



ENDAAMNAAN: HOMES FOR ALL NATIONS

Advancing the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan

ON-RESERVE SYSTEMS MAPPING INSIGHTS
FROM 230 FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES



Submitted to:
Assembly of First Nations



HELPSEEKER
TECHNOLOGIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	3
Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Systems Mapping Off-Reserve	6
Systems Mapping On-Reserve	6
Webinar 7 Community Engagement	7
Survey 9 Connecting the Dots	9
Recommendations	10
Introduction	11
Creating Ethical Spaces	11
Methodology & Approach	13
Approach to OCAP®	13
Survey Approach	14
Drop In Calls / Interactive Info Sessions	15
Developing a Systems Map	16
On-reserve Systems Mapping Methodology	16
Limitations to Systems Mapping	18
Off-reserve Systems Mapping Methodology	18
Limitations to Off-Reserve Mapping	20
Simulation Map Tool Methodology for On-Reserve and Off-Reserve	21
Research Questions & Survey Analysis	22
Limitations	22
Demographic Insights	23
Service Information	24
Services offered to the community	24
How is information found?	25
Challenges when accessing services	26
Inclusive Services Available	28
Resources for members living away from their First Nation	30
Considerations when making referrals	32
Drop In Calls	34

Drop In Calls: Themes and Recommendations:

Simulation Map Tool

On-Reserve Mapping Insights

Regional Breakdown

Distribution of Tags

Off-Reserve Mapping Insights

Regional Breakdown

Distribution of Tags

A Closer Look: Regional Distribution

Who is leading these listings?

A Closer Look: Regional Distribution

KEY FINDINGS & THEMES (DISCUSSION)

CONSIDERATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dedicated Funding for First Nations

Data Framework & Capacity Building

Systems Planning & Integration

National Point-in-Time Count (PiT)

Conclusion

Appendix

1.0 Survey Questions

1.1 Raw Survey data

2.0 Drop In Calls

2.1 Presentation for Drop in Calls

Appendix Document - AFN Report by HelpSeeker - Fr. and En. Drop In Call presentation.pdf

2.2 Community Summaries From Drop In Calls

3.0 Raw Dashboard Data

3.1 HelpSeekers Current Systems Map of Services

4. 0 AFN Resolution 79/2019: Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off-Reserve

37

40

44

44

44

46

46

46

47

49

50

52

52

56

56

57

57

58

59

61

61

62

62

62

62

62

79

79

80

PREFACE

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) represents and advocates for First Nations citizens in Canada to facilitate relationship building between First Nations, the Crown, public and private sectors.

AFN represents 634 First Nations, and more than 900,000 First Nations people living on and off-reserve. AFN is directed by First Nations Leaders (Chiefs) through resolutions passed through Chiefs Assemblies twice a year.

In 2019, First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 79/2019, titled “Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off-Reserve.” This resolution mandates that the AFN develop a national First Nations homelessness strategy in alignment with the Ten Year National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy. A national action plan for First Nations homelessness aims to improve the delivery of federal government programs, as well as the related social and fiscal mechanisms, to address First Nations homelessness. It aims to reduce, prevent, and ultimately eliminate First Nations homelessness while transitioning First Nations housing and infrastructure to First Nations management, control, and care. This action plan also aims to advocate for improved social programs to address First Nations homelessness, increase First Nations jurisdiction over homelessness programs, and enable First Nations to access resources.

The Chiefs-in-Assembly have mandated AFN to address the housing and homelessness crisis amongst First Nations through evidenced-based reforms. The goals are to 1. Improve services to address First Nations homelessness, 2. Address on-reserve homelessness, and 3. Strengthen First Nation's ability to care for their members no matter where they live (on or off-reserve).

As part of this resolution, AFN seeks to gather data to determine the following:

- The number of First Nations people experiencing homelessness;
- The causes and gaps in services including the shortage of housing on-reserve that contributes to members leaving their communities and reasons that prevent the homeless from accessing adequate shelter on and off-reserve; and
- Develop a mechanism that respects OCAP® and allows First Nations to own, access, control and possess data collected for their own future utilization.

AFN has designated three areas of research to support the development of a national First Nations homelessness strategy. The three bodies of work that have taken place to support AFN's initiatives are: 1) an environmental scan of homelessness statistics, services related data and other information relevant to First Nations peoples homelessness landscape, 2) a literature review of First Nations homelessness, and 3) a systems map of the on and off-reserve services related to housing and homelessness.

HelpSeeker is the data & insights company for social impact leaders on the front lines of solving the world's most complex social challenges looking for breakthrough solutions. We were honoured at the opportunity to support the third portion of this work for AFN.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HelpSeeker acknowledges the Assembly of First Nations for enlisting us to develop a body of research and work in support of AFN to develop a long term strategy to combat homelessness and the housing crisis First Nations citizens are facing on and off-reserve.

Special acknowledgements are given to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) for connecting with us throughout the project as the holders of the second body of work for AFN, the Literature Review. Their leadership in convening the Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) was integral to ensure Elder and community accountability to the work that our two project teams were developing. While we understand that the mandate for the work of AFN is strictly for First Nations communities and members, the cross-sector of people on and off-reserve that experience housing and homelessness are mobile and not always clearly defined by geographic or jurisdictional boundaries.

Additionally, we give acknowledgement to the IAC who supported our work and were available to offer support and guidance when needed. Each Advisory Circle member is Indigenous and works within the housing and homelessness sector. We give appreciation for their support and guidance throughout the project. Members of the IAC include the Elder Alex Jacobs, with Betty Edel, Bernice Kamano, Cindy-Sue Montana McCormack, Fran Hunt-Jinnouchi, Marcel Swain, Pauletta Tremblett, Samantha Restoule, Steve Teekens, and Tracey Doherty. 4 Finally, we give appreciation and acknowledgement to all of the First Nations, service providers, and representatives of those First Nations that joined us in our drop in call sessions held over Zoom throughout the summer. benefits available to people seeking help in the social sector.



These First Nations / communities included:

- 4 - Alberta
- 3 - British Columbia
- 2 - Québec
- 1 - Saskatchewan
- 4 - Ontario
- 1 - Yukon
- 1 - Northwest Territories

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While HelpSeeker is a social technology company that utilizes data, platforms and algorithms to support understanding the social safety net of Canada, we realize that the heart and foundation of all that we do lies with the people on the ground - those seeking or in need of help. Our methodologies will always include quantitative and qualitative results and seek to understand those with lived experiences.

This person-centered and wholistic approach is in alignment with Indigenous research and community protocols. When we started this work we had two First Nations staff members working on this project (Monique Fry, Stó:lō and Taylor Sparklingeyes, Cree), and subsequently hired another First Nations staff member (Sade Auger, Cree) who became the lead of this work alongside Monique Fry, VP Community Success.

Given the experience that Monique has from her academic career as a researcher and her community work previously, the need to open this work with the COH and the Indigenous Advisory in Ceremony with prayer and blessings was non-negotiable. The technical aspects of a project, including the use of OCAP® principles, are just as important as ceremonial acknowledgement to ensure that all things related to this project are done in a good way. This grounded all staff on this project, even those who are non-Indigenous, and our team ensured we lived up to protocols - both western and ceremonial.

HelpSeeker proposed a three-pronged approach, a systems mapping and a body of qualitative and quantitative research to develop supporting evidence for AFN's mandate for the development of a culturally appropriate national First Nations housing and homelessness strategy. This strategy is to complement and align with the current existing First Nations housing and related infrastructure strategy. Here are the high-level activities that we completed to provide the most accurate understanding of on and off-reserve programs and services in the time and scope that we had to work with.

Systems Mapping Off-Reserve

Through our HelpSeeker platform, identified and mapped were **911 off-reserve housing and homelessness locations, programs and services that serve First Nations and Indigenous peoples living off-reserve**. The 911 mapped services on the HelpSeeker platform is an all encompassing number for any service provider that identifies as Indigenous serving. The platform in its current state does not separate "Indigenous led", "First Nations led", or "non-Indigenous led" at this time. On the HelpSeeker platform there are currently 293 out of 911 (32%) of all Indigenous-serving housing and homelessness listings managed directly by service providers themselves. We refer to this as the 'claim rate' by which service providers can control their own listing details. This is a function of all our

listings on HelpSeeker, not just the Indigenous ones. Further breakdown of off-reserve listings on the HelpSeeker systems map can be found in the appendix - (3.1 - Appendix Document).

For purposes of this project, after further investigation and research we identified 22 “First Nations led” services being offered off-reserve (not added to our platform for OCAP® alignment), 221 “Indigenous led” programs off-reserve, and 305 “non-Indigenous led” housing and homeless related programs that serve off-reserve First Nations citizens.

Systems Mapping On-Reserve

Researching all publicly available data, we were able to identify over 640 Nations and reserves across Canada to find relevant services currently being offered on-reserve. Of this total, 230 First Nations have been included on the Interactive Dashboard. This number reflects the total number of First Nations with information specific to housing and/or homelessness programs or services. A total of 293 listings were mapped, which include general housing, transitional housing, supportive housing, shelters, homeless supports as well as any housing infrastructure departments located on First Nations reserve land. The remaining roughly 400 Nations that we did not include did not have any publicly available data on housing and homelessness, or the information found was outdated and not a reliable source. Given more time and human resources, a next step may have included personally reaching out to those Nations to fill in the gaps.



An Interactive Dashboard was developed to reflect on-reserve listings related to housing and homelessness while upholding OCAP® principles by not putting on-reserve listings on our public HelpSeeker systems navigation platform. The Dashboard exists for the purposes related to this project only and does not act as a definitive calculation of on-reserve programs and services related to housing and homelessness. However, it shares a story of what information is easily accessible and trends that are emergent from the available information. We would caution AFN not to share this publicly without the explicit permission from all the Nations that are listed; the Dashboard should be used for AFN's own strategic direction only.

It is our hope that through further engagement with First Nations, they will consent to add their programs and service listings to our platform, thus creating community data that can be used to leverage future funding initiatives for continuous social structure development.

Webinar

On June 17, 2021, HelpSeeker hosted a National webinar, entitled On the Map: Supporting Indigenous Self-Representation and Ownership in Systems Mapping with special guests Elder Doreen Spence, Amber Potts, Aaron Franks, and Shawn Gervais. The webinar discussed why access to information, self-representation, and understanding community needs is essential to supporting Indigenous communities, and how HelpSeeker is supporting this through their Systems Mapping efforts. The webinar received over 395 registrants representing First Nations, municipalities, provincial governments, and policy makers across Canada. This webinar was also the kickoff to our community engagement process where we invited First Nations service providers and leadership to our Interactive Information Sessions.

Community Engagement

HelpSeeker engaged on-reserve communities, service providers and leadership through Zoom Drop In Calls named “Interactive Info Sessions” to learn firsthand what housing and homeless services look like on-reserve, and to learn what challenges their communities face in addressing these issues. Sessions and materials were offered in both English and French, along with a French translator on standby particularly for Nations joining us from Québec.

With our culturally versed Indigenous staff leading the Drop In Call sessions, we created a culturally safe space to facilitate conversations to share and learn with communities. Over a seven week period we held 12 sessions where we successfully engaged over 15 unique First Nations Nations, and 19 individual participants. Most of the participants were on-reserve service providers, while three were off-reserve service providers working within the Indigenous community.

The main goals of the Drop In Calls were to: 1) educate participants about AFN’s initiatives to develop a national First Nations homelessness strategy and the scope of our project in connection with said strategy, 2) share the HelpSeeker Systems Mapping / Navigation app as a resource tool their Nation can engage with for finding programs and services off-reserve, 3) show participants how the backend of data collection works from the HelpSeeker systems map platform, which could support advocacy for increasing community service infrastructure, and most importantly 4) learn about community challenges and strengths related to housing, homelessness and what broader social support services currently look like on-reserve.

One of the most highlighted common themes emerging from the Drop In Calls were “years” long waitlists for housing, described anywhere from three to ten years and sometimes more. Additionally, all the First Nations that participated reported issues of overcrowding in homes. Although these are well known issues, it is interesting to note that all of the communities involved in Drop In Calls reported these two experiences. This highlights the fact that all of these First Nations (and most likely, most First Nations communities across Canada) are experiencing high levels of hidden homelessness.

Another interesting finding is the ratio between number of band members, number of on and off-reserve members, and the amount of housing available. For example, one specific Nation has a total of 2241 members, of which 682 live off-reserve and 1559 live on-reserve, and yet there are only 400 multi-family homes available on-reserve. This has resulted in a six to eight year waitlist and extensive overcrowding in current housing conditions. Members must live in their community for one year or longer before becoming eligible for the housing waitlist, resulting in a strong probability that many First Nation members will not be able to return home or will experience extensively long periods of what may be understood as “hidden homelessness” before being able to secure housing within their own community. Although not all reserves share the same policies, this was a common occurrence across all of the on-reserve communities that participated. The disproportionately limited housing available relative to First Nation members in need of housing is a large gap to fill.

Out of the 15 on-reserve communities, seven have shelter-related services that are reported to be always full with waitlists. At least two communities of the seven reported using these services as emergency COVID-19 isolation centres and having to refer their Nation members to nearby urban centres to access emergency shelter support. Time will tell when these communities will be able to use their shelters and services for the intentions for which they were created, post COVID.

Only one Nation reported having harm reduction transitional housing services for members on the path to sobriety or for exiting out of treatment or incarceration. However, this particular Nation did not have an emergency shelter on-reserve and would refer members to their closest urban city for access to immediate emergency homelessness shelter support. This Nation also has a damage deposit program to help with securing off-reserve housing. This damage deposit program supports those Nation members who are marginalized, homeless, fleeing domestic violence, and youth.

(To review each community’s input into the Drop In Call sessions, see Appendix section 2.2 Community Summaries From Drop In Calls)

Survey

HelpSeeker developed a survey in both official languages as another effort and entry point to reach on-reserve leadership. The goal for these surveys was to learn more about what types of programs and services are offered on-reserve, if First Nations have on-reserve shelters and, if possible, learn how community members access and find out about services either on their Nation or in the urban centres near them. We received 43 surveys in English and none in French.

The outcomes of those surveys indicated that many First Nations communities continue to lack essential social services (e.g., shelters) due to lack of funding, infrastructure and capacity. Access to information and navigation through the social service system also pose a challenge to accessing

services for First Nations community members, alongside difficulties associated with distance to services and access to reliable transportation. Lastly, assuming that the appropriate technology is available, communities should ensure that information to community members is delivered through an online platform (e.g., email lists, newsletters, and/or through social media). This is based on the survey responses to the question of how Nation members find out about programs and services, in which the highest number of respondents reported through online and social media platforms.

Efforts for getting the word out on both the Drop In Calls and Surveys took many forms, including social media posts (in both French and English), email campaigns to targeted First Nations, and outreach via personal connections in communities. To further promote all the systems mapping work that we were doing for AFN, we created a web-based landing page that we updated regularly, as well as used our large webinar audience to spread the word.

Connecting the Dots

Major findings of this project based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected are themes of overcrowding in on-reserve housing, years-long waitlists to get housing, and poor ratios of available housing vs number of band members. During the mapping process, the lack of accessible information about on-reserve services related to, but not limited to, housing and homelessness became clear. There were approximately 400 Nations where we were unable to identify on-reserve services. In several of the Drop In Call sessions where on-reserve First Nation members and service providers joined us, there were also instances of participants not knowing if their reserve offered certain services related to homelessness or not. Also reflected in the survey there was a clear lack of awareness in many responses towards knowing what services their First Nation offered. In the Drop In Calls where First Nations identified as having transitional or emergency shelter supports, it's worth noting that every single shelter had a waitlist, and therefore did not satisfy its community's capacity needs, in addition to some shelters being used for emergency COVID-19 responses. Many First Nations have to refer their members away from the community to access off-reserve emergency support.

The survey found that the majority of on-reserve First Nation members find out about their communities' programs and services through online social media, or word of mouth or by "calling the band office". There are many barriers towards accessing services on or off-reserve, a major one reflected in the survey being a lack of convenient public transportation. Of the 293 on-reserve listings that were found to have publicly available information on their services, only 16 of those were identified to have a shelter-related program.

Recommendations

We have provided both Considerations and Recommendations based on our collective findings during this project as well as the combined work that HelpSeeker has supported in the Housing and Homelessness sector in Canada over a number of years.

Here are the recommendations at a glance:

1

The need for Dedicated Funding for First Nations directly from Reaching Home and other Federal programs to meet the immense needs and fill the large gaps that exist in communities.

2

A Data and Capacity Building Framework for Nations to successfully manage and have complete control over their Housing and Homelessness strategies as sovereign Nations.

