted that racial biases affect First Nations experience of homelessness. • 2/4 respondents note that the lack of services and adequate housing facilities are integral to the FN experience of homelessness. 	
Ontario	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4/15 respondents agreed that there was a difference in homelessness definitions for FN than for non-Indigenous peoples. • 5/15 respondents described racial biases as being a decisive and divisive factor for not receiving equal treatment regarding housing; underscoring the belief that the definition of homelessness is different for First Nations. These respondents reference similar keywords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3/3 respondents believed that there was a different definition for First Nations. • ¾ survey responses use the word “overcrowding” as a specific definition for First Nations homelessness and mention “couch surfing” in many instances.

First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians
in describing discrimination experienced including 'lazy', 'unemployable', 'booze' and 'stigma' as stereotypes and prejudices, which lead to barriers to First Nations homelessness.	
Quebec and Labrador	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All respondents agreed that there was a difference in homelessness definitions. 3/6 responses noted the removal from ancestral lands and due to colonization and childhood sexual abuse trauma from residential schools as pertinent factors in defining First Nations homelessness. 1/6 respondents note the lack of resources and services as a specific factor in First Nations homelessness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/1 respondents believed that there was a different definition for FN, noting colonialism as a point of difference.
New Brunswick and PEI	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3/4 respondents agreed that there was a difference in homelessness definitions. 2/4 respondents noted that the impacts of historical violence, genocide and colonialism have created vulnerabilities within First Nations communities which provided greater exposure to effects of homelessness, as compared with non-Indigenous communities. 	
Nova Scotia and Newfoundland	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All respondents agreed there was a difference in the definition of homelessness. Their responses centered on the premise that the definition for FN homelessness should include not only the missing physical housing structure, but the physical, spiritual and cultural disconnection with the land and homeland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents found no difference between FN homelessness and non-Indigenous homelessness but noted that FN are more vulnerable to violence than non-Indigenous people in situations of homelessness.
Yukon and Northwest Territories – no responses recorded	

Chart 1 - Summary of Survey Responses (First Nations Members)

Features of First Nations Homelessness



meta-chart.com

Responses from Survey participants who are First Nations members agreed that homelessness is or should be defined differently in the First Nations context, and centered on six distinct themes and categories as indicated in Chart 1 above.

The most common response shared by 38.8% of participants noted that ***racial biases, stereotypes, prejudices and preconceived notions*** are a key differential factor distinguishing First Nations and non-Indigenous homelessness (and appropriate definitions thereof). Respondents shared experiences where landlords, rental boards and agencies had noticeably treated them differently and more unfavorably than their non-Indigenous counterparts due to stigmatization and stereotyping.

In the second most common response, 18.8% of participants believe that the main difference between First Nations homelessness and non-Indigenous homelessness is due to the ***lack of services, administration and support systems*** for First Nations. An experience repeated in the responses is that oftentimes, youth “age out” of foster systems and are given little to no support in finding accommodation, leading to many First Nations people first experiencing homelessness as young adults and teenagers. Given that First Nations children and youth are dramatically overrepresented in the child welfare system, the lack of supports for children and youth in care when they reach the age of majority is an especially significant contributor to homelessness for First Nations people. 2.4% of responses also specifically noted that inadequate housing facilities (and infrastructure) were integral to understanding the First Nations experience of homelessness.

A third common theme found among survey responses (12.9%) is the link between homelessness and housing insecurity, and intergenerational traumas associated with residential schools, colonization and genocide. Intergenerational and cumulative trauma from the impacts of historical violence have created vulnerabilities within First Nations communities that expose them more frequently to social factors that contribute to homelessness when compared with non-Indigenous people. Participants noted the detrimental toll of substance abuse as a direct outcome of trauma, perpetuating the cycle of First Nations homelessness. An additional 12.9% indicated that the most relevant factor distinguishing First Nations and non-First Nations definitions of homelessness is specifically related to disconnection from the land - not just in the sense of a physical housing structure, but also the associated spiritual and cultural severances. This theme spills over into responses related to intergenerational traumas as this is clearly seen as a by-product of dislocation from land. Overall, this paints a composite picture of First Nations homelessness in Canada layered over intergenerational trauma, layered over colonialism/colonial policies.

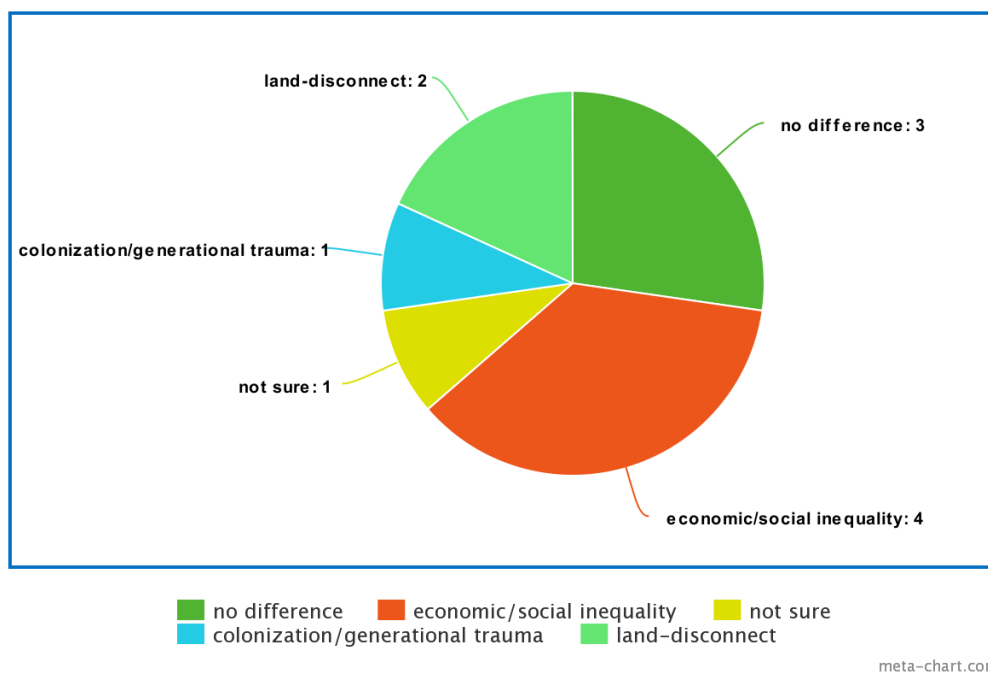
Responses to the second part of the survey question asking, “what would a definition of First Nations homelessness include?” were less frequently provided by Survey respondents. However, where responses were provided, the overwhelming majority suggest a definition of First Nations homelessness that includes more than just the physical elements associated with a lack of an adequate housing structure. Any definition should also include spiritual, cultural and practical dimensions recognizing that, compared with the traditional narrative on homelessness, the First Nations experience is more than just the loss of a home – it involves loss of identity and connections with important relationships. To limit the

definition of FN homelessness to an absence of physical structure would inappropriately confine definitions of First Nations homelessness within Western conceptions.

Chart 2 below reports some of the commonly referenced features of First Nations homelessness provided in the Survey responses.

Chart 2 - Summary of Survey Responses (First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians)

Features of First Nations Homelessness



Findings from the interviews conducted with service providers confirm similar perspectives on the definition of homelessness. Interviewees expressed the following views:

- Home is more than just shelter.⁴
- Residents of shelters don't mind being called homeless because their home is in their First Nations community.
- Softer terminology would be "unhoused".
- First Nations need "roll up our sleeves" and "own the narrative" around homelessness, and therefore define it: First Nations homelessness is unique as a consequence of First Nations people being marginalized in multiple ways.

⁴ Eagle Urban Transition Centre reported that it has held focus groups to define what is considered housing for First Nations citizens.

3.2 First Nations Experiences of Homelessness

To contextualize the homelessness experiences of those First Nations individuals who participated in the Survey, respondents were asked the following open-ended question:

What do *experiences* of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?

This section of the report describes what was heard and learned about First Nations peoples' experiences of homelessness from the Survey based on responses derived from the above survey question. Particular attention is directed to the results of a disaggregation of the qualitative survey data that was undertaken in order to gain a more nuanced picture of the different perspectives and experiences of First Nations people regarding homelessness, in addition to commonalities of experience.

The question regarding First Nations experiences of homelessness was directed to all three target groups in the three Survey streams: First Nations members, First Nations leaders, staff and technicians, and service providers.

Disaggregation of the available Survey data was completed:

- based on the ten (10) regions (as they were recognized by the AFN at the time) set up by the AFN in its Survey instrument;
- based on respondent groups that identified as either living in-community or out-of-community, and
- for those who reported they had lived experience of homelessness.

Prior to presenting Survey findings on disaggregated basis, it is important to note the following as a caveat to what is presented/can be derived from the data.

- No survey responses to the question on experiences were received from First Nations leaders, staff and technicians in Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, and the Yukon Territory.
- No survey responses were received from service providers in Quebec and Labrador, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, and the Yukon Territory.

Data on participation by region and by in and out-of-community is presented in tables included in **Section 2. Summary of Qualitative Research** of this report. However, survey respondents were also asked to self-identify whether they had lived experience of homelessness. Among survey respondents who chose to answer this question 60% indicated *they had not* experienced homelessness and 40%

reported *they had* experienced homelessness. Of those who had experienced homelessness, 82% were living out of their First Nations community, while the remaining 18% were living on their First Nation.⁵

a) Common Elements of Experience

Among First Nations leaders, staff, and technicians a “high level” rather than “granular” view of experiences of homelessness were offered. Most commonly, this group identified colonialism/ intergenerational trauma, racism, and governmental policy as the main drivers of homelessness. In aggregate, the responses also touched on themes that are similarly apparent across all groups. Among all survey responses received, the five most common themes were:

1. Affordability
2. Funding
3. Lack of housing/infrastructure,
4. Racism/discrimination, and
5. Trauma/colonialism.

First Nations governance over housing and infrastructure was a key component of each of the identified themes. Limited control and access to federal funding is linked to a shortage of houses and support services in-community, which contributes to ongoing mental health and addictions issues among members. Some respondents also stated they have conducted research to find new funding sources but have not had any success, indicating a potential need for systems navigators for First Nations communities.

Service providers were more likely to identify the effects of homelessness in their response to the question about First Nations experiences of homelessness, with respondents frequently identifying mental health/addictions, intergenerational trauma, and limited availability/accessibility of services for clients in need. Many of the responses of service providers also described overcrowding and a lack of housing as primary contributors to poor health, however they also described the experiences of individuals facing racism, particularly with landlords, as another root cause.

The lack of programming in rural and remote First Nations communities was attributed to a lack of capacity and funding, and services available in urban centres were identified as being located primarily in the denser areas of cities (i.e. the city centre) where housing and rental prices are least affordable. These services are often restricted to people living within a certain catchment area as well, which provides limited support to First Nations members attempting to leave their communities for support.

Through a query of all responses received in relation to the survey question, some common elements and key words were identified. Figure 2 below shows in word cloud form the most common words used in the Survey by respondents to describe homelessness experiences. The most commonly identified

⁵ While these numbers seem one sided on the surface, it should be noted that the overall survey sample received significantly more responses from First Nations individuals who lived out of their community. Of the 91 First Nations member respondents, 69 were currently living away from their First Nation, while 22 were living in their community.

themes that differentiate housing insecurity and homelessness involve the social elements of homelessness, such as health, social supports and assistance, and safety.⁶

Figure 2 - Key Words Describing First Nations Homelessness Experiences



The experiences of First Nations community members vary, but many of the testimonials of Survey participants powerfully and commonly speak to Canada's colonial history, systemic racism, cultural loss, loss of identity and disconnection from lands, traditions, values and kinship structures as providing the root system that feeds First Nations homelessness today.

b) Regional Perspectives

Although the distribution of Survey respondents was fairly diverse across the country, there were no discernible trends that could be directly traced to each region. Nonetheless, the table below presents some of the data disaggregated by region. While the information is organized by region, because there are few differences, and the emergent themes were the same in all regions (see list of five common themes above), this reporting of regional perspectives can be seen as a proxy for the general and common perspectives evident throughout the Survey results.

⁶ Keywords were managed in a way that allowed for synonyms to be grouped together. For example, the term “live” occurred 61 times in 91 responses, and included similar words such as “alive, existence, experiences, and survival”.