3

Systems Planning and Integration to ensure the coordination of support, referral and access also exists between on and off-reserve providers.

4

Develop or find a mechanism or approach to offer to First Nations to make information on programs and services more easily accessible and transparent to members both on and off-reserve.

5

Resources to support a National On-reserve Point-in-Time Count (PiT) to ascertain an accurate number of First Nations people experiencing homelessness, including Indigenous definitions of homelessness that reflect the cultural context and realities of hidden homeless populations.

INTRODUCTION

Access to safe, adequate, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing is essential to the health and wellbeing of all Canadians. However, Indigenous peoples in Canada are experiencing a well and longstanding housing crisis as a result of:

- less access to capital for repairs and building new units,
- lack of federal funding for on-reserve housing, and¹
- systemically racist policies that have prevented the self-management of housing².

Indigenous communities & services are often left out of key datasets, creating barriers to accessing resources as well as limiting our understanding of the resources Indigenous communities need. This creates a risk of continuing to overlook important issues in decision-making and continuing to perpetuate inequality.

To bridge this gap, HelpSeeker is contracted by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to create a systems map of services for First Nations people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness or a lack of housing options. This includes both housing and shelter-related services, as well as broader support for wellbeing.

HelpSeeker's development of a systems map of services relating to First Nations housing and homelessness is one part of the AFN's three part research phase. The research produced will assist the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in its mandate to seek resources to develop a National First Nations Homelessness Strategy for First Nations to address the housing and homelessness crisis that First Nations citizens and communities are facing.

Creating Ethical Spaces

HelpSeeker, along with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) and the Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) convened by COH, came together in April 2021 during the beginning of this project to align and hold a ceremony to set the intentions of this work. Creating ethical space means we embed the work with Indigenous world views and direct support from Indigenous leaders and community stakeholders. This Creating Ethical Spaces implements a culturally appropriate methodology to carry out this project in the best way possible working within the boundaries of time, scope and budget.

An Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) was created to offer support and guidance throughout the duration of the project. The IAC is made up of Indigenous people from across Canada who work and have experience within the housing and homelessness sector. They represent a cross section of distinct

communities and organizations that could inform and ensure that the context and heart of this work should always be about the people on the ground experiencing housing precarity or houselessness/homelessness.

Leading the project in ceremony was Elder Alex Jacobs, from Whitefish Lake First Nation in Alberta. Elder Jacobs is a traditional pipe carrier and respected knowledge keeper. Considered a bridge between traditional and western ways of knowing, he is university educated and has worked at numerous Indigenous organizations including the Anishnawbe Health Street Patrol, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto and most recently, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. He is able to connect the Indigenous holistic views and western ways of thinking at both a systemic and grass roots level.

During the ceremony, Elder Jacobs gave the project the name ENDAAMNAAN: HOMES FOR ALL NATIONS. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and HelpSeeker honoured this name in our project work for AFN. The name stems from the idea that there is no need for homelessness. In respect to the name, Elder Jacobs acknowledged that as children, he and his siblings did not understand what the term homelessness meant. In their culture, there was no such thing as homelessness. The reality of what we see today within First Nations on and off-reserve is that the sense of loss of culture, language, land, and home is something that did not exist prior to contact and colonization.

The Indigenous worldview is embedded in the language by framing this project's name that holds the meaning of "HOMES FOR ALL NATIONS" which connect to the fact that everyone needs a home. It is important for capturing what we are trying to do with this work.



We acknowledge that this name was gifted for the purposes of this work alone and does not preclude AFN from seeking their own ceremonial name and spiritual scope for their larger work at hand.

It was important for the literature review by COH and this systems mapping by HelpSeeker, two joint research projects as part of AFN's research on First Nations homelessness, to share scope, vision and name in order to create that ethical space.

METHODOLOGY & APPROACH

To engage First Nations communities in the Survey and Drop In Calls, HelpSeeker's Systems Mapping team compiled a contact list developed from their research into on-reserve programs and services. Through this contact list, we emailed First Nations across Canada to invite them to fill out the survey and participate in the Drop In Calls via Zoom. We then narrowed it down by region and sent a second invitation email one to two weeks prior to the scheduled Drop In Call date. This method of engagement seemed most appropriate to reach as many First Nations as possible in a short period of time.

Next, we developed a landing page website, which held all of the relevant information and documents related to the project, to give context to the project. Prospective participants could click on the survey, register for a session in their region, and formally opt-in to systems mapping.

1. Approach to OCAP®

Honouring First Nations data sovereignty and the principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession), HelpSeeker was proud to enact the following processes in our systems mapping process:

- HelpSeeker archived listings into an excel spreadsheet before publishing locations and programs for First Nations communities on the Systems Map, until First Nations chose to "opt in" to being included on the systems mapping directory.
- When governance and leadership did opt in to systems mapping, HelpSeeker would waive any fees associated with having full access to the datasets created from entering their listings into the platform. Typically, to gain full access to these data sets, communities would pay a subscription fee.
- Through our data sharing agreements, on-reserve First Nations would understand that HelpSeeker's technology and data platform is owned by HelpSeeker, but their data belongs to them and can be disseminated, collected, used and changed solely at the discretion of the Nations as directed by their designated party.

We are committed to honoring OCAP® to the highest level to ensure First Nations have control, access, ownership and possession of their data that is generated from our platform, ensuring it is free and completely accessible to Nations that choose to opt in. Developing a strong understanding of OCAP® changed the way we were originally going to approach systems mapping. This work also sparked internal training for many staff from diverse departments to become OCAP® certified by the First Nations Information Governance Center.

Before fully understanding OCAP® it was intended that we would enter their programs and services directly into our data platform / systems navigation app and the system would be able to analyze the

data. The system would then provide information on service mix, trends, gaps, strengths, barriers towards housing and homelessness services. .

However, learning about OCAP® instead led us to defining a new approach to how we completed our analysis. We could not simply enter their services in our public directory data mechanism/systems mapping /navigation app without proper consent. Instead we used internal spreadsheets to collect publicly available information for analysis on housing and homelessness programs on-reserve for the purposes of this project. We conducted the analysis within the boundaries of OCAP® recognizing the importance of getting consent from a leadership level for systems mapping with our public navigation app. Additionally, we need to have appropriate agreements in place that are in their best interest prior to publishing First Nations data. To get to an agreement level with leadership takes additional time, appropriate ethical engagement and relationship building.

2. Survey Approach

As it stands, there has not been research done to date on the current state of homelessness services available to First Nations on and off-reserves. Therefore, we conducted an initial survey for service providers in First Nations to: 1) help build the systems map of services, and 2) provide qualitative context for the findings of the systems mapping activities.

The survey was circulated digitally for 12 weeks to approximately 198 First Nations and 66 Tribal Councils via email addresses collected from public websites through systems mapping efforts. This garnered 43 responses. Questions from the survey provide a sample of data regarding the over-all program and service structure, availability, accessibility, and awareness of services on reserve with a focus on housing and homelessness. (A full list of the questions asked in the survey can be found in the Appendix 1.0)

This qualitative context is particularly important to consider when interpreting the systems mapping data because, while the systems mapping data are illustrative in themselves, they do not capture the full experience of First Nations in relation to service access. The systems map data cannot inherently tell the full story about the strengths and gaps of services available on First Nations. Therefore we took the approach of additionally offering a survey, and drop-in-calls, in conjunction with analysis of the systems map. Each provides their own data sets, and corroborate collective findings to confirm the resulting themes later discussed in this report.

3. Drop In Calls / Interactive Info Sessions

Taking a wholistic, culturally appropriate approach towards the engagement of First Nations and members, we conducted 12 Drop In Call sessions from the end of June to early August 2021. We were able to learn directly from 18 individuals about their scope of programs and services related to housing and homelessness, and the overall well-being of their respective 16 communities. Of these 16 communities, 15 were on-reserve and one was a service provider at a local Friendship Centre in a small town with many First Nations reserves in proximity. All individuals that participated in the sessions were asked for consent to share their name and what they shared about their communities programs and services publicly or anonymously for this report. If consent was not authorized or given, their personal and community identity will remain anonymous throughout this report.

Drop In Call sessions were led and created by HelpSeeker's First Nations team, beginning in prayer and creating a culturally safe space for natural conversations. Participants learned what systems mapping was, and how this work could support their First Nation should they choose to participate. They were also exposed to HelpSeeker's data collection mechanism that is designed to support First Nations sovereignty and create easier access to programs and services. We discussed our approach to OCAP® and steps to formally opt-in to our Systems Mapping. Sessions were designed to also inform First Nations about the National First Nations Housing and Homelessness Strategy development initiatives being undertaken by AFN.

During the session, participants were presented with the following case study:

*'Kyle' is a 24 year old Indigenous man who moved out and started working in the trades after high school. He lived in the nearest town with his four year old son as a single dad. With undue hardships caused by COVID, he was laid off, and forced to move back to his home community. He has 5 other siblings living in the house, along with his parents, and his grandmother. He stays in a room in the unfinished basement with his son. He is now unemployed and living off income assistance. There are concerns in the house because of the fighting between family members and he does not want his son exposed to this anymore. **Kyle is desperate to move out, but he does not know where to turn.***

Through this case study, participants were asked a series of questions which led to natural conversations in regards to their programs and services that they may refer Kyle to in order to support him in finding housing or other services. This also led to conversations about their housing infrastructure, shelter related services, other programs and services offered in their First Nation, and challenges they faced supporting their members. The flow of conversations allowed us to develop a familiarity with the participants where they felt comfortable sharing detailed information about their community needs and gaps. To view the presentation for the Drop in Call sessions, refer to appendix document (2.1)

Later in this report, we will discuss the key findings and themes that emerged from the Drop In Call / Interactive Info Sessions. Refer to the Appendix (2.2) to find all of the complete community summaries of what we learned and heard.

4. Developing a Systems Map

Systems Mapping is a systematic approach to mapping all of the programs, locations, helplines, and benefits available to people seeking help in the social sector.

To create an up-to-date picture of the Housing and Homelessness First Nations serving sector across the country, the HelpSeeker systems map was used to collect information about the different community and social services across Canada. Initial research to map the sector was done via desk research, then gaps were filled in with information we gleaned from the Drop In Calls. To capture as much of the housing and homelessness sector across Canada that we could, two different approaches for on-reserve and off-reserve listings were used. We will describe them in greater detail below.

A. On-reserve Systems Mapping Methodology

To create a systems map of on-reserve housing and homelessness services and programs, the systems mapping team created a Google Sheet (similar to Excel spreadsheet format) inventory that replicated information existing on the HelpSeeker database. After extensive research of available public information for on-reserve programs and service they were inventoried in the internal spreadsheet. There were four types of housing and homelessness programs and services that were pulled from the development internal data collection spreadsheet. 1. Programs and services led by First Nations that were located in urban centres; this is included in the Google Sheet inventory as a “First Nation Led” program or service. 2. “First Nations Serving” programs and services in urban centres that served First Nations persons in need of housing and homelessness support. 3. Onreserve programs and services found through online research.

To gather information on the 647 First Nations across Canada, we cross referenced the Assembly of First Nations map with existing First Nations we obtained through researching any available public facing online resources such as First Nation websites.

The initial mapping process prioritized programs and services by population density and the availability of information on First Nations by province. From this initial on-reserve list, the systems mapping team researched and included any public facing information through web based searches and determined what information was available, and if it appeared up-to-date.

This included shelters, supportive housing, housing, infrastructure, and capital offices/programs on-reserves. All information provided on the on-reserve Google Sheet (found in appendix 3.01) should be considered both First Nations serving and First Nations Led.

From this initial research, our team was able to map 229 First Nations out of 647. See table 1A below for a breakdown of First Nations by provincial and territorial numbers.

Table 1A. (First Nations with accessible information for systems mapping as of July 27, 2021)

Province	# of First Nations identified	# of First Nations that had service information available/ publicly accessible	# of First Nations that had service information unavailable/ not publicly accessible	# of First Nations with a Housing or Homelessness Tag
British Columbia	204	165	40	83
Alberta	47	41	6	10
Saskatchewan	75	47	28	24
Manitoba	63	56	7	26
Ontario	110	77	34	41
Quebec	64	42	22	16
Nova Scotia	19	16	3	6
New Brunswick	15	10	5	4
Newfoundland & Labrador	5	5	0	2
Prince Edward Island	2	2	0	1
Yukon	14	12	2	11
Northwest Territories	27	20	7	5
Total	647	493	154	229

*** NOTE: No First Nations data was available in Nunavut

B. Limitations to Systems Mapping

There were a few limitations the systems mapping team faced while mapping out the Housing and Homelessness serving sector for First Nations. The most challenging obstacle was the lack of information or detailed information on the services and programs offered on-reserves. Oftentimes, the only known address or location was the band office to the First Nation. HelpSeeker's Systems Mapping team was unable to locate any programs and services in Nunavut.

Due to a large amount of incomplete or outdated information in regards to housing and homelessness, and uncertainty about program scope and limitations, any social or community programs and services found on-reserve in the scan were recorded. Moreover, uncertainty about whether some services mapped that did not include an apparent housing focus could indeed be helpful to an individual's housing and/or homeless needs is unknown. These listings were not tagged "housing" or "homeless". The only next step or future exercise to improve the data set would be to fully map the resources and services that did not include Homelessness or Housing.

C. Off-reserve Systems Mapping Methodology

On July 19, 2021, a complete data set of all listings including locations, program, helplines and benefits were downloaded from the HelpSeeker database. The data was first sorted by the tag "Indigenous," which is used to represent Indigenous serving programs and services that may or may not include cultural components.

We further sorted the listings to indicate anything tagged Indigenous in conjunction with the housing, shelter and homeless tag. Helpseeker uses a taxonomy of category tags on the current systems map to identify services when users are searching. By isolating each tag of "Indigenous" "housing", "shelter" and "homeless" our system generated listings of programs and services available across Canada related to those categories. Listed below are the tag definitions.

- "Indigenous" could be separate or inclusive programs and services for First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples of Canada
- "Housing" is inclusive of the following tags: "supportive housing", "transitional housing" and general "housing".
- The tag "homeless" is used to describe any program or service geared towards individuals experiencing homelessness.

- “Shelter” is used to describe shelter services for those in dire situations. Usually shelters that are used for crisis situations, people experiencing homelessness or people with addictions

When categorizing listings as “off-reserve”, HelpSeeker is referring to services that are not offered on reserve land by a First Nation. It is possible for a First Nation led program to be included in off-reserve listings when the program or service operates outside of reserve land. Listings include services that focus on First Nations along with Indigenous inclusive Métis and Inuit specific populations.

- From this reduced data set, we entered it into a spreadsheet to further analyze and break down which locations, programs, helplines and benefits were specifically First Nations led or Indigenous led.
- Indigenous led services encompass programs and resources that help all Indigenous populations, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

The following are some assumptions and decisions made during the systems mapping process:

- Any listing name representing a First Nation will be identified as First Nations led.
- All listings with names written in a First Nations language were researched and, in most cases, identified as either First Nations led or Indigenous led.
- If a listing was identified as First Nations led, all programs offered by the same agency are also assumed to be First Nations led.
- All Friendship Centres are Indigenous led.

If a First Nation offers a resource located off-reserve but is tied to the First Nation itself, that resource was not added to the public HelpSeeker navigation platform. First Nations Led off-reserve programs and services were found through online web searches, and included in the off-reserve systems mapping data analysis.

D. Methodology for Categorizing On and Off-Reserve Systems Mapping Data

- First Nation led: Refers to First Nations led agencies, services and programs located within one of the provinces or territories, and typically operates on First Nations land; however, this may not be the case in all circumstances.
- Indigenous led: Refers to Indigenous led agencies, services and programs located within one of the provinces or territories, and typically operates on off-reserve land and includes services specific to, or inclusive of Métis and Inuit populations in addition to First Nations and other populations.

- Location: Synonymous with agency or organization, it refers to the agency or location that the program operates from.
- Program: Is any program or service that is offered by an agency.
- Helpline: Includes traditional telephone services, chat lines and interactive websites.
- Benefits: Are typically financial and may include rent subsidies, federal income credits and vouchers.
- On-reserve: Refers to organizations, departments and programs that operate on federally reserved First Nations land. A research approach integrated the principles of OCAP® was adopted for on-reserve mapping.
- Off-reserve: refers to “locations, programs and helplines and benefits” in the systems map that are not on-reserve land.

E. Limitations to Off-Reserve Mapping

A real-time inventory of locations, programs, helplines and benefits was pulled on July 19, 2021 from the HelpSeeker database so the spreadsheet used to collect and store this information may not capture information added or changed after that date. As the claim rate of service providers and agencies who manage their own listings increases, we expect that numbers will fluctuate to reflect more accurate and up to date population and service components.