Table 8 - Experiences of Homelessness and Housing Insecurity, by Region

(All Survey Respondent Groups)

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
British Columbia		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-community homeless people are referred to First Nations service programs which often cannot assist. • Limited ability to own homes in-community forces people to move to urban areas. • Cycles of trauma contribute to addiction issues, which are perpetuated through disconnection from identity and culture. • Inability to provide adequate housing in and out-of-community contributes to hidden homelessness. • Single parents are particularly vulnerable in First Nations communities, as limited supply and restrictive rents limit their ability to find secure housing with a single income. • Young Indigenous women are at heightened risk of domestic violence due to limited income and safe housing. • Youth are vulnerable. • Racism and discrimination are major barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness is a result of Canada's history of colonization and exploitation of Indigenous land. • First Nations members live in a wide range of insecure housing circumstances. • First Nations people experience racism and discrimination in housing. • Housing conditions are extremely poor, and in-community housing is limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some areas the homeless have several options in terms of shelter, but fewer options with respect to supports and employment opportunities. • There is constant discrimination by landlords. Single parents are particularly vulnerable. • Intergenerational living and larger families increase the cost of rentals for some First Nations families. • Communal gathering spaces for people living away from their homelands is lacking, and as a result people become disconnected from family and community. • There's are gaps in available resources between regions and between in and out-of-community.

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsidized housing units that do not allow the consumption of drugs or alcohol sometimes forces people struggling with addiction to become homeless. Having connections is key when people transition from their community to an urban centre. 		
Alberta		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations communities lack the infrastructure of larger urban centres. Affordability and rapidly increasing rental prices are issues. Racism, particularly from landlords. Nepotism in-community affects access to housing Inability to secure funds for housing (i.e. mortgage, down payments). Limited housing in-community pushes people into cities and often onto the streets as a result of vulnerabilities. Addiction and a lack of support networks. High population growth and no new housing units in communities leading to overcrowding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple generations of people live in the same family home, which causes serious overcrowding and makes it difficult for people to live there. Many people struggle with addictions to drugs and alcohol. Services in this area should be a primary focus of service providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in homeless populations has become a significant issue across large cities. Lack of affordable housing in cities aggravated by racism and discrimination, with outright refusals to rent to First Nations people. Homelessness caused or compounded by addictions, domestic violence, and poverty. Individuals struggle to find safe and supportive housing following completion of addictions and mental health treatments, leading to revolving door for service providers. First Nations communities are under serviced, with some having no programming to prevent or aid in ending homelessness. Most homelessness-related programs are only available in urban centres.

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intergenerational trauma has increased mental health and addictions issues. Natural disasters affecting communities aggravate the already serious housing shortages (e.g. fires and floods).
Saskatchewan		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rentals in out-of-community settings are unaffordable due to high costs and requirements for first/last month's rent. In-community housing is inadequate. Landlords discriminate against First Nations people. Perceived corruption and nepotism in First Nations communities and among leadership contributes to homelessness and housing insecurity. Minimal services available in Saskatchewan to help people break out of the cycle of homelessness, and some of the reported safety nets actually make it more difficult to do so. Limited opportunities for First Nations to own homes forces them to stay in rental properties. Housing market exacerbates this. Intergenerational effects of colonization and residential schools create cycles of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness creates a cycle of addiction and apathy. Communities are more isolated than in the rest of the country, and some people don't have to pay rent which contributes to overcrowding as there are no limits with respect to how many family members can occupy houses. Chronic lack of housing in all communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Northern Saskatchewan homes are not built to Canadian standards. Large families live in a single unit and people couch surf. The historical influences of residential schools and colonialism are key factors. Racism experienced by renters is different from what non-Indigenous people face.

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
<p>trauma, which effectively add barriers for people struggling with homelessness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services are often lacking, and the services that are available are often rooted in racist, colonial systems (i.e. healthcare and education). 		
Manitoba		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out-of-community, First Nations people experience racism from landlords, which contributes to homelessness. Housing and infrastructure in-community causes hidden homelessness. There is a wide gap in navigation and outreach support services in towns and cities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No responses recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous homeless people are at greater risk of chronic health conditions. Youth who age out of care do not receive the proper supports. A multitude of addictions and mental health cases is common in the homeless populations.
Ontario		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing shortages are rampant in First Nations and caused by inadequate funding, in addition to infrastructure issues (water). Intergenerational trauma and residential school trauma are also primary issues affecting experiences of homelessness. Lack of housing and the isolation of northern/remote communities creates a unique experience for First Nations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a lot of overcrowding in homes leading to couch surfing and co-dependent relationships. The root causes of homelessness are intergenerational and historical traumas There is discrimination and racism against First Nations people. There is no direct core funding from Indigenous Services Canada to help address needs in communities, which is an abrogation of fiduciary responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations people see homelessness both in and out-of-community. First Nations people often don't have a history with banks or community lenders which limits their ability to become homeowners. The housing situation for Indigenous is often not a choice, but a necessity; people are forced to relocate for health, education, employment, etc., and often require specialized housing.

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a wide gap in services in remote communities including shelters and places to visit for food and moral support. • People couch surfing are the 'invisible poor', and if a person doesn't have a vehicle they are effectively stranded where they are. • First Nations tenants are stigmatized because of negative stereotyping, and face discrimination from landlords. • There are more homelessness services in major cities but there is an associated level of discrimination. • Experiences of homelessness lead to cycles of joblessness, food insecurity, safety concerns and poor health outcomes. • The transitory pattern of flowing back and forth between their home/community and a larger city is prevalent and unique to First Nations people. • Displacement from lands is a unique experience to First Nations. People move from their land which is the first form of homelessness, then they experience racism from landlords within the cities they are trying to move to. • Indigenous women often are trying to escape violent situations and may end up homeless. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations people often have shared homes between families and go back and forth between the city and their home communities. • There are not a lot of First Nations-specific services available to people. • A lot of homelessness is invisible because couch surfers don't consider themselves homeless. • Discrimination and racism from landlords is widely experienced by First Nations renters

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations experiences of homelessness have a re-traumatizing effect on people. Urban sprawl is causing displacement of urban First Nations people with no real checks and balances in place to ensure the services remain accessible. Major cities in Ontario have inflated costs of living. When First Nations band members leave their communities, they are often disqualified from any assistance programs, however they also cannot get help from the Ontario government unless they have a fixed address. 		
Quebec and Labrador		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations communities have a much higher number of overcrowded homes than non-First Nations communities. Women experience homelessness out-of-community in different ways, as they may experience insecurity caused by abusive relationships and co-dependency and lack the family supports to escape the situation. In-community homelessness looks different, as there are more people at home that are willing to help compared to strangers in urban environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous people face racism, discrimination, poverty, sexism, and gender-based violence more than everyone else, which is a direct result of federal policies and colonization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No responses recorded

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding is provided to non-governmental organizations that should be handled by First Nations. Taking control of housing funds may allow communities to create emergency, transitional, and affordable housing options. Racism and discrimination towards First Nations tenants often means being turned away by landlords before they have a chance to see the house. There are limited affordable housing options. The underlying psychological, physical, mental, and sexual abuse experienced by First Nations are some of the main experiences that need to be addressed in the homeless population. The deeper effects of childhood traumas and issues are not being addressed, which creates housing insecurity because people leave their home communities and become transient, often becoming offenders themselves and “hiding in the homeless population” for fear of reprisal. 		

What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
New Brunswick and PEI		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires and other disasters contribute to housing insecurity. Individuals suffering from addictions and mental health problems are often unable to get the help and support they need. Systemic racism causes First Nations people to fall between the cracks. 	No responses recorded	No responses recorded
Nova Scotia and Newfoundland		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative stereotypes and racism among landlords is prevalent. The long history of colonization and associated traumas is directly linked to housing insecurity. Housing in First Nations communities needs to be based on need, not nepotism. 	No responses recorded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations children who experience sexual violence are at a greater risk of experiencing homelessness.
Northwest Territories		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a chronic lack of funds for infrastructure and housing, leading to homelessness and housing insecurity for First Nations. 	No responses recorded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many homes are over-crowded, yet families lack the resources for home renovations and repairs. There are lingering effects of inter-generational violence. Some people have been banned from their home communities and are forced to move to bigger cities, where they struggle with increased access to substances, a

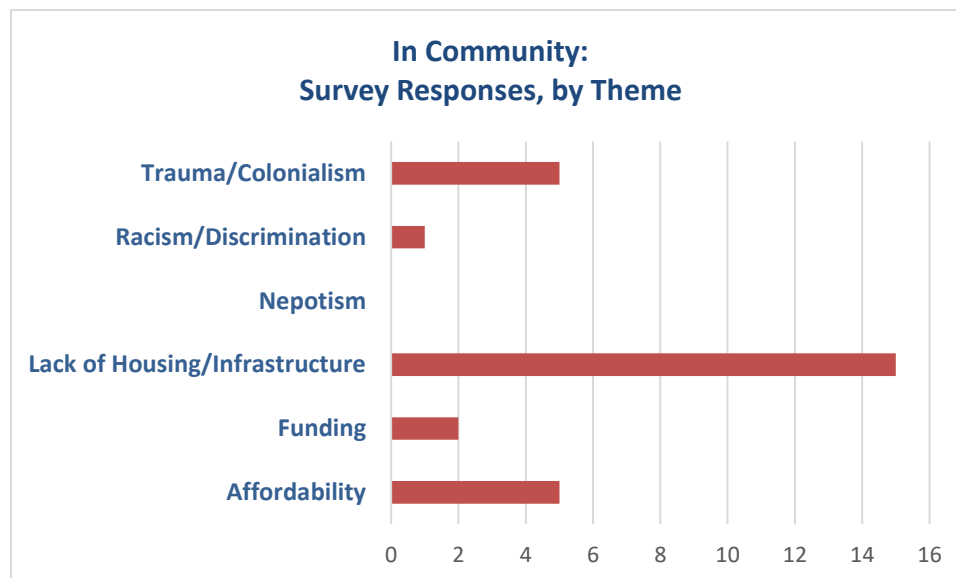
What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?		
First Nations Members	First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
		disconnect from their families, and language barriers.
Yukon		
No responses recorded	No responses recorded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No responses recorded

c) Perspectives based on Location In and Out-of-community

While the six themes were consistent across all regions and among different groups of survey participants, certain trends were noted when analyzing responses from individuals living in and out-of-community. The same is true with respect to responses from individuals who have lived experience of homelessness compared with those who do not.

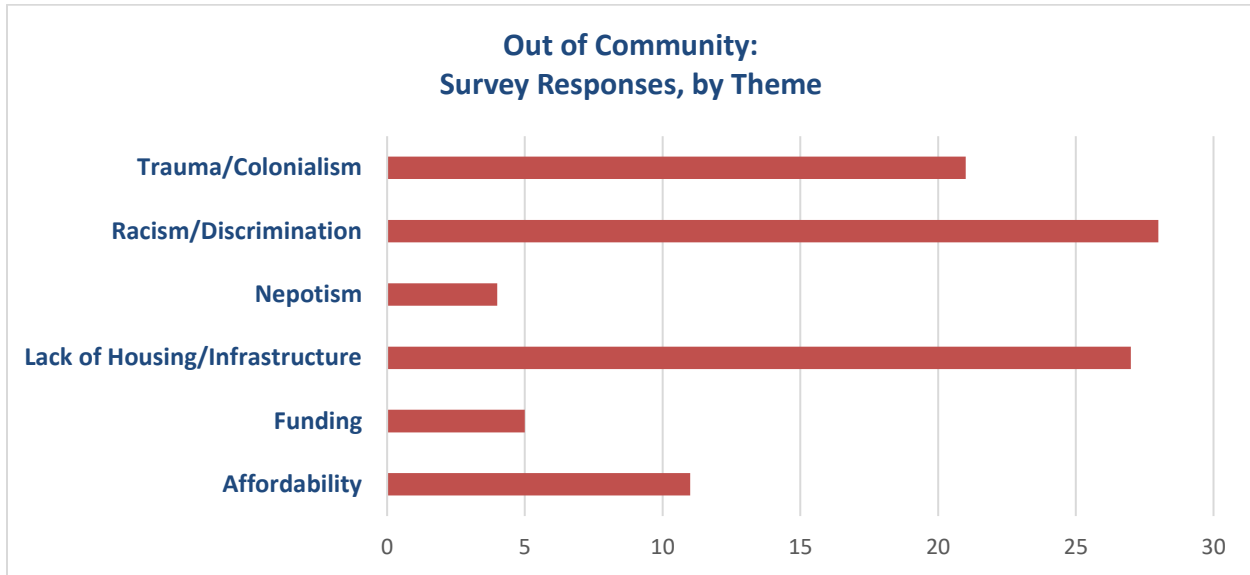
The most common theme noted among First Nations members who reported living in-community was the lack of housing and infrastructure in their communities. The lack of housing supply was identified as a root cause of invisible homelessness and overcrowding in communities. Of the 22 respondents (with lived experience) who reported living in-community, 68% (15) identified a lack of housing within their responses, 22% identified affordability as a key barrier/experience, and 22% described colonialism and trauma (note that some responses identified multiple themes within them).