Due to the limited functionality of the data pulled, it was not possible to work with real-time data to further differentiate between Indigenous serving organizations that are First Nations led and Indigenous led within HelpSeeker systems mapping navigation system while reflecting recent changes in our HelpSeeker database. The mapping team did extensive manual work through spreadsheets and looking through agency listings individually to best determine differentiation of Indigenous led, First Nations led, or non-Indigenous led programs and services.

5. Simulation Map Tool Methodology for On-Reserve and Off-Reserve

In order to stay true to our approach to aligning with OCAP® principles, we quickly realized that the routine way of handling the systems mapping process would not suffice. Typically, for all other listings of programs and services in cities and towns, we would automatically enter the programs and services onto our public systems navigation app and desktop directory. Doing this without asking permission was out of the question for First Nations / community lands. To mitigate this, and to provide a high level visual demonstration of programs and services relating to housing and homelessness on-reserve, we decided to build a simulation map / interactive data dashboard (See Appendix Document 5.0 only available to the Assembly of First Nations [AFN] and those authorized by the AFN) to provide the data in a way that is easy to navigate and filter through. This is by no means a complete picture of the programs and services available on-reserve as a whole, as the map only describes what we were able to collect via publicly available online websites and directories.

All the information collected through the systems mapping process of on and off-reserve housing and homelessness services in Canada is available through an private online interactive Tableau dashboard that allows users to visualize the location of these services and filter by province and program or service type (housing and homelessness programs, as well as shelters and on-reserve housing departments). It also allows for the identification of the number of them that are led by First Nations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada.



Note that this online dashboard only includes Indigenous serving housing and homelessness services and programs offered by Indigenous, non-Indigenous and First Nations on and off-reserve entities across Canada.

Hence, the reserves included in this visualization are only those that were identified as providing such services rather than all existing reserves in Canada. Furthermore, as this information was primarily obtained through different online sources, the lack of publicly available information on on-reserve housing and homelessness services and programs may not be an accurate reflection of the total number of on-reserve services and programs across Canada.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & SURVEY ANALYSIS

Through the survey analysis, insights were generated using both quantitative and qualitative data. Survey participants provided us with a deeper understanding of the types of services available for their respective communities, as well as any service gaps experienced by the community. Using this information, we are able to illustrate a more detailed image of what accessibility looks like in regard to accessing social services, for both on and off-reserve First Nations community members.

Limitations

Part of the proposed strategy to this project, was an advocacy component by AFN to endorse this project to those in leadership positions. There was a missed opportunity in the AFN-hosted National First Nations Housing and Homelessness Symposium. This venue for example could have been utilized in part, for HelpSeeker to directly share efforts for the Drop In Calls, Survey and our Webinar with the target audience for this project. It is likely we would have seen a higher percentage of participation in all our activities.

While the survey provides great capability to assess service delivery in First Nations communities, there are a few western methodological limitations to be addressed. Additionally, using a western methodology of survey collection, we have chosen not to discount any responses, nor downplay any of the findings associated with our analysis.

By the end of the survey collection period, a total of 43 survey responses were generated. While being a palatable sample size, we recognize that this may not be wholly encompassing of all the different First Nations experiences throughout Canada, but still believe that the information retrieved from these surveys offer important insights into service delivery within these communities. Further, our team ensured that an optimal amount of time was allotted to survey collection (12 weeks, ranging from June 7th to August 26, 2021), and contacted about 198 First Nations and 66 Tribal Councils via email to participate in the survey.

The experiences and insights offered by each survey respondent may not necessarily capture the full social service system in their respective communities. Each survey respondent is simply one person among many in their community, and their ideas/insights are shaped by their own personal experiences and biases. We understand that First Nations people are also humble, and do not like to speak on behalf of their communities, even when they have explicit permission to do so. However, it is exactly this personal experience that is able to humanize the data collected through the survey. This approach to the insights is also in line with scholarly use of Indigenous methodologies in data collection, analysis and use of individual voices. Individual voices, no matter how few there may be, are powerful and the goal is not always the perfect “sample” but, rather, the acknowledgement that every

voice is valid and worthy to be shared.

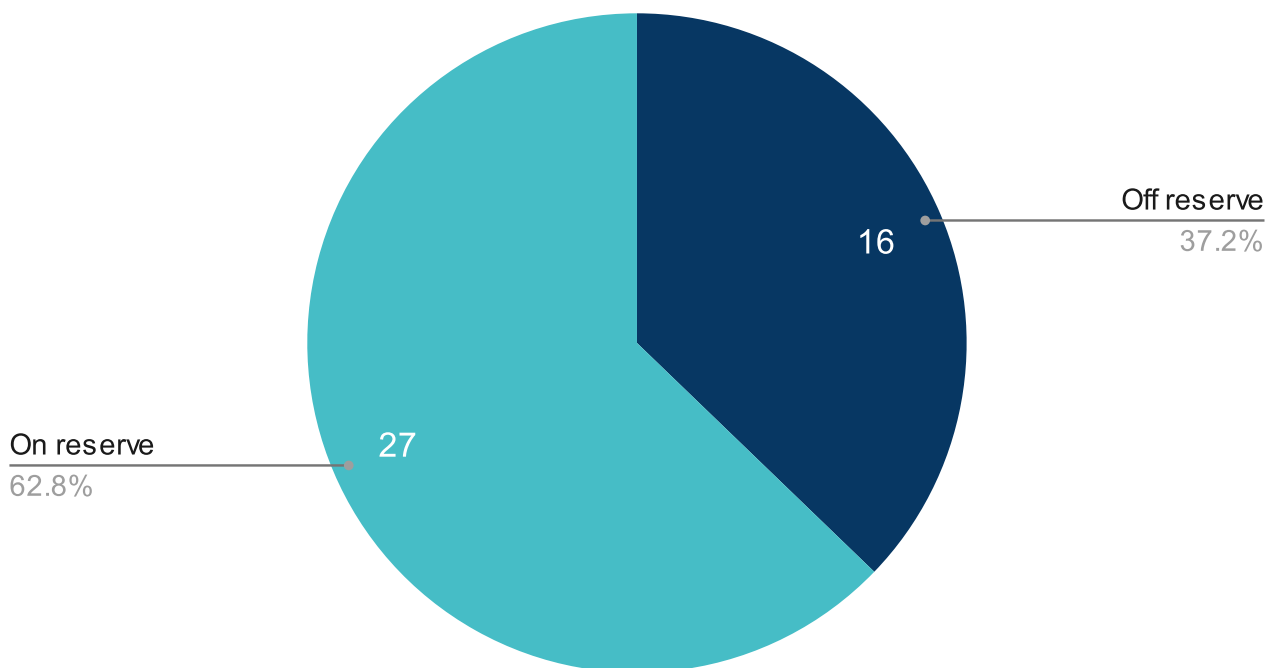
From the outset, we recognized that a survey may not be the most optimal way to reach and engage all communities since many First Nations have “research fatigue”. We knew that surveys would be a tool to support our learnings within the Drop In Calls, and perhaps fill in some of the gaps for us that were not so clear in the mapping process. The National scope of this work in the timeframe and budget, along with COVID-19 restrictions, did not allow for us to hold Circle Dialogues in person, which is our preference for community engagement. Had we had the opportunity, we would have used the survey questions as a basis of dialogue with First Nations, rather than the online survey questionnaire approach we had to take here.

Demographic Insights

At the end of the survey collection period, a total of 43 participants belonging to 36 different First Nations communities across Canada submitted a response. When asked if they are currently living on or off-reserve, it was found that the majority (63% or 27 respondents) are living on-reserve compared to 37% or 16 individuals living off-reserve (Figure 2). Three of the respondents identified themselves as nation members, not as service providers. Of the 16 respondents that identified as living off-reserve, 14 were off-reserve First Nation members, and two worked as on-reserve service providers.

Figure 2. Current place of residence (on or off-reserve).

Where do you currently live?



Service Information

In addition, this section of the report outlines the different types of services available to First Nations community members, and provides insight on how members locate services, the barriers they face when trying to access services, and how services may differ according to different personal identities.

Services offered to the community

Those who participated in the survey were asked, “As a provider of services to First Nations individuals, what kind of services do you offer?”. Figure 2A outlines the services offered according to all survey respondents, organized by the type of services most offered to those which are least offered.

Figure 2A. Services Offered.

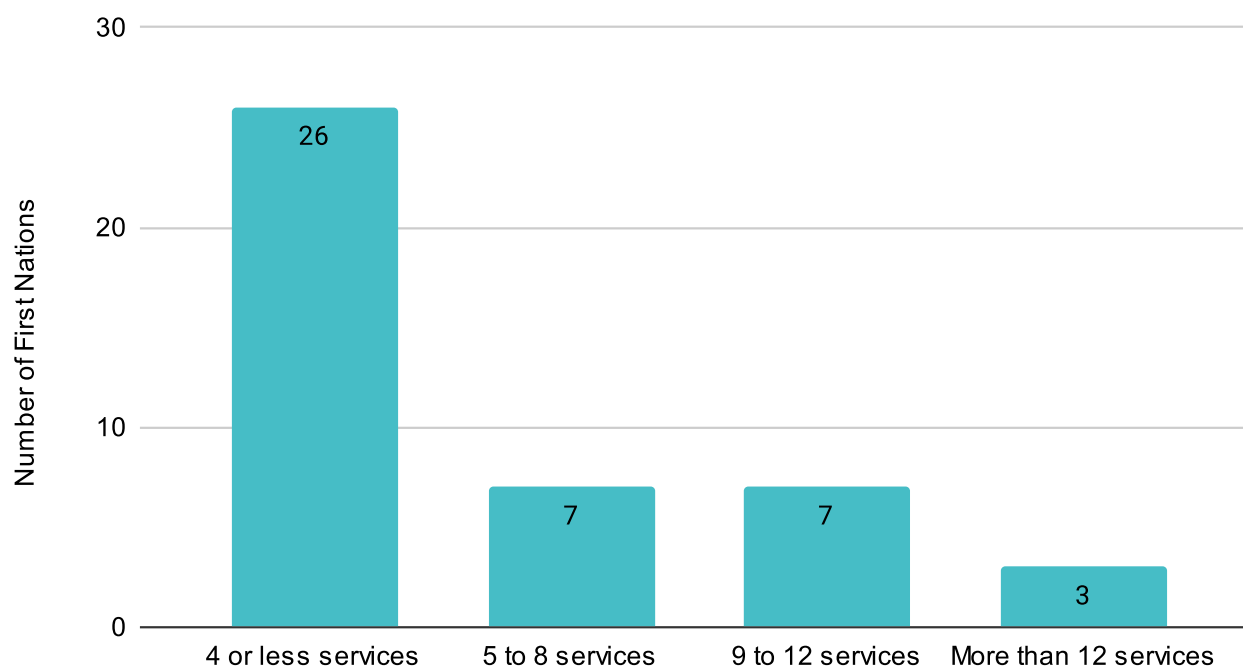


Of the 43 respondents, the most commonly reported services offered in First Nations communities were housing, mental health, and addiction support or harm reduction services, all with 20 responses each. On the opposite end of the spectrum, it is reported that peer support services (nine responses), domestic violence support (nine responses), and shelter services (seven responses) represent the type of services that First Nations communities were least likely to offer.

Of note, it is interesting that even for services which receive a greater indication of service delivery (e.g., Housing, with 20 responses), this number remains below half of the total number of survey participants. In addition, Figure 2B below indicates that 26 out of the 43 (60%) of respondents reported that their communities offer four or less of the services, out of the total 16 services listed in Figure 2A. It is evident that although social and health-related services are being offered in First Nations communities, many are also missing core and essential services, and/or do not currently have the capacity to offer services simultaneously.

Figure 2B. Gaps in Services offered in reference to Figure 2A

Number of Services Offered

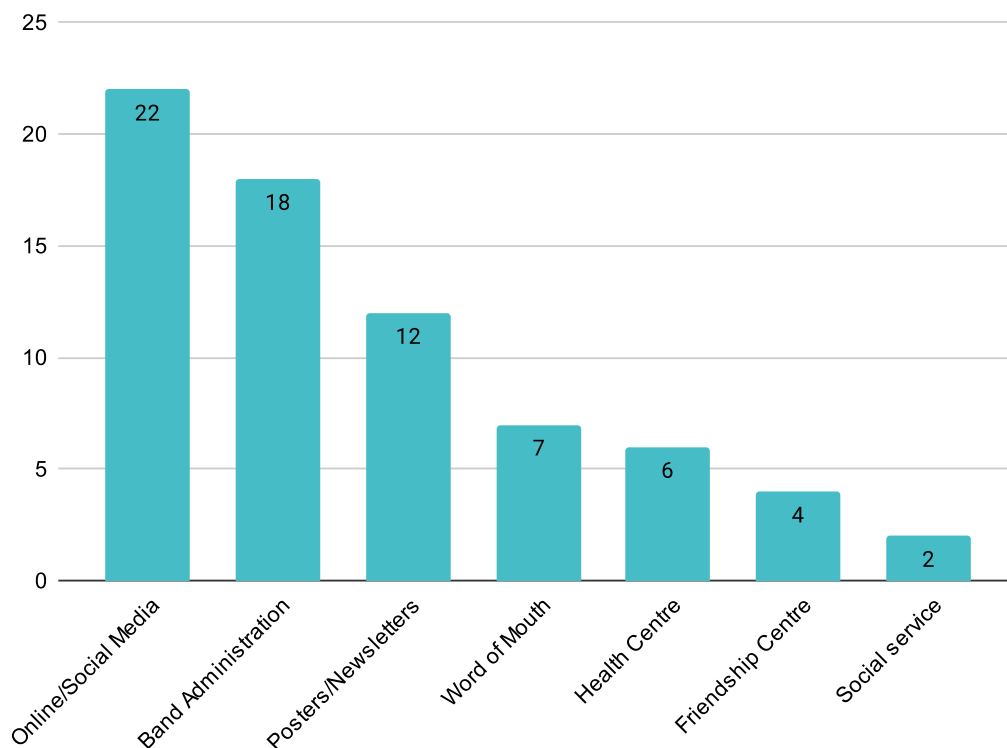


How is information found?

To assess the ways in which community members most often found information for available services, survey participants were asked, “Where do members of your First Nation look for information about the community & social services available to them?”. This question was delivered in an open response format, with the following themes emerging from the responses (Figure 2C).

Figure 2C. Themes as to how First Nations community members look for information.

How do members search for information...

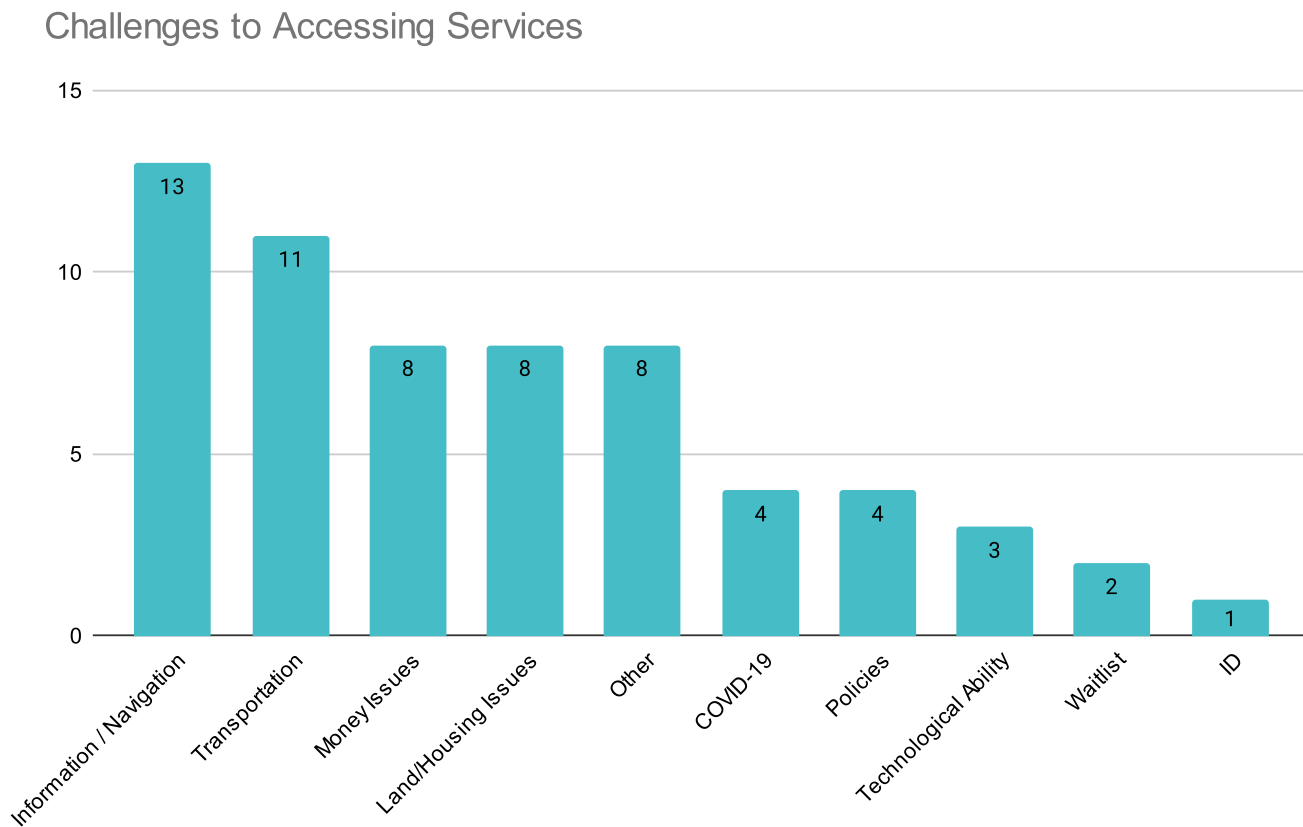


First Nations members indicate that those in their community are most likely to look for information online, through social media, through the band administration (e.g., Band offices), and/or through posters/newsletters (physically or digitally). With technology becoming more present and relevant in our daily lives, it is necessary for communities and their service providers to adapt. Additionally, it may also be the case that many feel more comfortable looking for information in spaces they feel safe in, such as band administration offices. Communities should take these results into consideration, and use them to inform future practices regarding the marketing of services and disseminating of information to their First Nations community members.