Table 9 - In-community - Survey Responses, by Theme



The most common theme noted among First Nations members living out-of-community was the amount of racism and discrimination they experienced when searching for housing. 40% of all respondents reported experiencing some type of racism or discrimination in the housing market, through things like discriminatory practices by landlords or improper treatment by service providers. This theme was closely followed by the lack of housing and infrastructure (39%), with many respondents identifying this as a primary reason they were forced to leave their home communities. Data supporting these findings are set out in tables below (Tables 10 to 12).

Table 10 - Out-of-community - Survey Responses, by Theme



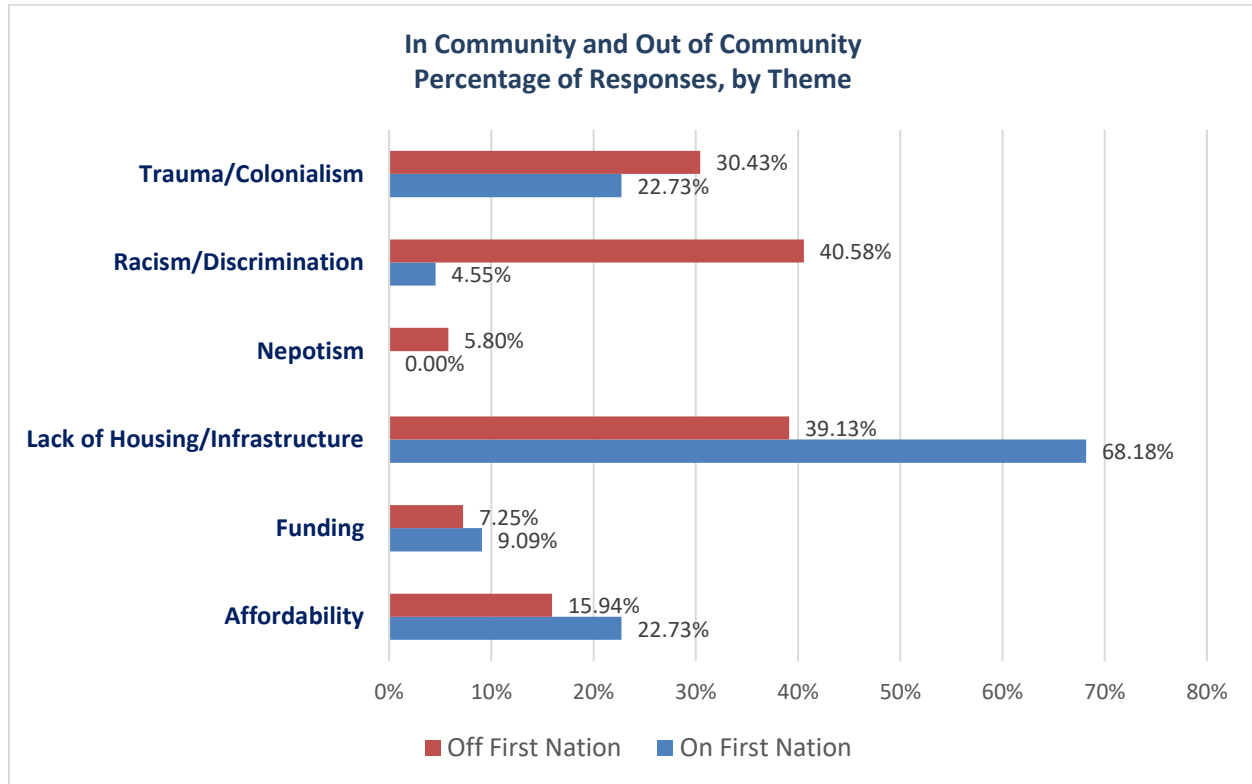
Interviewees noted that First Nations people living in urban centres sometimes are unable to return to their communities when they have been forced to leave a result of natural disasters such as fires and floods. It was also noted that many First Nations people living in urban environments who are homeless, are often disconnected from their First Nation, and face compounded realities of being homelessness and lacking connection to family, community and home.

Table 11 compares the number of times each of the themes were identified in responses from individuals on and off their First Nation. Note that due to a discrepancy between the total participants (75% of responses were from people living off their First Nation), the responses were calculated as a percentage of the total responses in each grouping to allow for a comparison.

Table 11 provides a few insights into the survey data. Respondents who lived on their First Nations were significantly less likely to report incidents of racism or nepotism, however a majority identified housing and infrastructure shortages in their communities. Individuals who lived off their First Nations were more concerned about the prevalence of racism and discrimination from landlords and service providers, while similarly noting that the lack of housing on their home communities was a core concern (and, in many cases, the reason they were forced to leave their communities in the first place).

However, a large majority of First Nations member respondents living in-community identified overcrowded houses as a primary issue in their community. These observations from the Survey may be indicative of the fact *hidden homelessness* is more prevalent among those who live in-community, while *visible homelessness* is more common among First Nations people living out-of-community and in urban settings.

Table 11 - Comparison of Responses: In and Out-of-community, by Theme



Off First Nation: n=69

On First Nation: n=22

d) Perspectives of People with Lived Experience of Homelessness

First Nations Members Out-of-community - Experienced Homelessness

Individuals who lived away from their communities and have experienced homelessness in the past were the largest group who responded to the survey (45 Responses, 49%).⁷ This group identified a number of themes throughout the responses, primarily the lack of affordable housing in cities, racism/discrimination from landlords, and addictions and mental health issues. It should be noted that many of the respondents identified racism and colonialism as the root of homelessness. They also reported that affordable housing was difficult to find, however the discriminatory rental practices of landlords were a key barrier that pushed First Nations renters out of the affordable housing market. Alternatives are either to rent an apartment away from the city centre (and the services found within it) or, in many cases, live in accessible neighbourhoods with insecure housing. Many additional issues come with insecure housing in cities. Survey respondents reported increased alcohol and drug use, which results in more interactions with law enforcement as well as poor mental health/health outcomes (including overdoses). First Nations women in these situations are particularly vulnerable to gender-

⁷ First Nations people living out of community were more likely to report having direct experience of homelessness than respondents living in-community (though this is possibly attributable to the Survey methodology and should not be interpreted as significant). They often face stigma and racism when it comes to securing housing and support. This stigma can be compounded when an individual is experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

based violence and sexual assault, which was reported as a reason why many women choose to stay in an abusive household.

First Nations Members Out-of-community - No Experiences with Homelessness

First Nations members who live out-of-community but who have no experiences with homelessness (24 Responses, 26%) were more likely to identify racism/discrimination, systemic issues, and affordability in their responses. Housing insecurity remains a primary issue for individuals away from their communities, however the responses indicated that the supply of housing is less of an issue than discriminatory rental practices of landlords. In these situations, many individuals reported that units became ‘unavailable’ after meeting with landlords in person.

This issue is further aggravated by the pricing of units; affordable housing in urban environments is difficult to find because of high demand, and the rental application process often eliminates First Nations individuals due to lack of credit history, references, or the funds to pay first and last month’s rent. Affordable housing is often only available on the outskirts of cities, which are less accessible and may have high rates of crime and violence. These areas are a potentially triggering environment for vulnerable populations, particularly those with a history of addiction or mental health issues.

First Nations Members in-community- Have Experienced Homelessness and have No Experience of Homelessness

First Nations respondents who live in their communities noted similar concerns regardless of whether they had or did not have experience with homelessness. The primary themes noted from these responses were overcrowded homes, a lack of affordable housing, and limited funding to build new units and infrastructure. However, individuals living in-community, who have experienced homelessness (10 responses, 11%), were much more detailed in the descriptions of their situations, emphasizing that overcrowding resulted in houses falling into states of disrepair more quickly, that unsafe drinking water created more health issues, and that a lack of privacy/workspace limited their options for education, training, and employment.

Many individuals described these experiences as primary causes of mental health issues, and in some instances reported being unable to leave abusive situations because there were no other options available to them. Respondents shared that feelings of hopelessness contributed to them leaving their homes, families and communities to pursue better opportunities in cities, despite having limited connections or experience in an urban environment.

e) Other Perspectives – Youth and LGBTQ

Most often it is younger generations that are growing out of (and in some instances “aging out” of) their living circumstances, pushing them into vulnerabilities or circumstances of homelessness that correspond more closely to First Nations definitions of the same.⁸ Their circumstances often lead them

⁸ Aging out refers to a situation in which children or youth who are in care reach the age of majority and are no longer eligible to receive government support, and must “age out” of the child protection system. The term “aging out” thus refers to the transition process of leaving care and becoming independent.

towards street-entrenched living, or situations where their homelessness is playing out *behind closed doors*. For many First Nations people, homelessness means “couch surfing” between different family members’ or friends’ houses, sometimes in or out of their First Nations community.

Youth are particularly vulnerable to this, as many will age out of the child welfare system and have nowhere to go – leading to insecure housing. As noted during interviews with service providers, this situation becomes aggravated when there are undiagnosed cognitive or mental health issues, addictions and trauma, limited or broken connections to family and community, and other circumstances that leave individuals with a limited set of options for breaking the cycle of homelessness.

“Youth are aging out of care into homelessness, sometimes with undiagnosed cognitive impairments due to FASD, etc., and the system has nothing to offer them.” (Interviewee)

Another dimension in youth homelessness stems from the reality that First Nations youth who leave their communities – for a host of reasons – are often unprepared for life in urban environments. They may be unfamiliar with the culture, dangers and financial demands of living in the city. And they either are not well positioned to find affordable housing solutions, or do not/cannot find the needed supports in areas such as housing, health and wellbeing etc.

“Youth that end up on the street are immediately preyed upon and groomed. The numbers of homeless youth coming out are a constant wave coming out of care. Many don’t have connections to home communities. They end up where they can survive. They’re preyed upon, put on the street” (Interviewee).

There were some themes related to gender perspectives on homelessness that emerged from the Survey, although the survey itself did not ask respondents to indicate their gender identity (thus ruling out the possibility of data disaggregation).

In some cases, women will temporarily rely on insecure housing to remove themselves from violent partners. Some First Nations people may become homeless as a result of being evicted from their houses by family members (or the community leadership) during periods of violence and intoxication.

“Our people are often faced with being forced into situations or coping strategies that increase their vulnerability to violence, such as hitch-hiking, addictions, homelessness, prostitution and other sex work, gang involvement or abusive relationships, especially for women.” (Survey Respondent)

There are also important dimensions to the experiences of Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ First Nations people as it concerns homelessness, as well as others who may be pushed out by their communities or otherwise ostracized within. However, the Survey methodology did not allow for these perspectives to be highlighted in the Survey results.

Some participants shared stories of community members who had been shunned by their communities. They explained that this had occurred because of the actions of the person, such as their involvement in

drug dealing, or because of prejudice and discrimination, for example, or because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

“Many factors of homelessness are indiscriminate to race, age, gender etc. However, my community struggles with addiction because of being raised in cycles of trauma. Much of that trauma is solely due the detail of their indigeneity; Residential school, racism, alcohol abuse, and being raised outside of their culture. These factors contribute to the strength of someone's hope and drive to get out of homelessness.” (Survey Respondent)

4. Program and Service Needs and Gaps

The Survey conducted by the AFN addressed issues associated with current programs and services, including gaps, as well as the needs of First Nations people living in different locations (in and out-of-community, urban/rural, different regions). The Survey (and results) provide a way to probe individual and organizational perspectives on these issues.⁹

There were four Survey questions related to this theme. Two of these questions were included in the survey stream for First Nations leaders, staff and technicians, and two were included in the survey stream for service providers.

First Nations leaders, staff and technicians were asked:

What are your community's greatest concerns related to addressing housing insecurity and/or homelessness? (e.g., housing, mental health, addictions, child welfare involvement, poverty, etc.)

What resources, programs, or services does your community require to best prevent or reduce the number of members experiencing homelessness?

Survey providers were asked:

What are areas of greatest need and/or greatest potential impact related to causes and consequences of First Nations homelessness?

What does your service organization require to best meet the needs, and/or reduce the number, of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness?

4.1. Community Concerns and Needs

Concerns

The housing shortage or crisis was most often mentioned by First Nations leaders, staff and technicians as the greatest concern followed by a lack of infrastructure, and lack of supportive services for those who are more vulnerable, specifically in the area of mental health and addictions.

"Homeless shelters need harm reduction strategies such as safe needle exchange; safe injection; safe drug monitoring; no place for detox." (Survey Respondent)

⁹ This provides an alternative perspective to findings from the AFN's commissioned research i.e. literature review, environmental scan and systems mapping, which tended to focus on government program and service-related gaps (i.e. funding, housing program structures etc.).

One respondent elaborated their concern for Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ people.

“A component that’s missing is gender-based violence, LGBT+ realities, and why people left their communities.” (Survey Respondent)

Other concerns related to poverty, housing and social issues were identified including concerns about:

- the safety of women, children and elders;
- linkages with domestic family violence, sexual abuse, elder abuse, isolation, child welfare, suicide ideations/attempts;
- lack of safe homes for those who are “kicked out” of the home because of alcohol or drug use;
- the cost of living outstripping the cost of meeting basic needs (food, shelter) and income supports;
- racism and discrimination;
- loss of culture; and
- intergenerational trauma.

Leaders, staff and technicians also noted concerns about structural issues, including the erosion of sovereignty, lack of jurisdiction and the inability to regulate housing in-community through enforceable laws. They also highlighted concerns about funding specifically for housing.

Needs and Requirements

In response to survey questions asked only of leaders, staff, technicians and service providers, these respondents emphasized the need for First Nations to extend their responsibilities and care to members wherever they reside including through:

- First Nations shelters;
- Supportive services including food, clothing, cultural and language activities, counselling and reconnections to the land;
- Increased availability of mental health services, addictions services and post-treatment services and facilities (e.g. sober/clean living homes);
- Extension of housing programs in-community to those vulnerable to homelessness especially single men and single women including small homes, half-way houses, temporary shelters, tiny homes;
- Continuing to keep in contact with out-of-community members and provide housing/shelter subsidies;
- Increase homeless shelters in-community and in urban areas;
- Establishing partnership among service organizations including Friendship Centres and mental health agencies;
- Purchasing hotels/motels to house people in need of temporary housing; and
- Increased First Nations authority, autonomy and roles in decision making.

First Nations leaders, staff and technicians consistently pointed to the need for housing, and increased social services infrastructure to address mental health and addictions, as well as funding to address these issues. It was also noted that more anti-racism training is needed for mainstream agencies and service providers serving First Nations populations.

Although the question regarding needs and concerns was not specifically directed to First Nations members, respondents in this group did identify specific needs when responding to other questions in the Survey. Table 12 below summarizes how the needs of First Nations people, and the interconnections that exist with respect to other policies and programs, were reflected in the Survey.

Table 12 - First Nations Needs and Connections to Policies and Programs

First Nations Needs	Survey Responses
Long waitlists for housing and shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental prices are going up rapidly and 'price out' First Nations renters, forcing them onto long waitlists for public housing. Houses are overcrowded due to a lack of supply; no financial support to help with rent deposits push people into the public system.
Cultural awareness at support centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addictions and mental health supports are lacking for First Nations both in and out-of-community. Limited culturally informed workers at non-Indigenous service centres.
Disaggregated Data and statistics on homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for data collection and up to date statistics to give a clear picture on First Nations homelessness nation wide. Develop an Indigenous data collection system that accurately gathers information that can help evaluate the solutions.
Racism in securing housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing first policies are not meeting the needs of hidden homeless.
Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When FN band members leave their community they are often disqualified from assistance programs; can't get support from communities living off First Nations lands, and can't get support from governments without fixed address.

Some regional perspectives were evident, and these are summarized and highlighted in the table below. These show considerable consistency across regions with respect to concerns about homelessness, although more variation in regional perspectives is evident when identifying needs.

Table 13 - Regional Perspectives of First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians on Concerns and Needs

Region	Concerns	Needs
British Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of housing • lack of social service infrastructure • Safety of homelessness people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing funding • Mental health and addiction counselling
Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of funding and lack of housing / infrastructure • funding for other social service supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing funding
Saskatchewan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of housing • lack of social service infrastructure • impacts of colonialism, trauma, loss of culture • addictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addictions treatment centres • Alternative housing options including in First Nations and First Nation-owned/operated facilities • Housing funding
Manitoba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded
Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of housing • lack of social service infrastructure • overcrowding • mental health and addictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-informed wholistic mental health and addictions programs and treatment centres
Quebec and Labrador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of housing • lack of social service infrastructure • FN sovereignty and lack of jurisdiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in federal policy including more autonomy and power to make decisions • Investment in training and skills development
Nova Scotia and Newfoundland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of housing /infrastructure • mental health and addictions • housing crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health resources and programs • Awareness of housing alternatives
New Brunswick and PEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of housing • lack of social service infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded
Yukon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded
NWT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded

4.2 Service Provider Concerns and Needs

Service providers identified similar concerns and needs with respect to First Nations homelessness as those of First Nations leaders, staff and technicians. Survey responses from this group of participants emphasized concerns regarding housing as well as social services and supports infrastructure, and associate funding. Additionally, service providers addressed land tenure issues in out-of-community environments, referencing lack of options in communities to develop lands that can lead to improved housing conditions.

Concerns

Some of the specific concerns highlighted by service providers included the following:

Housing and Infrastructure:

- Insufficient rent geared-to-income
- Overcrowded living conditions
- Lack of affordable housing in and out-of-community
- Housing eligibility restrictions
- Inappropriate housing options for people at different life stages
- Increase in the cost of rental housing
- Language barriers particularly experienced by elders
- community stigma
- Lack of support and resources in First Nations communities; need more services

Mental health and Addictions programs/services:

- Lack of addictions treatment programs that also offer childcare
- Lack of low-barrier traditional healing programs (i.e. some traditional services refuse entry due to intoxication)
- Need for complex care housing for those experiencing multiple challenges such as addictions, mental/physical health concerns, and homelessness

Funding:

- Capital funding for housing for First Nations members
- Land tenure
- Poor provincial income assistance programs

Racism and discrimination:

- Pervasiveness of systemic racism and discrimination
- Lack of cultural safety when out-of-community
- Broad stereotypes around Indigenous individuals when trying to find housing, therefore landlords would not rent to these individuals.

Trauma / Colonialism:

- Adverse childhood effects, intergenerational trauma, colonization, genocide and oppression
- Disconnection from friends and family (distance, community bans, etc.)

Needs

Amongst service providers the most commonly cited need is in relation to funding, specifically:

- Funding for affordable housing and increased housing opportunities;
- Support from funding streams to increase staffing, knowledge/ resources, and housing programs;
- Capital and operating funds to support members, regardless of where they live including housing for specialized groups (e.g. those requiring renal dialysis, youth, Elders, pregnant women);

- Funding for counselling services, basic material needs, gathering spaces and food;
- Grant funding to facilitate First Nations-designed programming to end homeless (including through alignment of housing and healing).

In addition to basic housing requirements and needs, social supports were commonly identified as a need by service providers, specifically:

- Child welfare;
- Sexual abuse prevention;
- Addictions (treatment programs, inpatient/outpatient care), after care housing options, withdrawal management, temporary housing);
- Wrap around services and funding;
- Mental health treatment;
- Health and wellness services;
- Additional supports such as assistance with transportation costs, relocation costs, and systems navigation.

Service providers also emphasized the need for recognition of the right to housing, as well as First Nations government jurisdiction, responsibility and authority.

Regional Perspectives

The survey noted service provider perspectives that homelessness is different in areas where there are large numbers of indigenous people (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, rural and remote areas). It was also noted that “more remote and northern reserves have even less access to services.”

As noted during an interview with a service provider:

There needs to be an understanding that there is distinctiveness between [Indigenous] groups and there needs to be more understanding that each group has their own challenges and the strategies need to be geared towards each group respectively. (Service Provider Interviewee)

Some regional perspectives were evident. These are summarized and highlighted Table 14 below.

Table 14 - Regional Perspectives of Service Providers On Concerns and Needs

Region	Concerns and Needs
British Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and eligibility • Social services infrastructure • Supports for trauma and to address impacts of colonialism • Lack of support systems to address disconnection from First Nations and families • Lack of jobs and a living wage
Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Lack of social services infrastructure including for mental health issues, poverty, addiction

Region	Concerns and Needs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • racism / discrimination • Intergenerational trauma and impacts of colonization
Saskatchewan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services infrastructure especially income support and assistance programs • Recognition of the different needs in different parts of the province (e.g. urban/rural, southern/northern and remote).
Manitoba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services infrastructure • Supports for trauma and to address impacts of colonialism
Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital funding for housing for First Nations members • More affordable housing both in and out-of-community. • Different types of housing options (e.g. apartments for singles) • Lack of options for rent geared-to-income housing • Addictions and mental health supports
Quebec and Labrador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded
Nova Scotia and Newfoundland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for child welfare and protection of children from sexual abuse
New Brunswick and PEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded
Yukon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No responses recorded
NWT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Land tenure • Trauma and healing from colonialism • Cost of living and shelter • Language barriers for Elders • Monopolization of housing stock

5. Improvements, Partnerships and Best Practices

The Survey included several interrelated questions that asked respondents how First Nations homelessness can be addressed or reduced through program and service improvements, strengthened relationships, collaborations, and government commitments. It also asked respondents to identify best practices.

Survey Questions

What *improvements* could be made to programs and services to reduce the number of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness? (asked of First Nations members only);

How might First Nations *extend responsibility* and care to their members experiencing homelessness wherever they reside, including away from their community? (asked of First Nations leaders, staff and technicians only);

Where might relationships be *developed or strengthened* to effectively prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness? (asked of First Nations leaders, staff and technicians as well as service providers);

What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from the *federal government* to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness? (asked of First Nations leaders, staff and technicians as well as service providers);

What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from *provincial governments* to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness? (asked of First Nations leaders, staff and technicians as well as service providers);

5.1 Improvements to Programs and Services¹⁰

When asked about improvements that could be made to programs and services in order to reduce homelessness, survey responses from First Nations members *generally* emphasized the need to:

- Address housing issues and the housing crisis in communities (e.g. through construction, renovations, social housing, increased land availability);
- Improve programs, services and facilities available for homeless people and those who are vulnerable (e.g., women fleeing violence, people with mental health issues and disorders, cognitive impairments as a result of FASD, youth) regardless of where they live (i.e. in and out-of-community);
- Make program funding available at a community level, with flexibility to establish programs that meet local needs, cultural contexts and circumstances;
- Link homelessness programs and program clients with an expanded set of supports including wrap-around supports in mental health, education and training, employment, income assistance, life skills, family support/wellbeing etc.;
- Provide a more seamless integration of programs and services available in-community and out-of-community, and establish supports for people in transition between living on/in and off/out of communities;
- Establish culturally safe and appropriate spaces where homelessness people can feel safe and access services/service referrals;
- Ensure that, regardless of where provided, programs and services that support the homeless or housing insecure are culturally grounded and based, and including access to cultural resources and supports;

Addressing Homelessness on a Collaborative and Integrated Basis

We need to think about homelessness prevention from a systemic point of view that includes many people from both the homelessness sector and other types of services and supports". (Survey Respondent).

"Systems integration isn't just important at the community level. It's also essential at higher levels of government, where interdepartmental collaboration and sharing of responsibility is needed to deal with the causes and consequences of homelessness." (Survey Respondent).

We need to address the policy framework and funding mechanisms that support this work...[and] human rights (a safe and healthy society where everyone has access to housing, health care, income, and other resources. To make this work, all levels of government need to be at the table at the same time. (Survey Respondent).

¹⁰ Survey responses were disaggregated by region for the Survey question on improvements to programs and services and by in community and out of community. No discernible regional trends were made evident as a result of this disaggregation. Therefore, this qualitative data summary report does not include an analysis of regional perspectives on the issues raised. (Regional breakdown of data is available upon request). However, the analysis does report separately on the perspectives of on/in and off/out of community First Nations members, demonstrating that even at this level of disaggregation there are both common perspectives, and perspectives that are unique to different respondent groups.

- Ensure appropriately trained staff that are trauma-informed, and preferably are First Nation/Indigenous and understand the particular circumstances of First Nations people; and
- Establish more urban reserves and housing programs in these communities.

Table 15 below lists some of the different points that were made by Survey respondents based on whether they identified as a First Nations member living in-community or out-of-community, as well as commonalities.