Challenges when accessing services

The following themes surfaced when participants were asked, “What challenges do members of your First Nation face in regard to accessing services?” (Figure 2D).

Figure 2D. Challenges to accessing services.



The most common challenges reported by community members included difficulties in accessing information, navigating the service ecosystem, and difficulties in accessing the appropriate transportation needed to travel to services. Other notable challenges include lack of funding to operate services, to hire staff, and limited amount of jobs available.

Housing issues were specifically described in the survey as:

- “no emergency housing”
- “off-reserve band members cannot access on-reserve housing”

- “lack of available housing”
- “limited housing opportunities”
- “No Jobs....Loss of housing...cannot pay rent...”
- “no housing available”
- “lack of housing and safe houses”
- “No adequate information on how to start a First Nations housing office”

It is known in the social service sector and validated in the past work that HelpSeeker has supported, that a lack of awareness of available and appropriate services for an individual's needs are some of the most cited challenges in the industry. Furthermore, transportation as a barrier to accessing services has been made very clear through the responses received. This may be due to living on reserve means potentially being in more remote areas requiring travel over significant distances in order to receive services or care needed. Transportation issues also include a lack of affordable options for car ownership, as well as a lack of public transportation. Lastly, it's to be kept in mind that the barriers to programs and services faced by First Nations members have been further compounded by discrimination and the past and ongoing impacts of colonialism in Canada.

Below are some direct quotes from survey participants in response to the question, *“What challenges do members of your First Nation face in regard to accessing services?”* :

- “Limited funding, administration are competing with other Nations for the same pots of funding available. Also transportation to and from access to professional care of any field, our remoteness means we either have to receive counseling virtually or travel for quality care. Economic stability is extremely challenging, no jobs, no income, families are at risk from mcfd [Ministry of Children and Family Development] and loss of homes because they cannot pay rent and/or utilities, there is so much more to add to this [...]”
- “Systems navigation & accessibility [...] there are no shared resources for the people. Everyone works in silos”
- “Not being informed on the services they require or mistrust in government run agencies.”
- “Limited a majority of the time to on-reserve, limited housing opportunities (current waitlist of 100), limited staff to client ratios, no specific programming to work with homelessness, transportation, poverty”

Inclusive Services Available

One component of the survey asked participants to identify programs and services which serve a diverse range of community members. The following types of services were identified for each sociodemographic group (Table 2E).

Table 2E. Population focus and types of services available.

SocioDemographic Group	Types of Services
2SLGBTQI+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • School clubs • Referrals • None
Living with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Government funded assistance • Home care • Referrals • Accessible rental units • None
Experiencing homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community centre access • Band office support • Emergency shelters • Social development services • Referrals • None
Experiencing mental health challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Services through Friendship Centre • Therapy • Counselling • Virtual • Nurse • Referrals
Using substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Hospital care • Community care • Counselling • Harm reduction • Referrals

SocioDemographic Group	Types of Services
Experiencing financial difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government assistance • Band office assistance • Community centre assistance • Budgeting • Financial literacy classes • None
Experiencing food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation Army • Food bank • Friendship Centre services • Food vouchers • Community food freezers • None
Experiencing abuse or domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's shelter • Counselling • Police • Health
Young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Community centre services • Outreach • Clubs • Youth centres • Youth shelters • Support workers • None
Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder programs/groups/committees • Friendship centre services • Health and wellness • Community care • Home support • Food support • Mental health support • Housing support

Through the responses received, it was quite clear that many Nations provide support and services to a variety of socio-demographic groups in their communities. It was found that resources included a mix of on and off-reserve programming, which varied by each Nation. However, the extent to which these services provide support or how generalized these services may be are unknown. Additionally, there were some responses which alluded to either a lack

of knowledge regarding the existence of programs for a specific socio-demographic group, or an indication that there were no programs in the Nation which served a particular socio-demographic group. Overall, there does seem to be a presence of inclusive and safe programs and services for all members of the community.

Resources for members living away from their First Nation

When asked the open ended question, *“What programs, services, or resources do you provide for your members living away from the First Nation?”* The most common resources indicated were funding-related services such as emergency medical funds, funding towards education/training, and general allowances for students. Additionally, there were eight responses that indicated they were not sure or did not know what was offered to off-reserve members. Five responses stated very little, limited or not much is offered for off-reserve band members, and three people responded that there was nothing offered for people living off-reserve.

Other prominent themes which were brought up include those related to referral and advocacy, and education/training. Health, food, and cultural-related services were also present, as well as some participants indicating their community provides the same amount of resources to both off and onreserve members.

However, the message that was iterated most frequently was that First Nations communities report either no or highly limited services to their off-reserve members. Although insight was not provided as to why this may be the case, we can assume that funding may be directed to programs and services which prioritize on-reserve community members, and programs and services for off-reserve members are lacking or non-existent. Another fair assumption that could be made is funding is limited, and Nations are under-resourced to create these service structures.

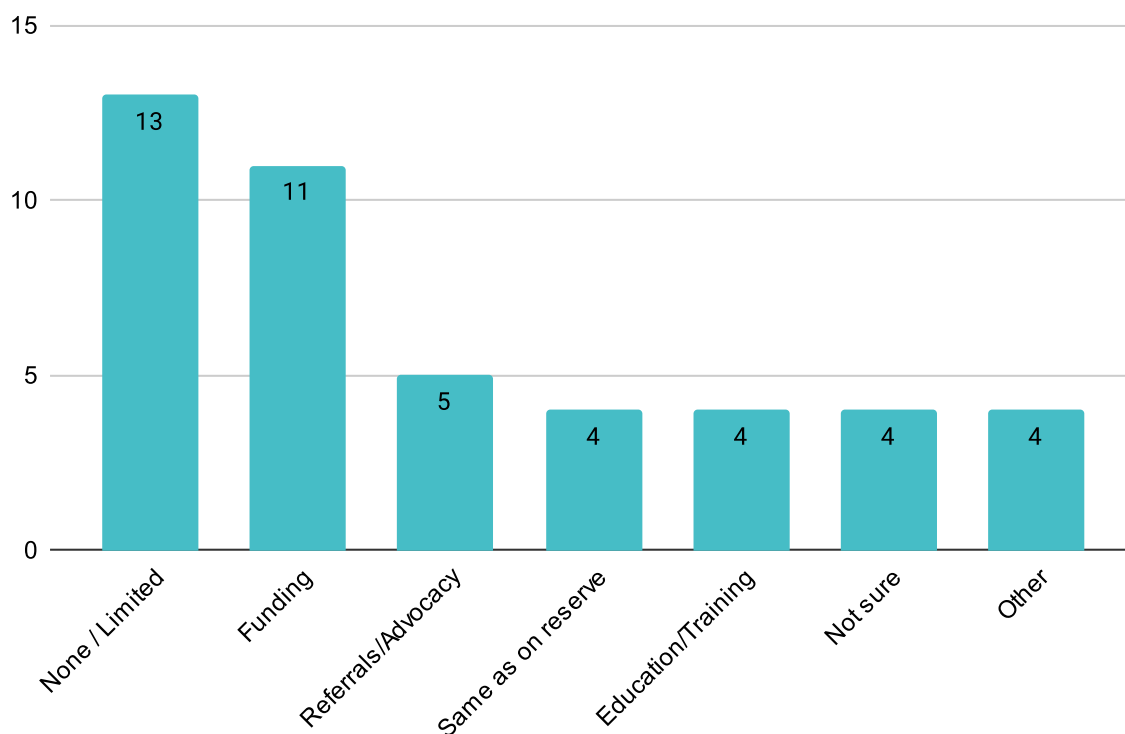
From understanding based on working with urban First Nations members that live away from their home communities, the consensus is that the jurisdictional contradictions of living in a municipality where that level of government is expected to care for its citizens in need is a common cause for confusion. This is displayed, and shown in survey responses as on-reserve service providers are likely to refer their off-reserve band members to access services and resources in their local jurisdiction, rather than provide them directly from the Nation. While this may be the case, there is a rights based obligation for First Nation governments to care for their citizens no matter where they reside. In particular since those members are on band registration, the Nation often receives transfers from the Federal government to support some programs and services.

It is worth pointing out that in the “challenges to accessing services” section (located earlier in this report) housing, emergency housing and shelters were lacking on-reserve. In this case, it may be safe to assume most First Nations lack the adequate resources and service structures to provide housing and homelessness specific services off-reserve, if they struggle to offer them on-reserve.

There are instances that we discovered in our mapping where First Nations lead initiatives and deliver services to their members exclusively off-reserve, though this is often easier, and seen with Nations that are in close proximity to an urban center.

Figure 2F. Services for off-reserve First Nations members.

Services for Off-Reserve Members



Below are some direct quotes from survey participants in response to the question, “What programs, services, or resources do you provide for your members living away from the First Nation?” :

- “Limited support through band requests. Try to assist finding programs that can assist off-reserve band members. Health centre does assist where they can but it is limited. updates to members via social media and newsletters informing them of available resources and programs.”

- “At present not enough, post-secondary funding, gift cards for food, annual royalty distribution, small one time funding for emergencies.”
- “Not much really, community members are throughout Ontario, large geographic area to provide supports”

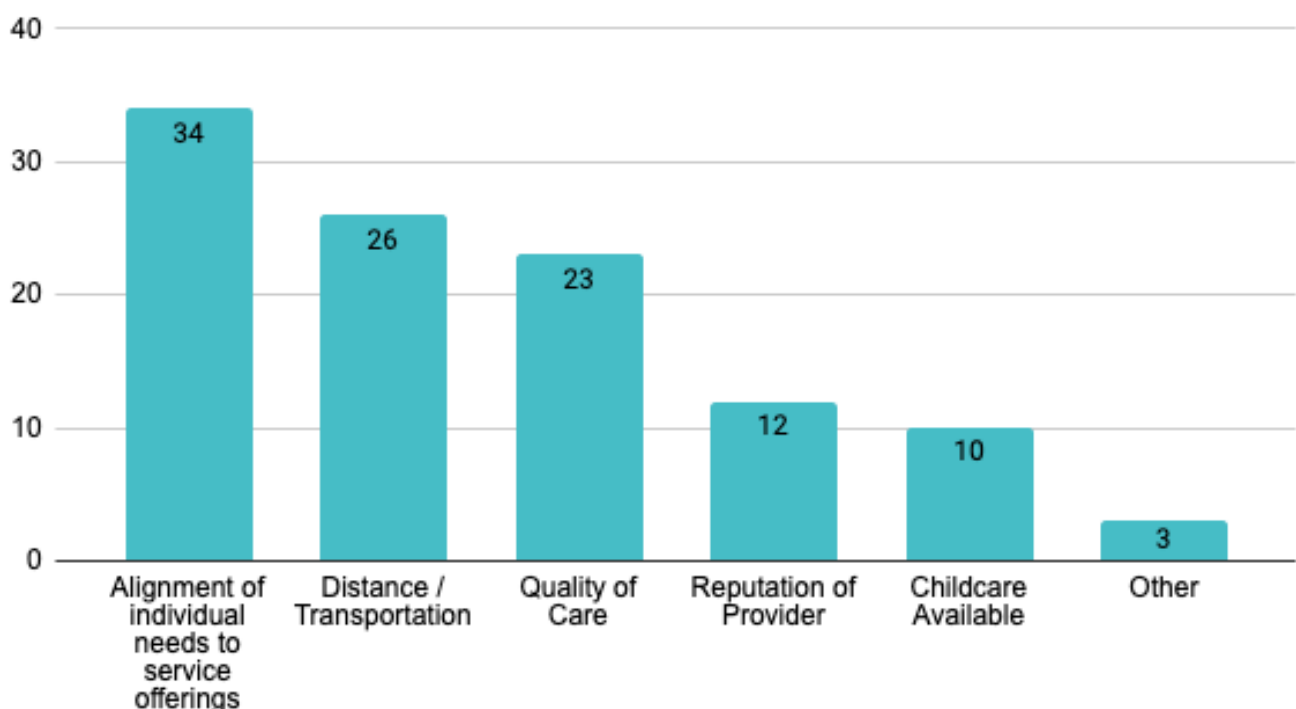
Considerations when making referrals

Among a pre-identified list of factors, participants were to select the top 3 factors they take into consideration when referring a community member who is at risk/experiencing homelessness to a community or social service.

It was found that the factors which were most often chosen to be among the top 3 included: Alignment of individual needs to service offerings (34 indications), Distance/transportation (26 indications), and Quality of care (23 indications). It can be assumed that individualized care is an important aspect of social services for First Nations communities.

Figure 2G. Factors to consider when referring community members.

What factors do you consider when referring...



Additionally, distance/transportation has been made apparent again as an important consideration when accessing services for First Nations communities. This echoes what was seen in a previous section where distance and transportation were indicated as one of the top challenges in accessing care for First Nations community members. The potential remoteness of on-reserve communities makes distance and transportation a key consideration when planning for the types and location of assistance communities offer their members, as community members may not have a safe and reliable mode of transportation to assist them in accessing the service.

All survey responses can be found in the appendix documents 1.01 and 1.02

DROP IN CALLS

Drop In Calls, a form of community engagement, later named 'Interactive Info Sessions' were conducted from the end of June 2021 to the middle of August 2021. During the sessions, HelpSeeker shared the scope of this project and its desire to learn about First Nations' social and housing infrastructure in relation to on-reserve housing and homelessness. 16 total community stories were collected from mostly on-reserve service providers and Nation members. Two attendees were First Nation members living off-reserve and one was a Métis service provider at a Native Friendship Centre location who had much to say about the Indigenous housing and homelessness situation in the town she works and resides. Of the 16 total communities, 15 were on-reserve, and one was a Friendship Centre located in a small town surrounded by many First Nations reserves.

Qualitative data emerging from the Drop In Calls was unique between communities; however, many common themes were present. Housing and infrastructure is handled differently between First Nations. Some First Nations have more economic resources than others, some have unique service delivery, and most lack the resources and ability to develop and maintain current infrastructure, some more seriously than others.

There is a high ratio of First Nation members to available and adequate housing, which is alarming in many respects. Every community reported overcrowding in homes and two to over ten year waitlists for housing, including long waitlists for repairs and maintenance to housing. The common theme of couch surfing and hidden homelessness on-reserve was prevalent in every session, except one community (highlighted in a case study below) that had highly visible homelessness.

While we have provided all of the summary discussions from our Drop In Calls in the appendix 2.2, we would like to share this particular case study from a community in Ontario as it really impacted our team in a profound way.

One Ontario First Nation member reported their reserve has little to no social infrastructure leading to prevalent social and economic issues including, but not limited to, highly visible extreme homelessness, tent cities, lack of sufficient homeless support ranging from emergency, short term and long term. Also discussed were the high rates of addiction issues amongst community members, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of available skills training.

Another key issue described and heard in other sessions was the extreme levels of racism and discrimination experienced in their neighboring urban centre. It was shared that this had prevented the First Nations community members from feeling safe, and they felt unwelcome to access services in their local town. The bordering town of one Nation was described as “the racist capital of Canada”. Of particular note in this region was that it had the highest percapita of residential schools in Canada, revealing a deeply rooted systemic issue.

While this particular First Nation does have a housing and infrastructure department, it cannot meet the needs of the community sufficiently. When presented with the case study of “Kyle”, who moves back in with his family on his reserve after being laid off from the workforce, the participant questioned and made the direct quote, “why would he move back here? We have nothing.” The participant shared that in her opinion, he would be better off living on income support in the town or urban centre he was previously living in, and tapping into local support and resources there, since the reserve had nothing to offer for support to help him create a sense of self-efficacy and independence.

This case study has highlighted how incredibly important it is to address the unique needs of each community, which will take time, strategic insight, resources and collaboration with honouring each community as sovereign Nations to meet their direct needs. Reconciliation and relationship building with their nearby off-reserve urban centres will also take time and careful consideration.

Another case study to highlight the opposite end of the spectrum is the Enoch Cree Nation.

Glori Sharphead, a Nation member and Coordinator of Enoch’s Social Housing program

joined our Alberta Drop In Call and consented to share her name and snapshot of what social programming related to housing and homelessness currently looks like on her Nation. Enoch has a notable service mix that supports Nation members. Population wise, the Nation has approximately 2794 Band members, 1839 living on-reserve and 955 living off-reserve.

Enoch is unique in the fact that it is situated close to the City of Edmonton and that, as a Nation, it is experiencing economic growth. Although it has higher access to capital than many reserves across Canada, Enoch still experiences difficulties in providing enough adequate housing to meet its Nation's needs. They have significant infrastructure for Nation housing, repairs, and transitional housing in response to harm reduction. Yet, as reported by Glori, there are still significant "years long" waitlists for permanent housing as well as their apartment building with over 130 units for singles and small families.

Enoch does not have an emergency shelter on-reserve, and would refer members to Edmonton shelter services. However, in response to harm reduction, they offer transitional housing and have six units for up to six months (sometimes longer) for Nation members experiencing mental health or addiction issues to mitigate and support harm reduction. Also available are nine units that support those at risk of being homeless and/or exiting treatment facilities or incarceration. Glori shared with us that there are also long waitlists for these transitional housing supports.

What is impressive about Enoch is their array of programs and services, referral processes and partnerships with Edmonton service providers. Glori made a statement, "It's not perfect, but we are trying". She discussed how Enoch is setting up a coordinated access system between the different divisions of services and is working to fill gaps.

When Glori was introduced to the HelpSeeker Navigation App, she was so excited to share it across her networks and get her Nation involved in systems mapping. She wanted to share it with Nation members and colleagues because the catalog of programs and services in Edmonton would be very useful for members and Nation service providers to discover support nearby.

By sharing these two case studies side by side, it demonstrates their contrast and similarities. Both communities border an urban centre and have the need for (and not limited to) addictions, mental health, housing and homelessness support services. The second case study (Enoch) has programs and services in place, yet the need still outweighs the capacity. Conversely, in the first

case study, without any services in place, and with poor relationships with their nearby urban centre, homelessness is more visible than hidden and addiction issues were described as more volatile. A lack of services on-reserve and lack of safety and trust in accessing off-reserve services leaves their Nation members in vulnerable and precarious situations.

Enoch Cree Nation has created a service structure to address on-reserve homelessness, addiction, treatment, and offers culturally appropriate programming to support their Nation members. However, they are still experiencing challenges in meeting the need and demand for housing and homelessness supports on and off-reserve. Addiction and complex social issues such as members leaving incarceration, treatment, or experiencing domestic violence are still prevalent risk factors for homelessness. Although programs are in place, the need is still greater than the capacity, resulting in continuous wait lists for short term housing, transitional housing or long term housing.

Enoch as a case study highlights a Nation that is creating a strong service structure and positive partnerships which can be perceived as organized coordinated access to services both on and offreserve. A future area of inquiry might be to dive deeper into their social structure as a whole to discover what successes their programs have produced while supporting their members and mitigating the risk homelessness. This is a Nation with a service model that other First Nations may wish to analyze and consider while drawing upon conclusions based on their unique needs.

Components for consideration in any social service delivery model, including that of Enoch's, include:

- **Service Inventory:** What programs and services exist for housing, transitional housing, and homelessness support? What is the capacity and occupancy of these programs and services compared to the anticipated demand?
- **Funding Sustainability:** Is there a sustainable source of funding for these programs and services? How has funding changed over time? What is the operating budget for such programs and services?
- **Delivery Model:** What frameworks, strategies, and staffing requirements exist for delivering programs and services?
- **Growth Plan:** How will the delivery model identify and respond to changing needs in the community? How is learning & continuous improvement built into the model?

Visit Appendix (2.2) to review summaries of all communities that participated

Drop In Calls: Themes and Recommendations:

- Overcrowding in homes:
 - Develop a model to create on-reserve PiT data to assess the current state of hidden homelessness on reserve
- Relationship building and high levels of reconciliation efforts with nearby towns and cities:
 - Relationships with neighboring off-reserve urban centres in some case studies were good, and there was described comfortability to refer members to off-reserve programs and services
 - In other case studies, these off-reserve community relationships were described as non-existent with experiences of racism and discrimination representing a barrier towards access
- Building more cases for funding by calculating housing availability vs total population:
 - Compare total community population to on-reserve housing availability
 - In some cases Nations only have housing for 10% or less of their total population
 - ◊ This is further dissected blow in the **discussion point**, citing case study number 14 from appendix 2.2
- Assess on-reserve service structure related to housing, homelessness and broader support for well-being, as well as components of social service delivery models as discussed above
- First Nations may consider the HelpSeeker Platform as an aligned data mechanism to enter on-reserve programs and services to create accessibility and data sets that recognize gaps, strengths, duplication and service mix
- Develop mechanisms to support Nation members who want to return to their communities and create a home in their community and mitigate the risks of members from experiencing hidden homelessness
- Create opportunities for members on or off-reserve to participate in and learn their language, culture, stories, histories, and to increase their sense of belonging and identity

Discussion Point:

Reviewing the case studies and drawing connections to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' (COH) literature review, it is worth highlighting the Indigenous world view of homelessness and "types of homelessness". Extracted from their draft report is this section of their literature review:

"Indigenous homelessness is defined by the Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness (ASCHH) (2012) as individuals, families, or communities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who lack secure, permanent, suitable housing, or the imminent possibility, means, or capacity to get such accommodation. Thus, indigenous homelessness is not characterized as a lack of residence structure, as the usual colonialist definition implies (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017). Instead,³ Indigenous homelessness is more completely articulated and comprehended with an Indigenous worldview lens (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017). Individuals, families, and communities who have been cut off from their connections to land, water, place, family, kin, social networks, animals, cultures, languages, and identities are among them (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017).

Importantly, Indigenous individuals experiencing various types of homelessness cannot reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships on a cultural, spiritual, emotional, or physical level (ASCHH, 2012; Thistle, 2017). Growing literature asserts that Indigenous homelessness is a product of a breakdown of healthy Indigenous relationships brought to bear by historic processes of colonization, such as land displacements, disconnection from identity, loss of cultures, linguicide, domicide, and a loss of Indigenous cosmology, among others. For instance, departing from a settler definition that describes home as a fixed, physical structure, select First Nations in southern Alberta find a mobile lifestyle more closely reflects traditional life customary to Indigenous people in the prairies (Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016).

Furthermore, It is within this context that mobility emerges as an important channel of spiritual renewal, of (re)asserting territorial sovereignty, and of ensuring economic reproduction. It is also within this context that ideas such as mobility, home, and land have arguably taken on different meanings. Thistle (2017) suggests that "...Indigenous homelessness [...] is best understood as the outcome of historically constructed and ongoing settler colonization and racism that have dispossessed and dispossessed First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors and stories" (p. 6).

It is important to acknowledge that many communities will not retain members on-reserve. There is a common theme within all of the housing systems on-reserve in their current state is by default, designed to push members out, not bring them in. Looking at housing availability vs. total community population produces the conclusion that a significant number of community members will and are experiencing a deep loss of connection to their communities, family structure, culture, language, and identity.

For example, it is common for a First Nations to be able to only accommodate somewhere between 30% to 60% of their actual on-reserve population. When considering off-reserve population, in some cases, over 60% of members live off-reserve. This brings the total capacity to accommodate all Nation members to sometimes under 20%. These are approximate figures that would be worth exploring further in the future. This example is to show the lack of capacity to accommodate all First Nation's band members, making it difficult for off-reserve band members to return home to their communities.

Additional example, citing case study number 14 in appendix 2.2:

- 220 homes, for over 650 band members on-reserve
- 1,950 members live off-reserve
- 33% of on-reserve Nation members have housing
- Only 8.5% of all Nation members have on-reserve housing

These calculations do not consider the size of homes / capacity of adequate ratio of members per household. It is worth noting that in this real life case study there is confirmed overcrowding on this Nation.

In connection to the case studies and the Indigenous view of types of homelessness as discussed in this section of the COH's literature review, it is important to capture the fact that most of our communities in their current state lack full capacity to negate the many negative effects of colonialism.

To create a physical and emotional connection to “home,” there is much work to be done on a national scale.

There is no linear path forward or one-size-fits-all solution. Yet it is evident that collectively, Nation members on and off-reserve face common experiences in relation to physical homelessness, and within an Indigenous worldview sense of homelessness; with a loss in culture, language, identity, land connection, and for many loss of community.

SIMULATION MAP TOOL

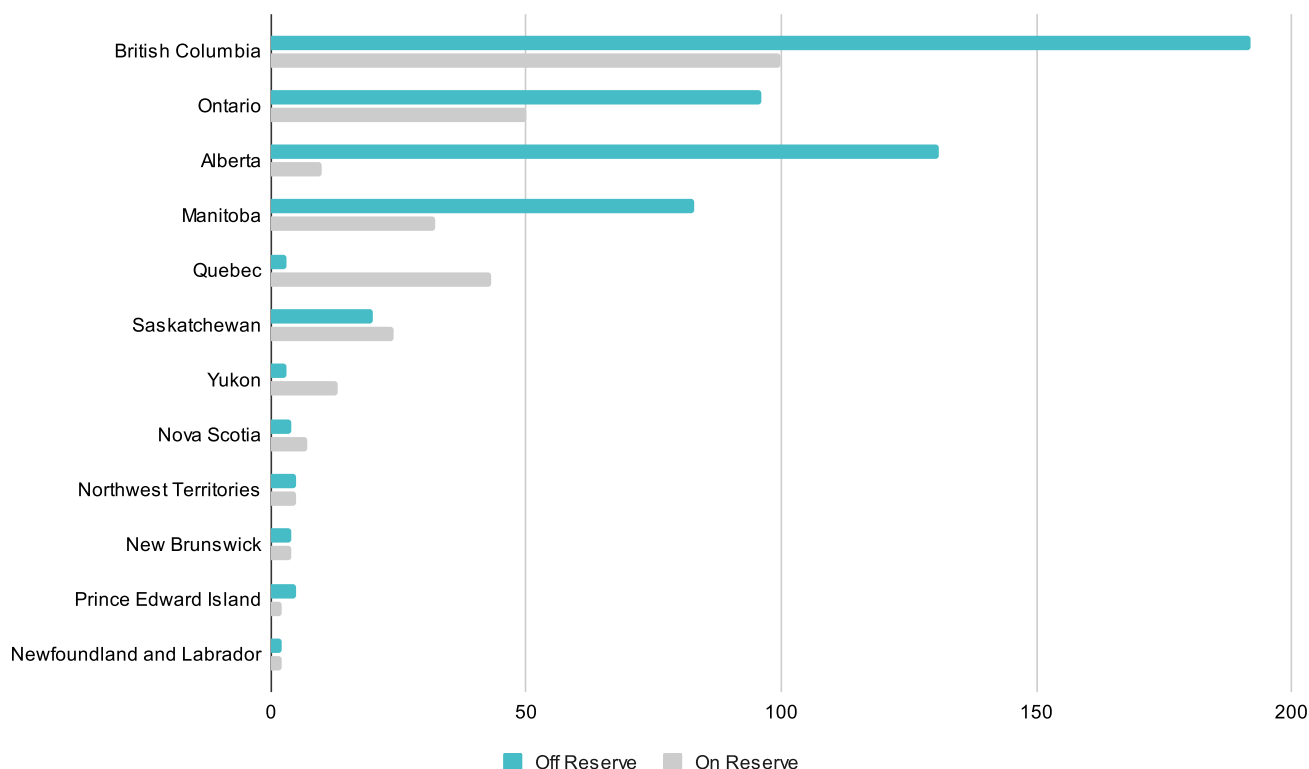
This interactive dashboard⁴ allows users to visualize on an online page the number of housing and homelessness-related services available for Indigenous populations across Canada. In particular, this tool allows for the identification of housing and homelessness programs/services, shelters and housing departments⁵ located on and off-reserve by province. It also outlines the number of programs/services that are led by First Nations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada.



In total, 840 housing and homelessness services were identified across Canada, the majority of which (548 services, representing 65% of all services) were found in off-reserve locations and over one-third (292 services, representing 35% of all services) were found in on-reserve settings. Of the total number of services identified, 221 services (26%) are Indigenous led, 314 services (37%) are led by First Nations, and 305 services (36%) classified as non-Indigenous led.

	On-Reserve	Off-Reserve	Total
Indigenous led	0	221	221
First Nations led	293	22	315
Non-Indigenous led	0	305	305
Total	293	548	841

In terms of the distribution of these services by province, British Columbia is the province with the majority of housing and homelessness services available to the Indigenous population in Canada (with 292 services in the province, representing 35% of all housing and homelessness services in Canada). Services located in Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba (402 services in total across all 3 provinces) account for 48% of the total services available in the country. Of note is that, when compared to the other provinces and territories, Quebec, Yukon, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan are the provinces with more housing and homelessness services available at on-reserve locations than off-reserve locations with 93% of Quebec services, 81% of Yukon services, 64% of Nova Scotia services, and 55% of Saskatchewan services being on-reserve.

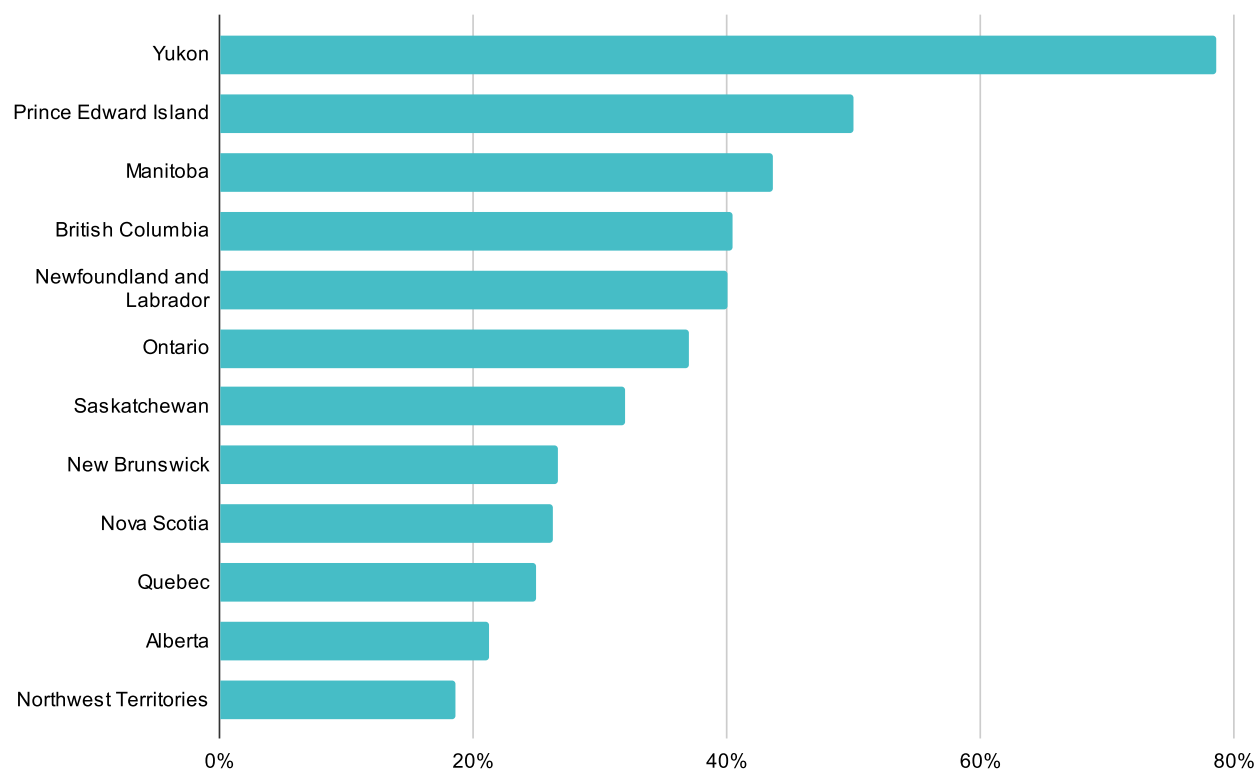


Graph 3B. Provincial Distribution

Of note, out of the 646 reserves found in our systems mapping process⁶, only 229 (35%) were identified as providing housing and homelessness related services. As outlined in the chart below, Yukon is the territory with the highest proportion of existing reserves with housing and homelessness-related services as 79% (or 14 reserves) identified in the Yukon Territory provides at least one of such services.