Table 15 - Program and Service Improvements

In-community	Out-of-community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelters in communities that are embedded in language, culture and traditions. • Improved housing especially for single people and single parent families. • Better support services to prevent people becoming vulnerable to homelessness (e.g. mental health supports). • Healing and treatment centres that are trauma-focused and support those vulnerable to homelessness. • Wrap around service delivery and funding models that support this. • Empower First Nations organizations to self-determine programs and services. • Increased programming to address “social determinants” of homelessness (e.g. employment and training programs, health and addictions). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to life skills programs including in relation to housing (e.g. caring for a home). • First Nation-specific programs that help individuals find housing in a culturally safe and non-discriminatory way. • Address systemic and interpersonal racism experienced with (non-Indigenous) front line service delivery organizations and personnel (e.g. through anti-racism training). • Address accountability and transparency of service delivery organizations in providing services to First Nations people. • Advocacy for housing that accommodates pets. • Find ways to better hear the voices of First Nations peoples who are homeless so they can identify needs and solutions. • Address systemic barriers to accessing programs and services available. • More direct contact and follow up with individuals who may contact service delivery organization in urban centres. • System navigation. • More diverse options for supportive housing (e.g. accommodations for people in recovery). • Defund service providers that deny access to First Nations and other Indigenous people.
Commonly Identified	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs and services that address the housing crisis in communities. • Increased funding and availability of culturally-based programs and services in areas such as mental health, addictions and trauma treatment. • Increased programming to address “social determinants” of homelessness (e.g. employment and training programs, health and addictions, education). 	

5.2 Preferred Approaches and Models for the Future

Results from the Survey confirmed some common elements in preferred and recommended approaches to addressing homelessness for First Nations people living both in-community and out-of-community. From this, several themes (and preferred approaches) were evident. With each presented in further detail below, these included:

- Rights-based approaches (including rights to housing, self-government/self-determination);
- Culturally-based approaches;
- Indigenous approaches.

All of these approaches spoke to the need for enhancements and modifications to existing programs, services and delivery models.

a) *Rights-based Approaches and First Nations Government Sovereignty*

Input provided by First Nations members, leaders, staff and technicians, and service providers often emphasized the importance of viewing homelessness through the lens of First Nations' rights to housing. The First Nation right to housing and, by extension, freedom from homelessness, is variously described as being based in Aboriginal and treaty rights, human rights, Indigenous rights and rights stemming from international covenants such as the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP).

Survey respondents underlined a number of considerations, including the importance of the federal government meeting its fiduciary obligations and responsibilities towards First Nations generally, and in the housing and homelessness sector specifically.

"The federal government needs to be reminded their fiduciary responsibility is recognized in law. The funding given to First Nations are not hand-outs and it is the right of First Nations to provide services to all their people, who they are responsible back to".

"I would like to see a constitutional amendment acknowledging the right to housing. Absent this, a legislative commitment to the right to housing would be good too".

Related to this is the idea that First Nations and First Nations governments should exercise more authority and autonomy in decision making around housing, and more control over how funding will be applied to housing priorities, including First Nations homelessness.

"The federal government should mandate that bands, community governments and Indigenous governments in each community, must be given funding to address their own homelessness issues, and they must be held accountable for the funding."

"We need First Nations governments to take the lead in their communities to address homelessness...to take initiative and not just say "homelessness is a federal mandate".

b) Culturally Based Approaches

Others emphasized the importance of culturally based approaches to addressing homelessness. The COVID-19 pandemic confirmed the importance of inclusive and supportive places for families that can also offer culturally based, wrap-around services and supports.

“First Nations should have their own homeless shelters to learn about their own culture and history – this should be available 24 hours a day”.

c) Pan-Indigenous Approaches

Concerns were expressed through the Survey and interviews about the relative empowerment of pan-Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations in homelessness services, and associated lack of empowerment of First Nations communities and governments through strengthened roles in service design and planning, governance and administration, and more equitable sharing of funding and resources.

While “Indigenous” approaches are well respected and play an important and significant role in providing services to First Nations people living out-of-community, some highlight limitations to pan-Indigenous approaches, including that they do not align with the fiduciary obligations of the Crown towards First Nations people, and First Nations and treaty rights, and may displace First Nations organizations, governments and delivery agencies.

“How about supporting Indigenous-led groups and organizations? Many non-Indigenous [groups] get most of the funding from the federal government because they check boxes in their applications, which says they house Indigenous clients” (Survey respondent)

d) Extension of First Nations Responsibility to all First Nations Members

First Nations leaders, staff and technicians were asked through the Survey *“how might First Nations extend responsibility and care to their members experiencing homelessness where they reside, including away from their community?”*¹¹ This question also arose during interviews with service providers. First Nations leaders/staff/technicians responses to this question are reported here, in summary.

- First Nations have responsibility to provide shelters, food, clothing, culture and language activities, counselling.
- Connections and re-connections to the land.
- In-community housing options that accommodate more diverse needs including singles, single parent families, families.
- Keeping in contact with members living out-of-community.
- Providing funding for out-of-community members.

¹¹ There were only 12 responses received to this question, and they are reported here, in summary.

- Opening and operating homeless shelters, especially in urban areas.
- Establishing and maintaining partnerships with other organizations (e.g. Friendship Centres) and agencies (e.g. mental health/wellness).
- Provide outreach services to First Nations members living off/out-of-community.
- Purchase facilities in urban centres that can accommodate First Nations members.

Through interviews, service providers made the following suggestions regarding the extension of First Nations responsibility and care to members experiencing homelessness wherever they reside.

- Provide transitional housing options for First Nations members while they're waiting to get homes on their First Nation.
- Provide supports in communities such as drop-in spaces where members living out-of-community can come and feel comfortable while in the community.
- Welcome First Nations members who return to their home communities from urban centres and other locations.
- Actively pursue creation/establishment of urban reserves where First Nations housing can be built.
- Bringing cultural resources to urban environments where First Nations members live, so they can more easily access these.

"A "home base" to welcome members back on First Nations. A place where members can have tea with community members and Elders." (Interviewee)

e) Policy, Program and Service Enhancements and Modifications

Some participants proposed broadly focussed solutions that require a fundamental shift towards a rights-based approach, while others expressed the need for modifications or enhancements to existing programs, services and structures. Some of the more evident themes and sub-themes that can be drawn from the Survey in this regard are highlighted below.

Funding and Access to Resources

- Increased funding for existing programs such as *Reaching Home* and for First Nations housing generally, including in urban environments.
- Increased and targeted funding for programs that meet needs of certain groups of First Nations people including youth, Elders, persons released from incarceration and on bail or probation, those experiencing domestic violence, undergoing extended or ongoing medical treatment (e.g. dialysis) and Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ First Nations people.
- Return lands to First Nations to increase the land available for housing development.¹²

¹² This was frequently expressed, often in terms of the "land back" movement. For example one survey respondent said "Give us our land back, and give us the funds that are owed to us to build these houses immediately".

- Direct provincial funding for housing and homelessness to First Nations and First Nations governments.

“Provinces need to step back from total control over services to First Nations off-reserve. They are failing First Nations and those who are the most vulnerable” (Survey Respondent).

Legislation and Policy

- Implement taxation policies that impose surcharges or land transfer taxes that are returned to First Nations and set aside to better meet urban First Nations populations housing needs.
- Reduce barriers created by municipal zoning by-laws (e.g. those that are not supportive of alternative housing forms such as tiny houses, temporary housing and trailer parks).
- Enhance and modify provincial government roles and responsibilities including through improved partnerships with First Nations and First Nations governments as well as direct funding of First Nations to support and allow them to extend services to out-of-community members.
- Encourage municipalities to review and change by-laws to eliminate barriers for First Nations people trying to find housing.

Service Design and Delivery

- Address racism and discrimination and create culturally safe environments within housing/homelessness programs and supports for urban First Nations people, as well as within income assistance programs and other supports delivered to vulnerable First Nations people.
- Introduce First Nations “ways of knowing” in program and policy design.

Increased First Nations Decision Making, Control and Governance

- Establish local housing committees to address issues of homelessness.
- Increase representation of First Nations people on the boards (and staff) of service delivery organizations.
- Allow First Nations communities to develop their own plans to end homelessness, including through holistic and integrated approaches.
- Increase First Nation/First Nations government participation in design, planning, delivery and management of homelessness programs and initiatives.

“Policy development is needed to allow First Nations communities to create their own plans to end homelessness from a holistic perspective” (Survey Respondent)

“Support Indigenous-led development of complex and supportive housing including [supports] such as detox/treatment, mental health support and follow up care”. (Survey Respondent)

- Increase First Nations staff including those providing systems navigation assistance to persons experiencing or vulnerable to homelessness.
- Enhance available support services (e.g. strengthened wrap-around supports) including access to counselling services, transportation supports, basic needs, food security, gathering spaces, peer supports, treatment programs, and temporary housing.
- Create a single portal for access to information about homelessness and housing related programs.

5.3 Partnership and Collaboration¹³

The Survey included questions about how relationships, partnerships and collaboration could be strengthened, and what government commitments (e.g. policy, resources) are required to help prevent, reduce or eliminate First Nations homelessness. These questions were asked only of First Nations leaders, staff and technicians, and service providers.

Systems Integration and Collaboration

“We need to think about homelessness prevention from a systemic point of view that includes many people from both the homelessness sector and other types of services and supports. Systems integration isn't just important at the community level. It's also essential at the higher levels of government, where interdepartmental collaboration and sharing of responsibility are needed to deal with the causes and consequences of homelessness. (Survey Respondent)

a) Partnerships and Collaboration

One aspect of program and service enhancement involves a call for strengthened partnerships among all who serve First Nations people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Through the Survey many respondents referenced the need for greater levels of collaboration, communication and co-management in prevention-oriented approaches, and in addressing First Nations homelessness, particularly in urban and out-of-community contexts.

“We must collaborate to provide the supports and services needed to address First Nations homelessness” (Survey Respondent).

“We cannot work together until we have danced together” (Survey Respondent, quoting an Elder).

¹³ Survey responses were disaggregated by region for questions related to government responsibilities, relationships, partnerships and collaboration. However, no discernible regional trends were made evident as a result of this disaggregation. Therefore this qualitative data summary report does not include an analysis of regional perspectives on the issues raised. (Regional breakdown of data is available upon request).

A range of approaches were referenced. For example, respondents to the Survey noted that there is a need to create a better “presence” for First Nations in urban centres, and this can be facilitated through active information exchanges with urban agencies or “mandatory participation” by agencies in joint collaborative committees. Examples of opportunities for collaboration include, for example, information exchanges on “what to expect before you come to urban centres”, innovating housing options (including third party ‘landlords’ on reserve), cooperative, and specialized housing.

First Nations leaders, staff and technicians emphasized the importance of good communication both with members living in and out-of-community. This includes making information available on both housing as well as support services, including in urban environments, and providing referrals to agencies and supports. Service providers also encourage actions that can be taken by leaders and in communities, including by establishing information sharing forums that allow leaders to hear directly from First Nations members of their experiences, needs, preferences and priorities.

We must address more than community-based programs and interventions when discussing homelessness prevention. We also need to address the policy framework and funding mechanisms that support this work. (Survey Respondent).

“Relationships need to be formed on and off reserve, making sure that Chief and Council are available to hear the voices of their community members.” (Survey Respondent)

Service providers also commonly called upon political leadership to advocate and press for the federal and provincial governments to act. They also support collaboration among multiple service providers serving homeless First Nations people and the creation of ‘platforms’ that can support cooperation and collaboration. They also pinpoint the need for collaboration in specific programming areas such as food security, health clinics, and access to internet services, for example.

The need to strengthen relationships among First Nations leadership including First Nations governments to ensure that leaders take control of and accept responsibility.

“It is everyone’s responsibility, including the Indigenous governments. They need to help our people and not just take money and not care and pass the buck. Our people heal through our own people”. (Survey Respondent)

Proposals were made with respect to the establishment of First Nations government structures at regional and national levels to coordinate homelessness policy and advocacy as well as programming innovations.

“Indigenous Governments need to step up and address these issues...Create an Indigenous Homelessness Secretariat with one member from each province/territory representing their Nation”. (Survey Respondent)

b) Federal Government Commitments

First Nations leaders, staff and technicians were asked about their perspectives on what is needed by way of federal resources and policies for First Nations homelessness. This group of survey respondents frequently referenced:

- The need for more funding and supports.
- Recognition of fiduciary responsibilities.
- Recognition of human rights, Indigenous rights and treaty rights.
- Fulfilment of commitments to develop a national Indigenous (or First Nations) homelessness strategy that is inclusive of federal commitments to First Nations and distinctions-based approaches.
- Co-developed federal policy on First Nations housing and homelessness.
- Direct funding to First Nations for community-based homelessness programs and supports.
- Increase the available land base for First Nations housing
- Imposing land transfer taxes to return funds to First Nations to be set aside for use for urban First Nations members
- Setting aside a proportionate amount of low income/rental and other housing for First Nations (proportionate to representation within the homeless population of cities).

Service providers also support the promotion of housing and homelessness as a federal responsibility and as a way to better motivate provincial governments to act, including by administering funding for First Nations homelessness through appropriate structures and arrangements.