It is suspected the identified high proportion of housing and homelessness related services in the Yukon Territory could be due to more readily available, up-to-date information available. Alternatively, it could have to do with the Yukon's First Nations capacity for self government which impacts their ability to offer services. This is a good indicator of a need for further exploration and inquiry towards this finding.

In provinces and territories for which the proportion of on-reserve housing and homelessness-related service is lower, suggests a gap in the provision of such services in on-reserve settings and a reliance on services offered in off-reserve locations for those in need of housing and homelessness services within the Indigenous communities.



Graph 3C. Service mix percentages

Looking at the focus of these housing and homelessness services in Canada, while most of them (680 services, representing 81% of all services in Canada) focus only on one type of service (either shelter, housing, homelessness or a Housing/Infrastructure Department), 19% (157) of them provide more than one service focus both at on and off-reserve locations.

As shown in the table below, most of these services focus on housing needs (39% or 398 services) and supporting those experiencing homelessness (32% or 326 services). Additionally, it is found that these services are for the most part offered at off-reserve locations.

Note that shelter has been made its own distinct category as in doing so, this allows for us to demonstrate exactly how many Indigenous serving shelters found that are located on and off-reserve. Further, separating housing-focused and homeless-focused programs and services was done as “housing” may not necessarily imply the provision of physical housing, but rather can also include services such as maintenance and repair. Lastly, it is possible for listings to be tagged under multiple categories.

Table 3D. On & Off- Reserve Distribution of identified Services

	On-Reserve	Off-Reserve	Total
Shelter	16	84	100
Housing	79	319	398
Homeless	1	325	326
Housing/Infrastructure Department	202	0	202
Total	298	728	1,026

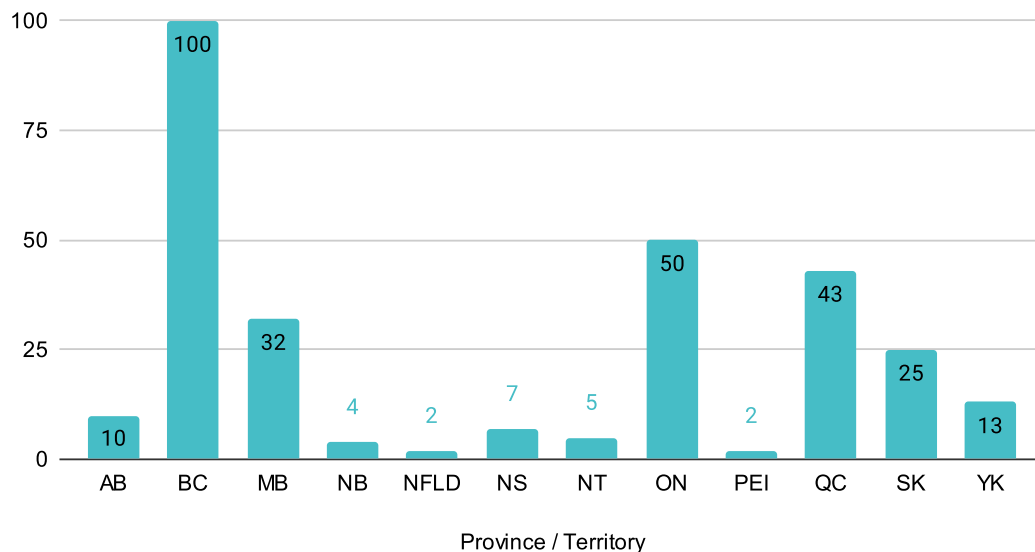
ON-RESERVE MAPPING INSIGHTS

The dashboard includes 229 First Nations across Canada that have been identified as having information specific to housing and/or homelessness. Among these 229 Nations, a total of 293 listings have been mapped. These services include general housing, transitional housing, supportive housing, shelters, homeless supports as well as any housing infrastructure departments located on First Nations reserve land.

Regional Breakdown

The graph below (Figure 4A) presents the distribution of listings across Canada according to each province and territory. British Columbia (100 listings), Ontario (50 listings), and Québec (43 listings) were found to be the regions with most listings, while Prince Edward Island (2 listings) and Newfoundland and Labrador (2 listings) were found to have the fewest. Again, this only provides a snapshot of the listings found as of July 19, 2021, and publicly available information is subject to updates.

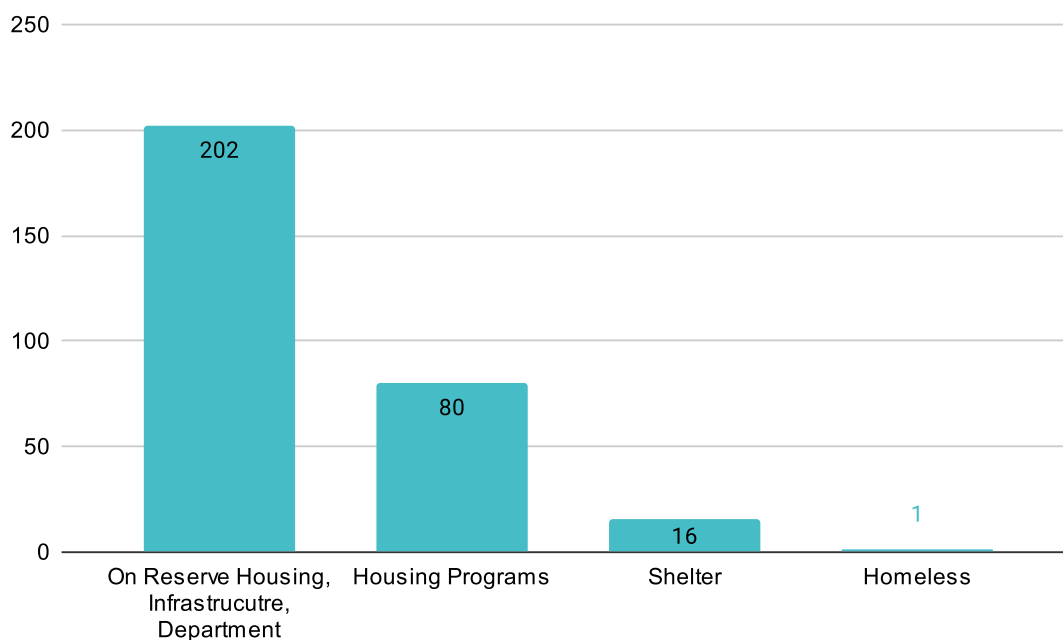
Figure 4A. Provincial breakdown of on-reserve listings for housing and homelessness



Distribution of Tags

Among the 293 listings, a total of 202 are tagged for having some type of on-reserve housing service, housing infrastructure resource, or housing department. Further, it was found that 78 listings were tagged for housing programs (which encompass general housing, transitional housing as well as supportive housing programs and services), 16 listings were tagged for shelter, and one listing was tagged under homeless (Figure 4B).

Figure 4B. Distribution of tags (On-reserve)



Through these findings, it appears that although many Nations offer some form of housing support, this support is typically delivered through services such as housing maintenance, financial assistance, and help towards obtaining on-reserve housing. On the other hand, shelter services and services with a focus on serving those experiencing homelessness appear to be less prevalent in First Nations communities compared to general housing services.

OFF-RESERVE MAPPING INSIGHTS

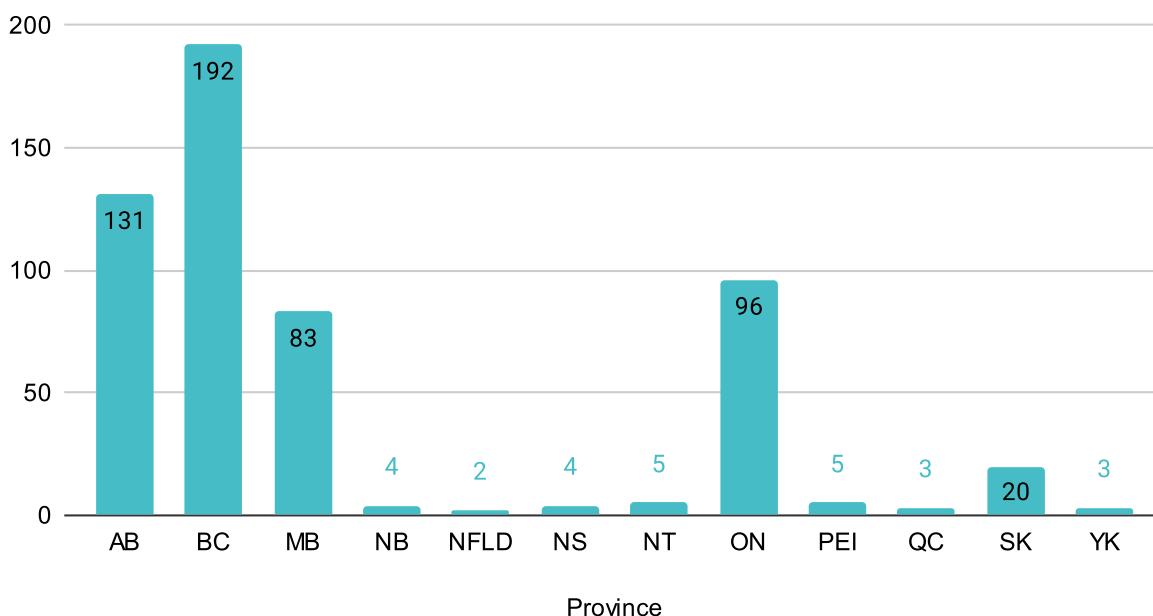
The off-reserve mapping illustrates all Indigenous serving housing and homelessness services across Canada. A total of 548 listings were identified making up 508 programs, 32 benefits, and 8 helplines.

Regional Breakdown

As with on-reserve listings, British Columbia (192 listings) was found to have the greatest number of off-reserve, Indigenous serving listings with a focus on housing and homelessness. Following British Columbia is Alberta with 131 listings and Ontario with 96 listings. Newfoundland and Labrador had two listings, Québec three listings, and in the Yukon Territory three listings were identified (these provinces had the smallest amount of listings).

Figure 4C. Provincial breakdown of off-reserve listings

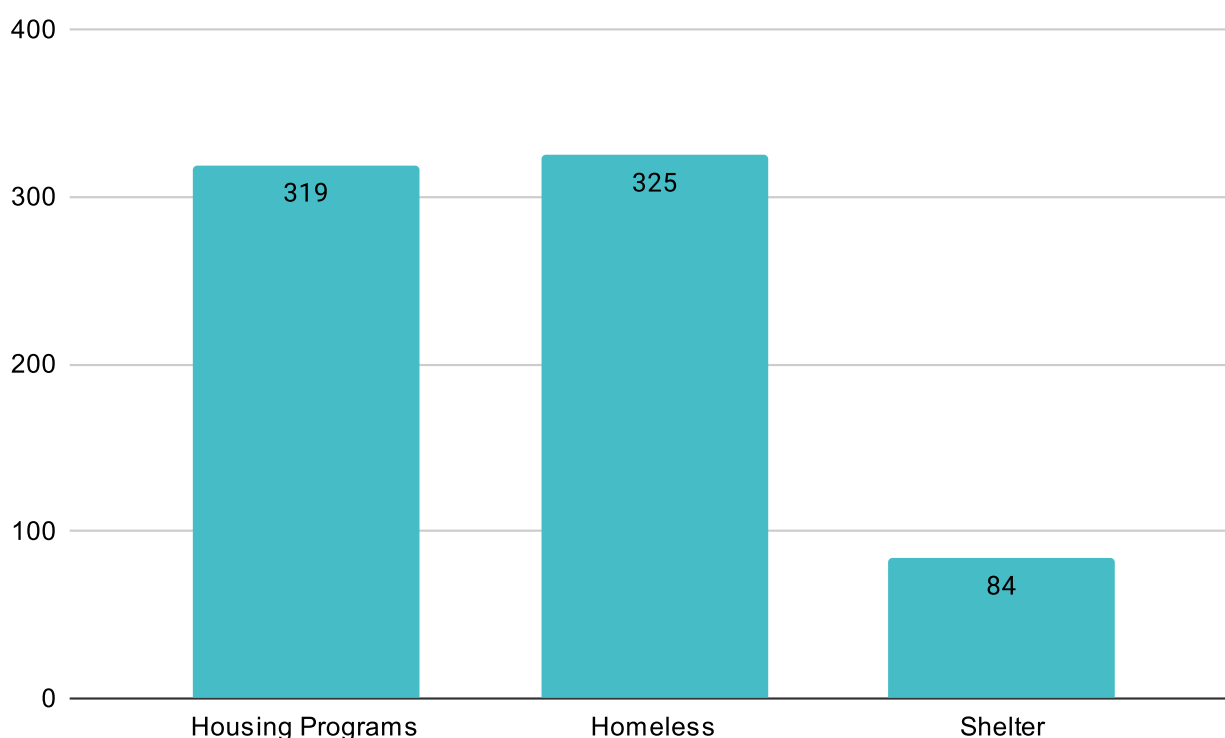
Regional Breakdown – Off Reserve



Distribution of Tags

Of the 548 listings, 319 are tagged for housing programs (including transitional and supportive housing), 325 are tagged for serving individuals experiencing homelessness, and 84 are tagged for offering shelter-related support (Figure 4D). Of note, seven listings are tagged for all three categories (shelter, homeless, and housing programs).⁷

Figure 4D. Distribution of tags (off-reserve).



A Closer Look: Regional Distribution

The graph below (Figure 4E) shows the distribution of tags for off-reserve listings within each province. Tags are represented as the percentage of listings that each specific tag accounts for out of all Indigenous serving housing and homelessness listings (programs, benefits, helplines). Figure 4F also outlines the same information using the actual count of listings under each tag per province/territory.

Figure 4E. Regional distribution of off-reserve listing tags

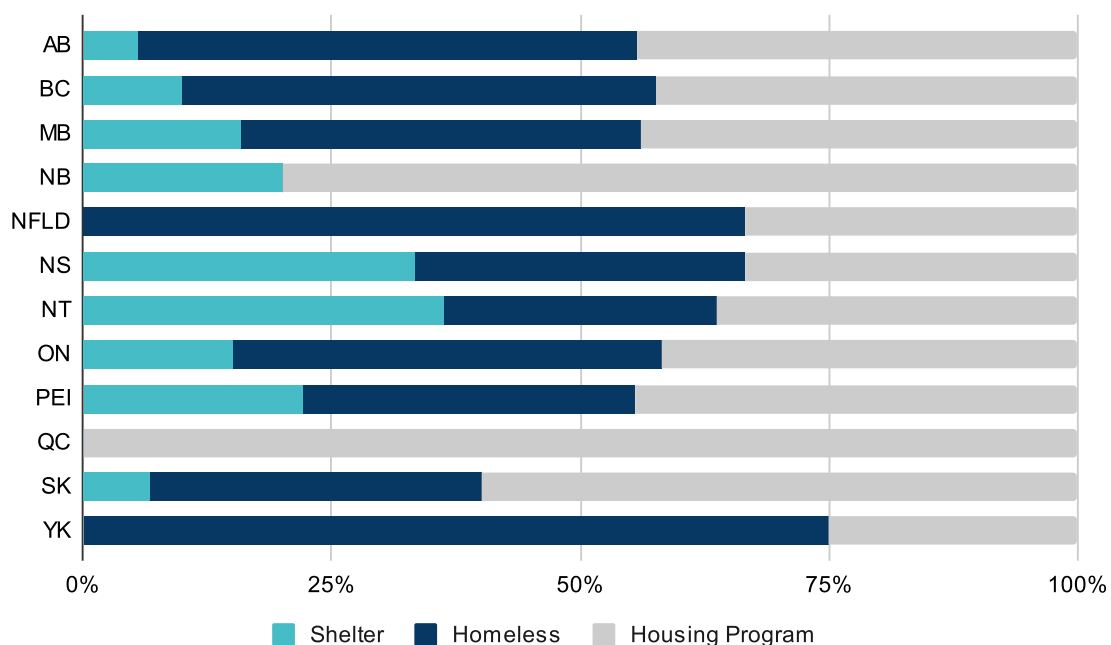


Table 4F. Regional distribution of off-reserve listing tags

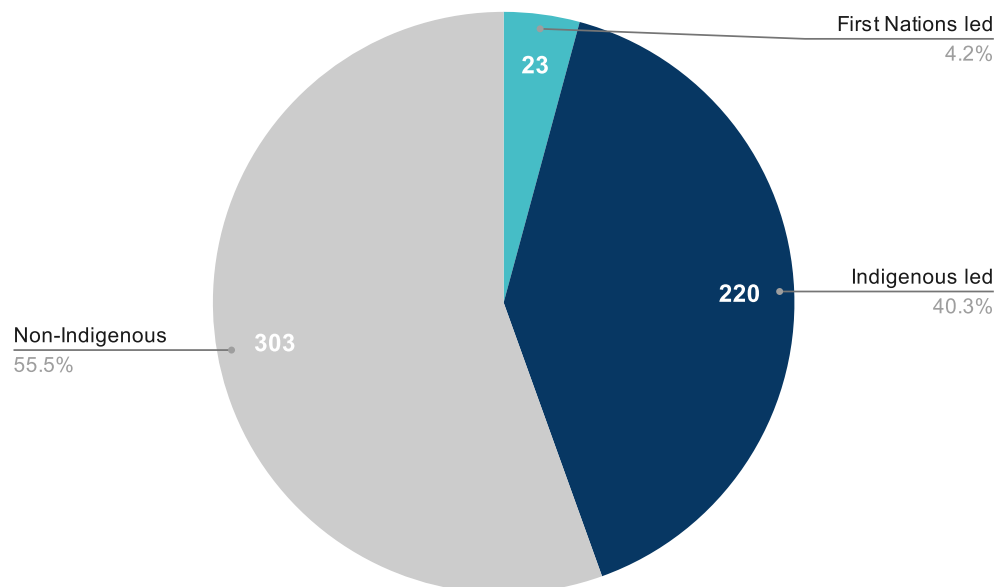
Province	Shelter	Homeless	Housing Program
AB	9	79	70
BC	25	119	106
MB	17	43	47
NB	1	0	4
NFLD	0	2	1
NS	3	3	3
NT	4	3	4
ON	21	60	58
PEI	2	3	4
QC	0	0	3
SK	2	10	18
YK	0	3	1
Total	84	325	319

The information presented above shows that listings tagged as “Homeless” and listings tagged as “Housing Program” are distributed in similar proportions across all regions. Additionally, listings tagged for “Shelter” were primarily located in BC, ON, and MB. However, large discrepancies exist in regard to the distribution of listings across all regions as some regions are found to have limited services in comparison to others.

Who is Leading These Listings?

Figure 4G outlines the distribution of off-reserve First Nations led, Indigenous led, and Non-Indigenous led listings. About 55% of the Indigenous serving listings identified in our mapping for off-reserve listings were found to be Non-Indigenous led, while 40% were Indigenous led. Only 4% of the listings identified appeared to be First Nations led.⁸

Figure 4G. Leadership of listings.



Interestingly, while these listings are all Indigenous serving, a significant number of listings are Non-Indigenous led. It may just be that many of these Non-Indigenous led listings are services that cater to the general population, or simply have a broader focus that includes serving people of Indigenous identity. Additionally, the small number of First Nations led listings found may indicate a recommendation for more First Nations specific off-reserve services for their specific band members. To achieve this recommendation, resourcing and capacity may need to be further developed or increased.

Regardless, it is essential that cultural representation is a core component embedded into service delivery for Indigenous people off-reserve programs and services, as creating safe spaces for Indigenous and First Nations community members is crucial to improving social outcomes such as obtaining employment, safe and affordable housing, education, and an increased sense of belonging within the community.

A Closer Look: Regional Distribution

A further breakdown regarding listings that are First Nations led, Indigenous or Non-Indigenous led by region is presented in Figure 4K and Table 4L. The distribution within regions follows the proportions outlined nationally, with the majority of off-reserve listings being Non-Indigenous led followed by Indigenous led. For regions with fewer mapped listings, it appears that housing and homelessness programs and services are typically Non-Indigenous led.

Figure 4K. Provincial breakdown of leadership of listings

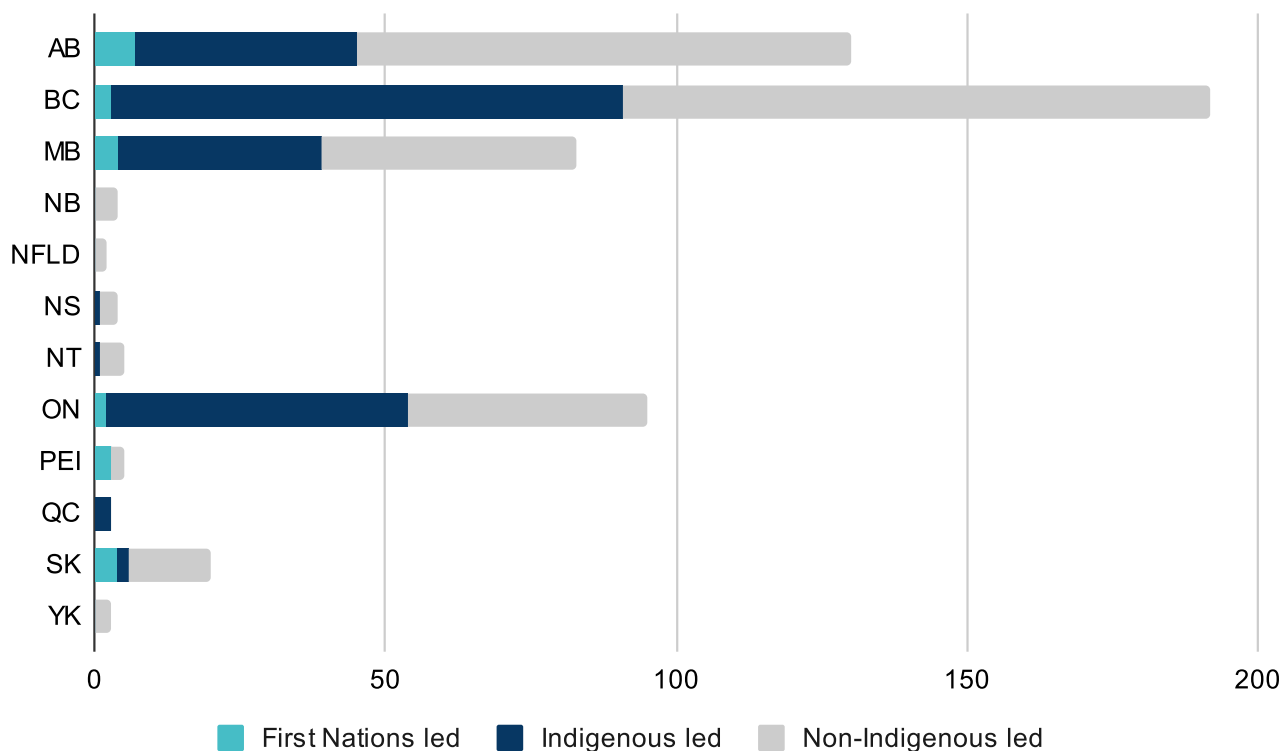


Table 4L. Provincial breakdown of leadership of listings

Province	First Nations led	Indigenous led	Non-Indigenous led
AB	7	38	85
BC	3	88	101
MB	4	35	44
NB	0	0	4
NFLD	0	0	2
NS	0	1	3
NT	0	1	4
ON	2	52	41
PEI	3	0	2
QC	0	3	0
SK	4	2	14
YK	0	0	3
Total	23	220	303



It is essential that cultural representation is a core component embedded into service delivery for Indigenous people.

KEY FINDINGS & THEMES (DISCUSSION) CONSIDERATIONS

Research has found that Indigenous peoples, particularly urban Indigenous peoples, are over-represented in homelessness counts for many reasons including, but not limited to, the lack of affordable and culturally appropriate housing.⁹ In non-urban settings (rural, on-reserve, etc), little research has been done to understand the scale of Indigenous homelessness¹⁰, let alone First Nations homelessness. Without enumerations of the number of First Nations people experiencing homelessness outside of urban settings, it is difficult to have the necessary conversations about how to best support First Nations communities. The systems mapping and conversations with service providers that we have done with Nations is a first attempt to understand some of these experiences, but is by no means a complete picture of the landscape.

Some progress has been made at the national and international levels on this issue from a human rights standpoint. As noted in the preamble of Resolution 79/2019 passed by the Special Chiefs Assembly for the Assembly of First Nations, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹¹ (with which the Government of Canada is required to take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of Canada are consistent under Bill C-15¹²) states the following:

- **Article 3:** Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
- **Article 21 (1):** Indigenous Peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
- **Article 21 (2):** States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.
- **Article 23:** Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous Peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.
- **Article 24 (2):** Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.¹³

Further, the following clauses were also established in the preamble of Resolution 79/2019:

- There is an urgent need to address homelessness for First Nations both on and off-reserve.
- In 2014 Statistics Canada reported that 18% of homeless people were Indigenous- more than twice the rate of non -Indigenous peoples.
- The number of First Nations people becoming homeless is increasing every year.
- First Nations who are homeless face significant barriers in finding adequate and affordable homes and accessing the proper medical and mental health care they need due to a lack of housing on -reserve and affordable housing off -reserve.
- Government programs and policies have failed to provide sustainable long- term positive housing outcomes and have led to persistent substandard living conditions with negative impacts on health, education, economic development, and child welfare, etc. These substandard living conditions are felt more deeply by First Nations women and girls, seniors, youth, the homeless, people with disabilities and First Nations people in the north.
- First Nations have the right to freely pursue our social development, including the urgent need to address homelessness of our citizens, put in place measures and institutions to help our people without homes and provide them with the means of subsistence or development.
- The federal government, provinces and municipalities must ensure adequate housing is available to deal with the homelessness crisis facing First Nations. [AFN Resolution 79/2019 - see Appendix documents 4.0, 4.01, 4.02)] ¹⁴

Clearly, there is not only an urgent homelessness crisis at hand, but also an imperative for local, provincial, federal, and First Nations partners to work together to improve the social and economic conditions of First Nations communities. This means not only acknowledging the shortcomings of past efforts to reduce homelessness for First Nations, but also creating a new way forward that respects the rights of all Indigenous peoples and provides them the resources they need to grow their communities' health and wellbeing.

Today, Employment & Social Development Canada, through the Reaching Home program, provides funding to local communities across the country with the aim of preventing and reducing homelessness, in support of the goals of the National Housing Strategy. This includes supporting the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing and reducing chronic homelessness by 50% on a national level by fiscal year 2027 to 2028.

There are four main funding streams¹⁵ under Reaching Home:

1

The **Designated Communities** stream provides long-term, stable funding to over 60 communities across Canada to develop a community plan with local outcomes and report on community-level outcomes. The designated communities stream also has cost-matching requirements, in which designated communities must spend \$1 for every dollar spent by Reaching Home.

2

The **Indigenous Homelessness** stream provides funding to organizations that provide support to meet the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The intent is that the funding be provided to Indigenous organizations located in urban centres. *Notably, this does not include specific funding for First Nations who face unique challenges in accessing services, nor does it account for rural Indigenous homelessness or housing shortages, either on-reserve or off-reserve.*

3

The **Rural & Remote Homelessness** stream provides funding to all non-Designated Communities. Non-Designated Communities include any community outside of the Designated Communities and Territorial Homelessness streams, regardless of the size of the community. Rural and remote homelessness funding is done on a project-by-project basis, instead of long-term funding.

4

The **Territorial Homelessness** stream exists to better support communities in the Territories, offering their funding under a single envelope that offers more flexibility in how funding can be used to address unique homelessness challenges.

First Nations unique needs are not adequately met through these funding streams. While the Indigenous homelessness stream does exist, there remain many gaps and there is currently no clear strategy to support First Nations communities in their efforts to reduce homelessness. This is particularly concerning given that First Nations populations are often distributed between urban and rural settings, as well as on and off-reserve settings, while available funding remains siloed and narrow in their scope despite this unique distribution. Specifically, each funding stream has a specific set of unique parameters for how the funding may be used, often not overlapping with each other between streams.¹⁶

To ensure that communities act in a coordinated manner, with a strategy to address housing and homelessness concerns, Reaching Home requires Community Advisory Boards (CABs) to “[set] direction for addressing homelessness in the community or region.... expected to coordinate efforts to address homelessness in a community, and is therefore expected to have an in-depth knowledge of the key sectors and systems that affect their homelessness priorities.”¹⁷ Notably however, only communities receiving funding under the Designated Community or Indigenous Homelessness streams are required to have these advisory boards, and are merely encouraged, not required, to ensure First Nations representation. Further, because these boards only take on an advisory role and are often composed of organizations who do not have the resources or authority to engage in systems planning or change, they are relatively ineffective in enacting the level of change and support needed for First Nations service users.

As a result, when funding decisions are made, they are often made in a reactive way informed by perceptions of need rather than data, or in a way that neglects to coordinate activities with other funders, organizations, or systems. This creates silos and inefficiencies in the ways that people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are supported, despite homelessness being an issue that intersects with many other social challenges such as access to technology, mental health, poverty, climate change, and urbanization.

Therefore, as the current National Housing Strategy and the future National Homelessness Strategy seek to reduce homelessness, it is imperative that addressing Indigenous homelessness is central. Further, because First Nations have such unique experiences with homelessness in their communities, it is essential that future funding strategies recognize First Nations as sovereign bodies with the right to advance their own social, economic, and health development goals that meet the unique needs of their Nations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In alignment with the Goals and Actions of the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy, HelpSeeker makes the following recommendations:

Dedicated Funding for First Nations

- 1.** Advocate for First Nations specific funding streams under the Reaching Home program, that:
 - a.** Allow for the First Nation to act as their own Community Entity, meaning that they are in full control of administering and distributing their funding as they see fit to best benefit their membership.
 - b.** Include flexibility in funding directives for the First Nations funding stream, including the provision for funds to be used across urban, rural, and on and off-reserve settings as the First Nation sees fit to support their membership.
 - c.** It should be noted that the limited funding that is currently available to Reaching Home recipients will not meet all the needs of First Nation communities in combating the housing and homelessness gaps that exist. Other dedicated funding should be considered, which may include access to more and innovative capital funding, loan programs and greater support for maintenance and repairs of existing infrastructure.

Data Framework & Capacity Building

- 2.** With the goal of ensuring funding accountability and creating business cases for future policy advocacy & social development efforts, create and implement a National Data Framework for Assessing First Nations Homelessness that describes the following:
 - a.** First Nations Housing Supply per on-reserve capita and total Nation capita.
 - b.** Rates of First Nations displacement from reserves due to housing shortages and core housing need on-reserve.
 - c.** Annual point-in-time counts of homelessness & hidden homelessness for First Nations.
 - d.** Financial investments on and off-reserve for First Nations housing and homelessness prevention services.
- 3.** Align the National Data Framework for Assessing First Nations Homelessness to OCAP® principles

to ensure that First Nations have complete ownership, control, access, and possession of their housing and homelessness data and can use it in conjunction with other initiatives at their discretion.

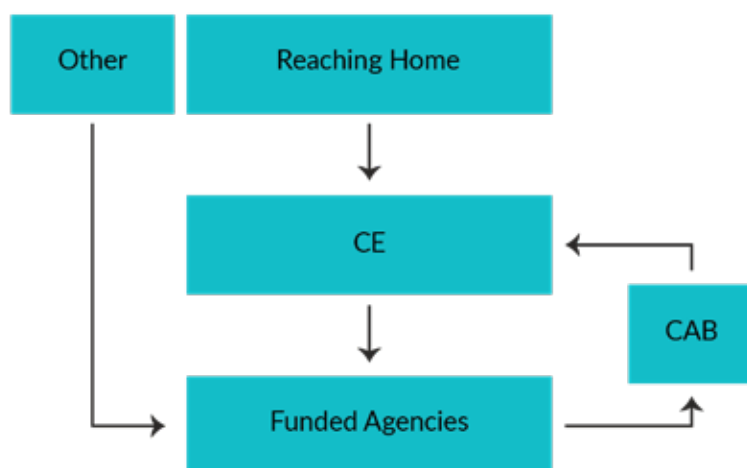
Systems Planning & Integration

4. Adjust the directives Reaching Home to require the selection of a dedicated systems planning backbone agency that works in partnership with both First Nations and non-First Nations Community Entities as well as other funders of the housing/homeless-serving sector to:

- a.** Ensure funding is coordinated at a sector/systems level by convening funders to create an integrated funding strategy.
- b.** Execute on shared funding mandates by leading the implementation of community capacity building, strategy, data collection, outcome tracking, and program operations among funded agencies.