“Housing providers have no doubt been starved of funding for decades. If the federal government would acknowledge the right to housing is a federal responsibility, provincial housing agencies might be willing to administer with significantly more funding.” (Interviewee)

This was reinforced by interviewees who shared concerns about the divide First Nations members have to cross when leaving communities, including reduced access to First Nation-specific health care, education and housing options. Once outside the reach of federal programs that are otherwise available in-community, under federal funding arrangements, First Nations people are left adrift. This situation, which is a result of jurisdictional issues, needs to be addressed.

“Supports and services for First Nations people leaving the reserve and coming to the city, are totally absent. Many are falling through the cracks in existing social services.” (Interviewee)

c) Provincial Government Commitments

In the Survey, both First Nations leaders, staff and technicians, and service providers were asked about provincial resources, policies and commitments that could help prevent, reduce or eliminate First Nations homelessness.

First Nations leaders, staff and technicians identified the following:

- More First Nations-specific (and Indigenous) program funding.
- Recognition of provincial governments' responsibilities in the area of homelessness and to serve First Nations populations.
- Return of lands and resources and/or imposition of land transfer taxes.
- Support for the establishment of urban reserves as places where First Nations housing can be established.

Service providers identified the following:

- Partnerships with provincial agencies that assess and meet needs of First Nations clients.
- Increases to provincially-established social assistance and income support rates.
- Improved monitoring, data collection and research on First Nations homelessness in provinces/regions.
- Influence municipal government action including e.g. review of by-laws to eliminate barriers to housing.
- Increased collaboration with First Nations governments, and creation of single window access points or portals for programs and funding.
- Strengthened policies around racism and discrimination, and anti-racism training for provincial front line service delivery staff.
- Holistic social services including health, social, child and family services in combination with cultural programs and culturally integrated approaches.
- On-First Nations land funding and programs for homelessness that encompass cultural approaches including traditional healing.

d) *Municipal Government Relationships*

In addition to building relationships with federal and provincial governments, Survey respondents also pointed to the need for improved communication with municipal governments and better coordination and information sharing, as well as direct advocacy with municipal service providers.

"We need to develop relationships with local municipalities or urban centres where our people go to live." (Survey Respondent)

Service providers in particular have an eye on the importance of building relationships, and recognize the need for this:

"It's weird when relationships are generally almost non-existent between municipalities and Nations right now, that we don't have a lot of common ground". (Interviewees)

e) *Service Provider Collaboration*

Service providers were asked how service organizations can collaborate to meet needs and reduce homelessness. Many of the responses provided to this question mirror the perspectives of service providers shared elsewhere in the Survey. To summarize, these included:

- Returning land to First Nations to increase the availability of land upon which to build houses.
- Increased collaboration, communication, unified approaches and co-management.
- Cooperation to promote wrap around service delivery.
- Establishing cooperative committees of service providers.
- Facilitating access to First Nations elders, traditional healers and counsellors, caseworkers and language speakers within shelters (where service organizations lack that internal capacity).
- Pooling available funds and resources.
- Mutual support by sharing capacity and best practices.
- Providing leadership and advocacy.

“We will need leadership in the forefront in addressing and supporting these initiatives.” (Survey Respondent)

5.4 Best/Promising Practices

Through both the Survey and interviews some best or promising practices in First Nations homelessness were identified. This section provides an assessment of some commonalities evident in best practices that were identified, as well as mini-profiles of case-specific examples of best practices that were highlighted by Survey participants and interviewees during one-on-one discussions.

Table 16 below summarizes some of the best practices identified by First Nations leaders, staff and technicians and service providers through the Survey.

Table 16 - Best Practices

First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	Service Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data sovereignty around housing and homelessness.• Common approach to imposing taxation on land transactions with funds being directed to addressing First Nations homelessness, especially in urban areas.• Approaches that increase housing for those living in-community and shelters for those living out-of-community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural teachings and supports made available to First Nations people experiencing homelessness.• Provision of mental health supports to address trauma, adverse childhood effects etc.• Trauma-informed environments for service delivery (including trauma-informed holistic training for front line service providers).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with members about available programs and services (in and out-of-community). • Trauma informed training for front line service workers. • Protocols that provide for service providers to first seek solutions by consulting with First Nations service providers before approaching other resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to wrap-around and individualized supportive services including child care, counselling, mental health and addictions, career counselling (resume building), family and personal supports. • Harm-reduction-based treatment programs. • Partnerships, networking and working together with other service providers. • Comprehensive affordable housing programs that meet the needs of different groups/populations. • Decriminalization of vagrancy and homelessness (e.g. tent encampments). • Inclusion of First Nations people with lived experience in planning processes.
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Several examples of best practices were shared by interviewees during one-on-one discussions. Interviewees themselves are representatives of out-of-community service providers, and their programs and services are profiled briefly here as ‘best practices’.

EAGLE Urban Transition Centre (Winnipeg, MB)

The EAGLE Urban Transition Centre (EUTC) was created by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in 2005. The primary goal of EUTC is to act as a culturally relevant and non-discriminatory gateway for Indigenous people transitioning into an urban centre. The EUTC office is focused on providing a single window from which clients receive support, advocacy and access to needed programs in their efforts to achieve independent living.¹⁴

EUTC believes that Indigenous people experiencing transitional issues should have access to resources that support a healthy balanced life and wellness in the areas of: physical, mental, spiritual and emotional.¹⁵ Through its mandate, EUTC provides holistic supports, provides team support, advocates and provides a supportive environment with:

- Access to computers
- Voicemail Services
- Listings of employment opportunities, rentals, education and training opportunities, events and gatherings

¹⁴ Most of EUTC’s funding is reported to come through *At Home Winnipeg*. EUTC has had 2 programs with them: “Housing First” and another non-“Housing First” program. The organization has noted complications when EUTC is looking for housing for clients as landlords prefer rental to a Housing First client (over a non-Housing First client) since they get funds (e.g. for repairs, damage deposit). The non- Housing First clients get support from EUTC but not funding for those things. Housing First clients therefore gain an advantage over other tenants.

¹⁵ <https://manitobachiefs.com/policy-sectors/eagle-urban-transition-centre/>

- Assistance with printing, faxing and mailing
- Appointment with an Elder
- Advocacy and referrals to other services
- Disability resources
- A Healing Room for traditional and contemporary spirituality practices

Based on interviews with EUTC, this organization is described as “filling a gap”. It offers a type of “newcomer settlement program” but one designed for First Nations people, especially those transitioning to an urban environment. The organization and services are strongly linked with recognition that treaty rights are portable.

Some specific housing and homelessness related initiative EUTC is engaged in include:

- A co-habitation pilot project. EUTC is working with people experiencing homelessness in public housing. Individuals, supported through mentorship, have owner-type responsibilities including grass cutting, shoveling snow, and following rules. The approach resolves some privacy issues that arise when there is public sharing of some resources (e.g. internet, food preparation facilities). Clients have their own units which include a fridge and computer. There are both private spaces as well as common areas for socialization. EUTC is monitoring the success of this program in creating community as a way to support people vulnerable to housing instability, and as a counterpoint to mainstream approaches that ‘scatter’ people within communities that are often predominantly non-Indigenous.
- Through another project, EUTC is trying to change the shelter model. At their facility the goal is to encourage people who want to stay “in” during the day to do so, and to work on programming, talk with counsellors (including on housing issues) etc. This represents an alternative to people who are otherwise accessing supports and services being “kicked out” every day.
- EUTC is modelling appropriate programs for youth who are aging out of care, and report that under a model program youth have access to live-in counselors, mentors, and supports in each of their own buildings (which are owned by the sponsoring organization).

End Homelessness Winnipeg (Winnipeg, MB)

End Homelessness Winnipeg was established in 2015. Prior to that time it was the Poverty Reduction Consulate. The Consulate prepared a Ten-Year Plan to end homelessness based on a wide community consultation process. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs was then approached to support the Ten-Year Plan. Since then, there has been a close working relationship with Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and internal programs within the Assembly to increase their involvement in ending homelessness due to the need and level of crisis in the community.

- End Homelessness Winnipeg (EHW) recently moved its main office to an urban reserve as a way to “put money back into community”. The organization is pursuing a number of new and innovative housing initiatives in Winnipeg, including prioritizing Indigenous organizations seeking out capital.
- The organization is transitioning their governance model and staffing to become an Indigenous organization whereas previously they were a non-Indigenous organization.
- End Homelessness Winnipeg has suggested that a community entity-type model could be useful, and potentially used within a First Nations, distinctions based funding stream. In this model, funding would be distributed through regional First Nations organizations which would then administer funds and direct these to areas where there are significant needs.
- End Homelessness Winnipeg notes that one of its best practices has been effectively engaging with the community (e.g. Ten Year Plan) and involving people who have lived experience on various boards and committees.

Niginan Housing Ventures (Edmonton, AB)

Niginan Housing Ventures is a registered charity that was formed to address the particular needs and requirements of Indigenous people living in Edmonton. The organization is dedicated to providing supportive affordable housing opportunities for individuals and families of native ancestry, who have not been successfully served by any other organization in Edmonton.

Niginan's first development, Ambrose Place, is one of the most successful programs and housing complexes for Edmonton's formerly “hardest to house” Indigenous people. It is based on a “housing first” approach and provides housing and support services within a culturally sensitive environment to homeless Indigenous individuals and couples who have not been successfully housed in existing facilities.¹⁶ The 42-unit supportive living home offers residents safety, dignity and stability.

Ambrose Place is operated using a set of practical strategies that help people reduce the negative consequences of drug use, alcoholism and mental illness by:

- meeting people where they are at;
- focusing on improving the quality of the individual's life, health and well-being;
- educating the person on options and consequences, thus enabling the individual to improve their quality of life, health and well-being; and
- working with residents in a non-judgmental and gradual fashion.

This approach has been very successful in enabling people who have not been appropriately served by traditional facilities, to significantly improve their circumstances. Based on evidence-driven approaches, Ambrose Place surveys and tracks clients, and works with Alberta Health to track the costs of housing

¹⁶ <http://www.niginan.ca/welcome-to-ambrose-place>

services for 2 years before people are housed, and then 2 years after. Health cost savings are estimated at \$7.8 million as people have moved into Indigenous housing and are engaged in harm reduction programs. Ambrose Place has many support workers and provides or facilitates access to health care services. Their harm reduction approach helps stabilize people, and is effective because it helps people address issues while not being simply in “survival mode”.

Native Men’s Residence (Toronto, ON)

Native Men’s Residence (Na-Me-Res) is a large organization in Toronto that helps homeless Indigenous men gain access to temporary, transitional and permanent housing. The underlying philosophy is to take care of the whole person through Indigenous cultural-based approaches, and thereby support Indigenous men as they rediscover *mino bimaadziwin* (living a good/healthy life).¹⁷

- Na-Ma-Res reports it has 72 staff involved in housing and outreach.
- It currently offer 2 shelters and an Indigenous halfway house (under arrangements with Corrections Canada), which has seen 100% of Indigenous clients/residents complete their parole successfully. It was noted that non-Indigenous run halfway houses have a success rate of 25%, by comparison.
- Na-Ma-Res utilizes a case management approach which is preventive of homelessness.
- Na-Ma-Res has also been successful in building new housing facilities on time and on budget, although scarce resources and Toronto housing market conditions have presented significant challenges.
- The organization intends to expand its services, including in corrections and in mental health programming.

Homeward Trust (Edmonton, AB)

Homeward Trust, based in Edmonton, has a mandate to end homelessness in the city. It acts as a “systems planner” and aggregator of funds to coordinate responses to homelessness across sector partners. Homeward Trust¹⁸ does not operate within a distinctions-based approach, but instead aligns with recognition of the universal right to housing as set out in international conventions to which Canada is a signatory.

Homeward Trust focuses on long term sustainable housing solutions rather than shelter. It has funded outreach to communities. However, Homeward Trust specifically tries to support First Nations people who enter the city because of a lack of space to live with family members in-community, recognizing the traumas that have been endured and offering services that help address “other spheres of the medicine wheel”, namely spiritual needs and land-based teachings. Homeward Trust has Elders who are available to go on site for teachings and guidance in Housing First programs.

¹⁷ <https://www.nameres.org/>

¹⁸ <https://homewardtrust.ca/>

Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (Victoria, BC)

ACEH's is a "pan-Indigenous" type organization and front-line service provider, with a "dual model" of housing care offering culturally supportive housing, access to Elders, traditional foods, prayers/ceremonies, grief support and family visits. As a non-profit, its board includes representatives from regional tribal councils and representatives of the Metis Nation of BC. While ACEH may operate on a pan-Indigenous basis, one of their strengths as an Indigenous organization is that they have well established relationships with the First Nations on Vancouver Island and are therefore well-equipped to deliver services to First Nations people in a manner that is culturally appropriate.

- ACEH offers workshops and life skills, and a range of supportive housing options that aim to assist people move from the street to shelters.
- It also creates employment and links for people back to their home communities and homelands.
- ACEH pays First Nations communities to deliver land-based healing camps.
- It is one of a few organizations in Canada that are utilizing an Indigenous harm reduction model, and is uniquely positioned also with respect to leading cultural housing.
- As part of its outreach ACEH has surveyed people in the downtown core of Victoria to hear the voices' needs and desires of people who are homeless.

Other best practices were identified in the Survey or interviews.

- *Hopes and Dreams Initiative* - This was conceptualized by focus groups brought together by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. It resulted in the creation of a village concept with tiny homes and various supports and resources for people in the community. As a result of their politically focused mandate, the Chiefs were not able to proceed with the initiative. However, another pan-Indigenous organization took on the concept and partnered with End Homelessness Winnipeg to see this to fruition. The coalition acquired funding through the federal government and additional funding through Reaching Home.
- *N'Dinawemak "Our Relatives"* – A homelessness program in which 5 organizations (3 Indigenous), came together to create an emergency warming space for homeless people turned away from over-filled shelters.
- *Shawendaasowin* – A non-profit, third-party resource that provides holistic services for those involved in the child welfare system both on-reserve and off-reserve. The organization provides programs designed to support families, and help children who are entering and exiting the child welfare system. The organization assists those in need to make a better transition from welfare to housing by creating jobs, professional training, housing, etc.
- *Thunderbird House* - Uses shipping containers to build smaller units. They have a cultural space near Winnipeg, which offers a tiny village where people can live together and help each other with on-site support.

6. A National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan

The Survey included several questions regarding a National First Nations Homeless Action Plan:

What [vision] goals, objectives, and actions should be included in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve? (asked of all respondent groups)

What role might be outlined for service organizations in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve? (asked of service providers only)

How should the success of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness be measured? (asked of First Nations leaders, staff and technicians only)

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the development of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve? (asked of all respondents)

This section of the report summarizes qualitative research findings from the Survey in relation to the questions above, as well as insights gained from interviews with service providers with respect to:

- Action Plan principles and approaches
- Action Plan goals and objectives
- Areas for action
- The role of service organizations (asked only of service providers)
- Measuring success of a National Action Plan

In addition to the above, the qualitative data provide insight into other elements of a National Action Plan (including general principles and approaches, and considerations related to how an Action Plan should be developed).

6.1 Action Plan Principles and Approaches

Some of the principles and approaches to First Nations homelessness that can be advanced or supported through a National Action Plan on First Nations Homelessness might include the following:

- The Action Plan should support First Nations planning, design, governance, management and delivery of an integrated and sustainable continuum of First Nation-specific, culturally relevant and culturally safe homelessness services and supports to First Nations people living both in First Nations communities and out of First Nations communities, and as they move between these.
- The Action Plan should be based on a First Nations, distinctions-based approach that recognizes the unique rights and interests of First Nations peoples and governments across Canada,

including Inherent, Indigenous and Treaty rights to housing, and provides distinctions-based funding to support First Nations homelessness programs, services and initiatives, particularly out-of-community.

“Funding for distinctions-based approaches is needed for urban centres, which are often overlooked.” (Interview)

- The Action Plan must uphold Indigenous and Treaty rights, and be consistent with UNDRIP as it pertains to Indigenous rights to housing and self-determination. It should also be aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.¹⁹
- The Action Plan should accommodate situations of homelessness experienced by First Nations people in a variety of circumstances i.e., living in and out-of-community, Elders, youth, Two-Spirit and LGTQQIA+, single mothers/fathers, Elders and others. It needs to acknowledge that there are major differences in homelessness in and out-of-community.
- Commitments should be made to foster respectful and equitable relationships between First Nations, all levels of government and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations involved First Nations homelessness. Partnerships involving First Nations and First Nations organizations, governments, service providers and other agencies and organizations are a key component of any national approach to First Nations homelessness.
- A multi-sectoral, holistic strategy is required to meet needs and fulfill responsibilities towards First Nations people at-risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

“From a human rights framework we need an integrated response that works with different systems, like health, education, criminal justice, child protection and more.”
(Survey Respondent)

- Wrap-around service delivery models should be a core feature of homelessness initiatives and approaches to First Nations homelessness taken by any agencies and organizations serving First Nations peoples at-risk of, or experiencing homelessness.
- Some have called for a priority to be placed on homelessness in-community and that this should be tied to a distinctions-based approach. Others have emphasized the need to ensure that First Nations members living out-of-community, and their needs and priorities are given equal attention.

¹⁹ UNDRIP Articles 21 and 23 are relevant here. Together they recognize that “Indigenous people have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of...housing”. ... and “the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising [that] right.”

“First Nations homelessness off reserve is very different than on-reserve. The issues that contribute to homeless are similar but efforts should be focused on reserve. The option to go back home to community is available when you’re living off. The resources for this should be dedicated on reserve. because we are citizens of our First Nations and not urban “communities”. (Survey Respondent)

“Off-reserve homeless [people] need the same benefits as on-reserve. Off-reserve social programs are limited to what can be done and how they can help off-reserve.” (Survey Respondent)

“Each First Nations should have urban housing for members living away from home.” (Survey Respondent).

6.2 Action Plan Goals, Objectives and Actions

The Survey included a question on what goals, objectives and actions should be included in a National Action Plan. Table 17 below summarizes some of what was reported through the Survey by all respondent groups.

Table 17 - Survey Responses - Goals, Objectives and Actions for a National Action Plan

Survey Respondent Group	Goals, Objectives and Actions Identified for Inclusion in a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan, by respondent group
First Nations Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible housing • Permanent homeless shelters • First Nations-specific programs that are culturally rich • Rights and reconciliation in housing • Enforcement of treaty rights to housing and the Crown’s fiduciary responsibilities • Preventative strategies • Culturally-sensitive harm reduction strategies incorporated into homelessness programs and services • Land back for housing purposes • More funding • More housing • Establishing alternative shelters and housing accommodations for singles • Provide diverse options that are applicable to different situations, regional and political landscapes. • Address underlying issues of poverty • Gain better understanding of the scope of homelessness problems in communities • Offer men’s and women’s shelters both in and out of First Nations communities

Survey Respondent Group	Goals, Objectives and Actions Identified for Inclusion in a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan, by respondent group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement UNDRIP's housing-related provisions/articles • Trauma-informed service navigation to people at risk or experiencing homelessness • Implement Housing First models in-community • Incorporate wrap-around services in housing and homelessness • Consult with Indigenous peoples who are homeless or have lived experience • Establish a national committee of First Nations peoples • Collect data • Develop a long term plan • Empower First Nations governments in the area of homelessness but ensure they are responsible and accountable
First Nations Leaders, Staff and Technicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnect First Nations peoples experiencing homelessness culturally, spiritually, emotionally and physically with their First Nations identity and connections to family/community. • Transfer of responsibilities and funds from federal government to First Nations for housing and homelessness • Support homeless shelters in urban areas • Build homeless shelters both in and out-of-community • Provide more services and programs to address homelessness and support people who are without homes in-community
Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear definitions of First Nations homelessness • Provide services to address trauma and mental health • Invest in affordable housing options for First Nations people • Advocate for adequate income supports and affordable housing • Establish an Action Plan that is flexible, provides for a wide variety of housing options, addresses different circumstances and needs • Take a holistic approach to urban First Nations homelessness • Establish a National Indigenous Homelessness Council to provide advocacy and fulfil other responsibilities • Promote access to housing as a human right • Provide safe housing for First Nations youth • Take action to address racism and discrimination faced by First Nations people in the housing and homelessness environment • Engage leaders and technicians across all provinces and territories as part of the further development of an Action Plan and in identifying solutions and options

6.3 Areas for Action

The AFN has suggested that strategies to address First Nations homelessness should support and enable regional approaches, and have short, medium, and long-term objectives.²⁰ Further, it must provide for the implementation of resolutions passed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly with respect to homelessness and First Nations jurisdiction over housing.

A summary of the type of content that might be included in an Action Plan, based on input received from the Survey and interviews is provided below.

First Nations Jurisdiction and Control: A key focus should be transitioning jurisdiction and control of housing to First Nations, particularly as it relates to addressing homelessness. This includes the transfer of control over homelessness funding, programs and services where First Nations wish to exercise that jurisdiction.

Funding: A key area of advocacy for the Action Plan should be seeking the financial investments required to address homelessness for First Nations. This could include investments required for housing construction and renovation. Beyond housing and other capital investments, funding is required for all of the health and social services that are required to support First Nations people experiencing homelessness. Funding must be made available for distinctions-based approaches to ensure that First Nations have the resources they require to address homelessness within their communities and exercise their right to provide services to their members no matter where they live.

Key areas of investment could include, but are not limited to:

- wrap-around services offered by First Nations homelessness service providers;
- addictions, trauma and related treatment and aftercare;
- system navigator positions and positions that act as liaisons between First Nations communities and urban centres or other areas where members live out-of-community;
- priority given to First Nations in whose traditional territories homelessness shelter and other homelessness projects will be established, to access available funding to build these facilities and administer these programs themselves.

Increased Land Base: Streamlining the addition of land to reserves, as well as the establishment of urban reserves arose as a point to be included in the Action Plan in order to address the restrictive nature of limited available reserve land. This point was often raised with reference to the phrase “Land Back” which has gained currency among grassroots Indigenous activists. Addressing the limited land base many First Nations have access to for the purposes of increasing available housing and alleviating the circumstances that give rise to First Nations homelessness.

²⁰ Assembly of First Nations. (2018). 10 Year First Nations national housing and related infrastructure strategy. Ottawa, ON: Assembly of First Nations.

Wrap Around Service Models: A First Nations Homelessness Action Plan should be based on a holistic approach which considers addictions and trauma treatment, mental health supports, income assistance, employment, education, connection to culture, and connection to community.

Pan-Indigenous Models: Further work is needed to determine how predominant pan-Indigenous models and programs can be enhanced and improved from a First Nations-specific perspective, in order to ensure First Nations have the resources and support to be involved in the delivery of services to their members experiencing homelessness where they wish to be involved. Services and supports being delivered under pan-Indigenous approaches, including in urban environments, should be assessed and modified to ensure they address First Nations needs and circumstances generally and also are responsive to input from First Nations whose members they support.

6.4 The Role of Service Providers in a National Action Plan

In response to the Survey question regarding the potential role of service organizations in a National Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness, the following suggestions were more commonly made (by service providers who responded to the question):

- Offer shelters, short term and transitional housing.
- Direct delivery of a range of services (e.g. client support, children-at-risk/family wellbeing, addictions, mental health services etc.).
- Provide systems navigation services and referrals to other services including housing, employment and training, education, family supports and income assistance etc.
- Provide cultural resources and supports to First Nations clients.
- Participate in local and regional coordinating committees, advisory groups involved in homelessness and housing.
- Engage in advocacy.
- Collect important and relevant data (e.g. 'numbers' of First Nations clients).
- Promote collaboration and coordination with other housing and homelessness service providers and related facilities (e.g. shelters, transitional homes).
- Provide cultural awareness and safety training to other service providers.

6.5 Measuring Success

Through the Survey, First Nations leaders, staff and technicians were asked how success of a National Action Plan might be measured. Responses were limited, but are summarized below.

- Outcomes should be measured through robust research methods that encompass monitoring and reporting on both in and out-of-community homelessness.
- Data collection systems should accurately measure identified indicators of both need and success, and should involve First Nations people (e.g. through surveys) as well as opportunities to undertake data collection (qualitative) in communities.
- Point-in-time counts should be conducted both in and out-of-community.

- Application of OCAP principles and respect for data sovereignty should be a feature of any information and data collection, and should inform how data concerning First Nations people and homelessness is used.

“We need to use data from Point-in-Time Counts from major urban centres and for baseline knowledge. For data sovereignty...we should collect that information and we need successful programming in data and holding governments accountable. This helps to build better supportive housing programs and more culturally based approaches.” (Interview)

- There should be monitoring of non-First Nations organizations that receive funding for service provision to First Nations people.

“Stop funding non-First Nations agencies and do background checks on organizations that receive funding as some get funded and do not spend on what the money was intended for”. (Survey Respondent)

Measures of success include:

- reduction in the number of First Nations people who are homeless (for all regions);
- reduction in the number of people accessing shelters and/or homelessness-related services;
- improvements in secondary indicators such as rates of use of supportive and “recovery”-type services (e.g. job search supports, housing), justice statistics, child protection, and wellness (e.g. reduced number of overdoses); and
- increased number of workers who are trained in culturally safe and trauma informed service delivery.

7. Conclusions

It is generally acknowledged that the face and character of First Nations homelessness is changing. Not only are an increasing number of First Nations people experiencing homelessness, but also, as a result of a growing population, the demographic of First Nations individuals experiencing homelessness is also changing – with a shift towards youth and First Nations members who are unable to gain access to affordable housing.

The homeless population has grown, and an increasingly large number of people are facing housing insecurity. Housing insecurity and homelessness is sustained by many underlying causes and factors. Increasingly it results from a tightly limited supply of adequate housing in First Nations communities and lack of affordable housing options. While homelessness can be attributed to these structural issues, it also persists as a consequence of ongoing social and economic disruptions and poor health, mental health, employment and security conditions.

Pathways into First Nations homelessness are related to historical and cultural trauma including colonization, intergenerational trauma, loss of culture and identity, dispossession from lands, resources and traditional economies, and disrupted social/kinship relationships. Homelessness is also an outcome of pervasive racism and discrimination that manifests at systemic and interpersonal levels, and is rooted in stereotypes and stigmas. It is frequently encountered by First Nations people seeking rental and other accommodations in urban and other out-of-community settings.

Definitions of Homelessness

First Nations understandings and definitions of homelessness are unique and distinct from understandings held by Western and mainstream society, and even from those of other Indigenous peoples. Definitions of homelessness offered by First Nations people demonstrate that having access to a home or home ownership fails to correspond to First Nations meanings and understandings of “home”.

For First Nations, different forms of homelessness exist concurrently. These are most commonly categorized as ‘visible’ and ‘hidden’ homelessness. First Nations-specific homelessness definitions are commonly identified as needing to explicitly recognize the role and impacts of systemic racism caused by historic and ongoing colonial policies.

Program and Service Needs and Gaps

The qualitative data from the survey and interviews identified many program and service needs and gaps related to First Nations homelessness. Underlying these needs and gaps is a recognition that responsibility for housing and homelessness is related to the fiduciary duties and treaty obligations of the Crown, and to the portability of rights to housing.

Funding remains a primary issue to be addressed in relation to First Nations homelessness programs and initiatives, and associated questions and concerns arise about government responsibilities and how existing programs and resources can be made available on a First Nation-specific basis (i.e. distinctions-based) and administered through First Nations organizations and service providers.

The need for access to a spectrum of information regarding provisional housing, shelter organizations, safe houses, home ownership, mortgages, and financing to support First Nations housing options, while allowing First Nations people to make informed decisions with respect to their own individual situations was a key sub-theme of findings from the Survey. This could be tied to a National Action Plan.

Improvements, Partnerships and Best Practices

Findings from the Survey suggest system improvements that are based on partnerships and evidence- and strengths-based best practices. There is a strong emphasis on the need for collaboration and partnership building at a number of levels, but especially between First Nations and organizations serving First Nations members living in urban and other out-of-community environments (i.e. First Nation-specific, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations).

There is significant support for centring solutions and models on rights-based approaches which emphasize human and Indigenous/treaty rights to housing, portability of rights, as well as self-government and self-determination. Further, these approaches should be grounded in distinctions-based approaches that recognize First Nations jurisdiction in housing and in addressing homelessness.

A National First Nations Action Plan for Homelessness

A National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan should be based on principles that emphasize First Nations jurisdiction and control, culturally relevant and grounded approaches, a seamless approach to service delivery (and exercise of jurisdiction and authority) for homelessness both in and out-of-community, and flexibility to offer services to different groups of First Nations people (e.g. youth, Elders, persons with addictions/in recovery, people in transition from correctional facilities, women fleeing violence, Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ people, and single parent-led families).

Based on findings from the Survey, areas for action to be articulated within a National Action Plan should focus on First Nations jurisdiction and control, funding, land base/land back, wrap around services, expansion of First Nations service organizational capacity, and enhancement of pan-Indigenous models to ensure they meet First Nations needs and circumstances and are accountable to the First Nations whose members they serve.

Finally, establishing appropriate measures of success and the means to monitor, collect and interpret data should take place within a framework of First Nations data sovereignty and application of OCAP principles –a key component of a National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan.

National Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off Reserve 3 Survey Streams

Survey begins with the following closed-ended question.

Are you answering this survey as a...

- a) First Nations community member living in or away from their community
- b) First Nations leader (e.g., Chief or Band Councillor), staff member, or technician
- c) Service Provider (e.g., Staff from urban Indigenous organizations, non-profits, etc.).

Respondents will answer questions from one of the below 3 streams based on how they self-identify.

SURVEY FOR FIRST NATIONS MEMBERS

Identifying questions for respondents

What region do you live in?

- a) British Columbia
- b) Alberta
- c) Saskatchewan
- d) Manitoba
- e) Ontario
- f) Quebec and Labrador
- g) Nova Scotia and Newfoundland
- h) New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island
- i) Northwest Territories
- j) Yukon Territory

Do you live on or away from your First Nation?

- a) On my First Nation
- b) Away from my First Nation

Are you currently, or have you ever personally experienced homelessness?

- a) Yes
- b) No

1. What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?
2. Does homelessness have a different definition for First Nations than for other populations in Canada? If so, what would that definition include?
3. What goals, objectives, and actions should be included in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?
4. What improvements could be made to programs and services to reduce the number of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the development of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?

SURVEY FOR FIRST NATIONS LEADERS, STAFF MEMBERS, AND TECHNICIANS

Identifying questions for respondents

In which region is your First Nations located?

- a) British Columbia
- b) Alberta
- c) Saskatchewan
- d) Manitoba
- e) Ontario
- f) Quebec and Labrador
- g) Nova Scotia and Newfoundland
- h) New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island
- i) Northwest Territories
- j) Yukon Territory

A National Action Plan

1. What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?
2. Does homelessness have a different definition for First Nations than for other populations in Canada? If so, what would that definition include?
3. What goals, objectives, and actions should be included in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?
4. How should the success of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness be measured?

First Nations

5. What are your community's greatest concerns related to addressing housing insecurity and/or homelessness? (e.g., housing, mental health, addictions, child welfare involvement, poverty, etc.)
6. What resources, programs, or services does your community require to best prevent or reduce the number of members experiencing homelessness?

7. What best practices related to addressing First Nations homelessness could be supported by a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?
8. How might First Nations extend responsibility and care to their members experiencing homelessness wherever they reside, including away from their community?

Partnerships & Collaboration

9. Where might relationships be developed or strengthened to effectively prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?
10. What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from the federal government to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?
11. What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from the provincial government to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?

Final question:

12. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the development of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?

SURVEY FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Identifying questions for respondents

Are you a representative of a...

- a) First Nations service provider or First Nations regional organization
- b) Indigenous service provider not associated with a First Nations
- c) Non-Indigenous service provider
- d) Other (please specify)

In which region is your organization located?

- a) British Columbia
- b) Alberta
- c) Saskatchewan
- d) Manitoba
- e) Ontario
- f) Quebec and Labrador
- g) Nova Scotia and Newfoundland
- h) New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island
- i) Northwest Territories
- j) Yukon Territory

A National Action Plan

1. What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?
2. What vision, objectives, and/or action items should be included in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?

The Role of Service Providers

3. What are areas of greatest need and/or greatest potential impact related to causes and consequences of First Nations homelessness?
4. What role might be outlined for service organizations in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?
6. What does your service organization require to best meet the needs, and/or reduce the number, of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness?
7. What best practices related to addressing First Nations homelessness could be supported by a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?

Partnerships & Collaboration

8. Where might relationships be developed or strengthened to effectively prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?
9. How can service organizations and First Nations collaborate to best meet the needs, and/or reduce the number, of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness?
10. What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from the federal government to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?
11. What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from the provincial government to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?

Final question:

12. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the development of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?

Appendix B – Survey Respondent Groups, by Question

Question #	Survey Question	Asked of...		
		FN Members	FN Leaders, Staff, Technicians	Service Providers
1	What do experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness look like for First Nations, and how do they differ for First Nations compared to other populations in Canada?	Y	Y	Y
2	Does homelessness have a different definition for First Nations than for other populations in Canada? If so, what would that definition include?	Y	Y	N
Program and Service Needs and Gaps				
3	What are your community's greatest concerns related to addressing housing insecurity and/or homelessness? (e.g., housing, mental health, addictions, child welfare involvement, poverty, etc.)	N	Y	N
4	What resources, programs, or services does your community require to best prevent or reduce the number of members experiencing homelessness?	N	Y	N
5	What are areas of greatest need and/or greatest potential impact related to causes and consequences of First Nations homelessness?	N	N	Y
6	What does your service organization require to best meet the needs, and/or reduce the number, of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness?	N	N	Y
Improvements, Solutions and Best Practices				
7	What improvements could be made to programs and services to reduce the number of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness?	Y	N	N
8	How might First Nations extend responsibility and care to their members experiencing homelessness wherever they reside, including away from their community?	N	Y	N
9	What best practices related to addressing First Nations homelessness could be supported by a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?	N	Y	Y

Question #	Survey Question	Asked of...		
		FN Members	FN Leaders, Staff, Technicians	Service Providers
Partnerships and Collaboration				
10	Where might relationships be <i>developed or strengthened</i> to effectively prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?	N	Y	Y
11	What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from the <i>federal government</i> to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?	N	Y	Y
12	What resources, policies, or commitments are needed from the <i>provincial government</i> to prevent, reduce, or eliminate First Nations homelessness?	N	Y	Y
13	How can <i>service organizations and First Nations collaborate</i> to best meet the needs, and/or reduce the number, of First Nations persons experiencing homelessness?	N	N	Y
National Action Plan				
14	What <i>[vision] goals, objectives, and actions</i> should be included in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?	Y	Y	Y
15	What <i>role</i> might be outlined for <i>service organizations</i> in a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?	N	N	Y
16	How should the success of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness be <i>measured</i> ?	N	Y	N
17	Is there <i>anything else</i> you would like to share regarding the development of a national action plan for First Nations homelessness on and off reserve?	Y	Y	Y

Appendix C – Themes, Issue Areas and Sub-topics

Sources Legend

Survey 1 - FN Members = S1
 Survey 2 – FN Leaders, Staff, Technical = S2
 Survey 3 – Service Providers = S3
 Interviews/Discussion Groups = DG

Issue Area	Issues / Sub-topics for Analysis	Primary Sources & References
Theme 1: Understanding First Nations Homelessness		
Defining FN homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western versus FN definitions of home and homelessness Forms of homelessness (hidden, urban etc.) Data and research (approaches, limitations, gaps) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S1 (survey question re: definitions) S2 (survey question re: definitions) S3 (survey question re: definitions) DG (question re: definitions)
Factors influencing FN homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factors influencing and underlying FN homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The housing crisis Access to services Social (health, mental health, historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, families) Age, gender, identity Geography Economy and access to resources Environmental (e.g. climate change) Cultural Societal racism, attitudes/behaviours Systemic racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S2 (survey question re: causes)
FN experiences of homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data and statistics (current baseline) Impacts of homelessness (outcomes) Perspectives – regional, gender, age, in/out-of-community Personal experience and testimonies / “in our own words” First Nations needs with respect to homelessness and interconnections with other policy/program areas (housing, health, income support) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S1 (survey question) S2 (survey question) S3 (survey question) DG (general discussion of factors, experiences)
Theme 2: Approaches to Addressing FN Homelessness		
Current models, system approaches and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing models and programs Homelessness programs and services (FN, Indigenous, non-FN/Indigenous) Funding for homelessness services Distinctions-based versus Indigenous versus mainstream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DG (examples of current approaches)

Issue Area	Issues / Sub-topics for Analysis	Primary Sources & References
Program and service needs and gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FN rights to housing / human rights / UNDRIP • Needs: level and types of need • Program, organizational, funding and other gaps • Challenges and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S2 (survey question) • S3 (survey question) • DG (discussion group question)
Best / promising practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promising practices, case studies, models (policy, program, structural) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First Nation ○ Indigenous ○ Non-Indigenous / mainstream ○ In-community, urban, rural ○ Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S2 (survey question) • S3 (survey question) • DG (discussion group question)
Preferred approaches and models for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service delivery approaches (in-community, urban, general, FN service providers, collaborations/partnerships) • Self-government / self-determination • Culturally-based approaches • Partnerships (FN, Indigenous, non-Indigenous) • Other models and approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S1 (general) • S2 (general) • DG (discussion group question)
Theme 3: A National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan		
Action Plan development and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Goals ○ Objectives ○ Action Areas ○ Actions ○ Roles and responsibilities ○ Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S1 (AP goals) • S2 (AP goals and measures of success) • S3 (AP goals) • DG (discussion group question)