Diagram 5. Systems Planning & Integration Considerations

Current State: One CE, no integration

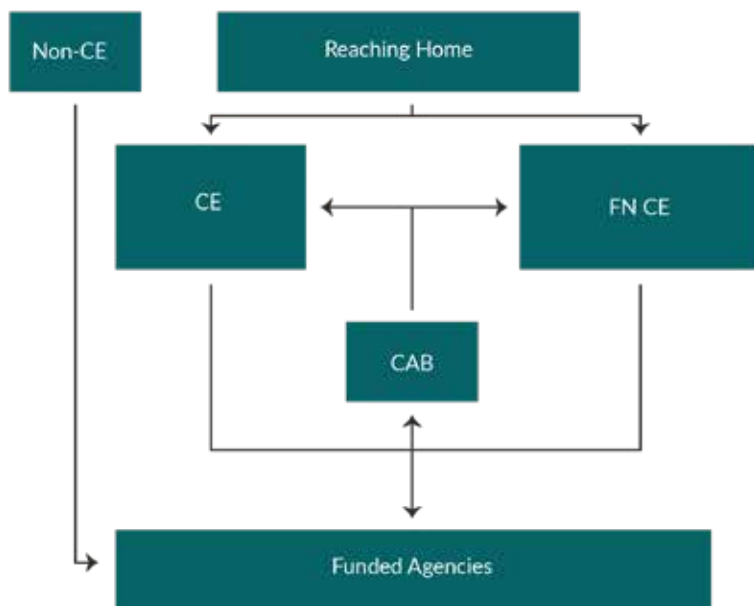


The CE makes decisions in a reactive way, based on input from CAB membership (often who represent funded agencies). There is no coordination with other funders, and limited coordination between funded agencies via coordinated access.

First Nations do not control the distribution of funds, unless they happen to be the CE themselves (uncommon). More frequently, they are treated as funded agencies, but this is at the discretion of the CE.

Alt:

Both FN and non-FN CE, no integration

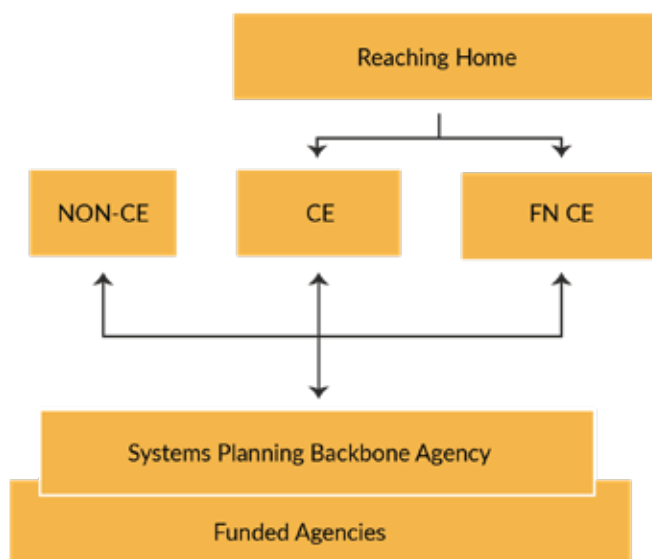


First Nations have more sovereignty over the control of their funds, but there is little coordination with the non-First Nations CE. Therefore, funded agencies may be duplicating services / finding service gaps. Still no coordination with other non-CE funders.

The CAB can pick up on the symptoms of this siloing and share that back to the respective CEs anecdotally, but this is still a reactive model.

Alt:

Integration between CE, FN CE, and non-CE via systems planning backbone agency



A more proactive model has coordinated funding & operations from the start.

A systems planning backbone agency is assigned in this strategy to help create this an integrated funding strategy and ensure on-the-ground coordination of resources (ex. Coordinated access, service delivery, data collection, capacity building etc). Each funder still maintains their leverage & mandates, while the Systems Planning Backbone Agency manages the execution of those mandates for the community in a coordinated way. They also collect data and report back to funders, so they can advocate for what is needed next and report on community-level outcomes.

Goal: reduced duplication of services between CE, FN CE, and non-CE funders + stronger focus on community outcomes/systems planning


Why is the CAB replaced with the systems planning agency?

- Improves ownership & accountability (that is often missed in CABs currently)
- Stronger operationalization of coordination & capacity building
- Community building through actually working together, beyond just information sharing

National Point-in-Time Count (PiT)

5. It is unclear exactly how many people on reserve are experiencing homelessness, and just as unclear when those members leave the community as First Nations are not often collecting the data in a systematic way. PiT counts occur off reserve in urban centres but do not usually include a First Nations by First Nations breakdown, aggregating the findings under Indigenous peoples instead.

- a.** To ascertain an accurate number of First Nations people experiencing homelessness, a National PiT count should be conducted in collaboration with First Nations.
- b.** If Nations are close to a neighboring city from which their members may easily migrate back and forth, their PiT counts could be coordinated with that neighboring city to support better data collection and accuracy.
- c.** Ensure that any data collection includes appropriate First Nations and Indigenous definitions of homelessness that reflect the cultural context and realities of hidden homeless populations, loss of home lands, culture and other ways in which First Nations people feel displaced and without “home”.
- d.** These activities do require financial investments to collect the information, analyze the data and report the results in a consistent manner for comparability.
- e.** Whether AFN or a combination of organizations were to undertake the organization and implementation of a First Nations PiT, a complete review of the current PiT count processes would need to be conducted to ensure it meets the unique needs of First Nations.



PiT count processes need to be conducted to ensure it meets the unique needs of First Nations.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this report, it has been both an honour and a privilege to engage in this body of work from both a grassroots perspective and systemic approach. HelpSeeker holds strong to the value of being a force towards reconciliation and First Nations data sovereignty. Through aspects of this project, we have initiated systems changes specifically to address OCAP® and to create ethical and easily accessible solutions towards systems mapping that will help on and off-reserve Nation members, service providers and governance.

As part of our discovery, conducting formal on-reserve systems mapping requires respectful alignment to OCAP®, which entails a deeper level of community engagement. The engagement process and involvement from each community needed more time than the time constraints of this project allowed. Each community that participated in a Drop In Call session is encouraged to connect with leadership to formally enter into systems mapping. HelpSeeker will be continuing the conversations with those communities.

It is with confidence that the HelpSeeker Systems Mapping platform, the back end of data, and our proposed system changes to align with OCAP® will promote First Nations data sovereignty and provide a mechanism for the promotion of increasing service structure. Additionally as important, it creates easier access to services for Nation members on and off-reserve, and free data sets for leadership that will provide evidence and rationale for supporting growth and decision making on a social systems and infrastructure level.

To enact a form of systems mapping, our team came up with a visualization tool that is a simulation map / data dashboard. The dashboard represents what publicly available information could be found in regards to housing and homelessness services both on and off-reserve. This is not meant to be a public resource and was created solely for the purpose of this project to help inform AFN of potential gaps in service delivery and access to information.

There have been so many rich discussions with the 15 Nations and one town that we engaged across Canada in regards to their housing and homelessness service structures and their challenges or strengths in those areas. It is important that time is taken to review all of the community narratives provided so each community voice is heard and acknowledged. Many common themes emerged from the Drop In Calls, such as years long waitlists for housing on every Nation, limited service structure for emergency shelters and homeless supports, and lack of resources to sufficiently meet community needs of housing and social supports.

Also discussed in the community engagement section of this report was the connection to the COH's literature review and the types of homelessness First Nations people experience in their world view.

It is important to note that, through this view, creating culturally appropriate solutions is paramount towards the success and longevity of significantly reducing both on and off-reserve homelessness in the future.

Our survey in regards to on-reserve programs and services yielded a sample size of 43 individual respondents. This sample resulted in key themes related to service gaps, transportation issues, and no consistency in ways members access or learn about services offered on their Nation. The most common way people reported finding out about information was through online social media and calling the band office. Through our systems mapping efforts, it was also determined that many of the online websites for Nations are outdated and cannot be a trusted source of accessing accurate information. Based on these findings, it is important to address issues of accessibility to information.

It is the intention of this report to share the information gathered as supporting evidence and recommendations towards AFN's mandate to and development of a culturally appropriate and sustainable long term housing and homelessness strategy for First Nations. HelpSeeker supports this work immensely and is committed to supporting future work or projects that are in alignment with supporting First Nations and the journey towards healing, reconciliation, equity and sovereignty.



APPENDIX

1.0 Survey Questions

The Survey was offered in both English and French, however no French Surveys were completed. For purposes of this appendix/report, all of the survey questions are provided in English below.

1. Which First Nation's are you a member of?
2. Do you currently live on or off-reserve?
3. In what community do you currently live?
4. As a service provider to First Nation individuals, what kinds of services do you offer?
 - Options available to check off: Basic needs, housing, Shelter, Mental Health, Education, Income Support, Childcare, Addiction or Harm Reduction, Mentoring, Peer Support, Domestic Violence supports, Supports for People Living with disabilities, Food Security or Food Supports, Child Welfare Supports, Supports for youth existing in the child welfare system, Other - please specify.
5. Where do members of your First Nation look for information about the community & social services available to them?
6. What challenges to members of your First Nations face in regard to accessing services?
7. Suppose you had to refer a community member who was at risk/experiencing homelessness to a community or social service. What factors do you consider when deciding where to refer them to?

Choose your top 3 answers

- Options available to check off: Alignment to individual needs to service offering, Reputation of provider, Distance/transportation, Childcare available, Quality of care.
8. Can you give some examples of services specifically geared towards -
 - Options available: LGBTQ2+, Living with disabilities, Experiencing homelessness, Experiencing Mental Health Challenges, Using substances, Experiencing financial difficulty, Experiencing food insecurity, Experiencing abuse or domestic violence, Youth people, Elders.

9. What programs, services or resources do you provide for your members living away from the First Nation?

10. Please provide an on-reserve service provider contact we could connect with to learn more about what they offer and invite them to co-create a systems map with us.

1.1 Raw Survey data

Shared Appendix Document Folder:

1.101 Appendix Document - AFN Report by Help Seeker - Final Survey Data 1 (Spreadsheet)

1.102 Appendix Document - AFN Report by HelpSeeker - Final Survey Data 2 (PDF)

2.0 Drop In Calls

Presentation for Drop in Calls

Shared Appendix Document Folder

2.1 Appendix Document - AFN Report by HelpSeeker - Fr. and En. Drop In Call presentation.pdf

2.2 Community Summaries From Drop In Calls

In accordance with OCAP®, near the end of this project while compiling this final report, we sent out these summaries to all individuals who attended. We asked individuals to review them for consistency and to choose whether to have their Nation identified and/or their name used in this report. We also believe that this follows community and Indigenous beliefs that words and stories carry power, and we do not want to silence the voices of those that provided such rich context to this body of work. At the time of this writing, we received permission from only a few participants so all other participants have been anonymized unless explicit consent is given.

Community Summaries British Columbia (3)

1. First Nation Located on Vancouver Island

Participating BC First Nation community is located on Vancouver Island Eastern region, and has 4 reserves within its Nation. They have approximately 1367 band members, with 880 on-reserve and 487 off.

Key Findings:

- Long waitlist for housing
- Worried about hidden homelessness on-reserve
- Worried about homelessness of off-reserve members
- Lacks water infrastructure to build new houses
- Elders lack social supports, along with healthcare supports, cultural and recreational
- Huge need for more Elder supports
- Lacks programs and services to support people ages 35-65
- Transitional supports / shelter like services are now being used as covid isolation centres

Our participant is a Nation member who works for her Nation as a Service Management Coordinator. During the session she made it clear that her community is experiencing a known housing crisis.

It is difficult for them to maintain current houses, and build new ones. Not only is there a lack of capital to build new houses or units, they do not have the water systems to provide basic plumbing and running water for new infrastructure.

As reported in every community we interviewed, the waitlist for housing is “very long” and they are uniquely challenged with lack of capital and the need to build water systems to support infrastructure.

Also mentioned were other gaps in services and challenges her community is facing such as lack of elder care / support, programming and for many adequate housing is not available. There are gaps in services for age groups 35-65. She mentioned they do provide services to youth and they are developing employment programs.

Homelessness in her community is a concern with overcrowded homes and “couch surfing” (Hidden Homelessness) she reports they have a short term housing program, that is temporary and almost like a shelter related service, but not exactly. This program has been affected by COVID-19 and has been used to support people who are in quarantine and self isolation.

She is worried about homelessness of off-reserve members, as she is aware of the struggle to

pay for high rent and mortgage prices. She mentioned her Nation has emergency food support but supply is always limited.

To the participant's knowledge, Nation members find services on-reserve mostly through word of mouth, their Nation's website which is not up to date, and their facebook community page.

When she was introduced to the HelpSeeker Navigation app and the possibilities of resource guides, community pages and creating easier access to services, her response was very positive. She noted how developing community pages will make it easier for her and the work that she does. She said this service is well needed in her department to alleviate the need to constantly update their website.

This participant was keen on learning about the community data generated by HelpSeeker's tools and the potential it has to create supportive data to prove her community's needs. We are currently in the process of setting up post sessions with leadership to get her Nation opt-ed into systems mapping.

2. BC First Nation - South Coast (inland)

A Nation representative joined us from her home community in British Columbia. This participant is the Housing Manager of her Nation which has 1,559 members living on-reserve, and 682 members who live off-reserve.

Key Findings:

- Years long waitlist
- Builds 6 homes / year
- 1559 on-reserve - with approximately 400 family homes
- 6-8 year wait lists for smaller family housing and extensive overcrowding in homes
- Years waitlists for larger family homes
- Obtained funding to build a woman's shelter, which begins construction this year in 2021
- Community has rent to own units
- Lacks accessibility / transparency of services - most band members call the band office to find out about services

There are approximately 400 homes for the on-reserve members to live in. The community is building approximately 6 multi-family homes a year. For 2 bedroom housing accommodations there is currently a 40 person waitlist which equates to an approximately six to eight year wait list.

This BC First Nation has received funding for an Emergency Shelter for women fleeing violence. The two-storey facility will provide seven housing units; four three-bedroom family units, and three units for single people. Building is anticipated to begin in Summer 2021.

When asked about “Kyle’s” situation and where she would direct someone for housing support, she said she would give him a housing application for a rental unit or a rent-to-own unit. Noting that to obtain housing on these particular units, waitlists are anywhere from 3-4 years long.

3. BC First Nation - Vancouver Island Tribe

Two Nation members from a Vancouver Island Nation joined us in the drop in call. This Nation has 5069 band members, with approximately 2,861 living on-reserve and 2,208 living off-reserve.

Key Findings:

- 3 years plus waitlist to get into on-reserve housing
- Tiny cabin initiative used for singles or transitional housing
- 2020-2021 - Tiny cabins are now used as COVID isolation sites
- Has homeless shelter - but is not sufficient to meet the need “it is always full and we need more space or another one”
- Has sobering centre within shelter
- There is a huge need to build more low income housing

Participants of this community shared they have a waitlist of 3 years or longer to get into any type of social housing. They started building small cabins to support singles, or small single families. Once the members learned about this initiative there is now an extensive wait list. With COVID 19, the cabins became isolation centres which are still being used for this purpose at the time of the session. These cabins will be used for COVID-19 isolation support until their COVID 19 funding runs out in March 2022. Another part of the funding the COVID-19 response helps with is securing hotel rooms for isolation purposes, as the cabins did not fill the need.

Participants stated that their community does have a homeless shelter, “but it can only have so many people in it” which leads us to believe that it is not sufficient for the current need. The shelter has a sobering centre within it so people who are intoxicated have somewhere to turn for help and support to get into a sober state. They also recently incorporated a “cooling shelter” to battle the extreme heat wave of this summer 2021.

With the long waitlist to get a cabin, or a house, participants described seeing the need to build more low income housing. They shared that service providers in the area were able to secure funding to build 100 low income housing units. It was not clear if these units were exclusive to members or the general population in the area. Since using the term service provider, it was assumed it was outside of the Nation.

In a nearby town, they currently have a printed social support booklet that is 23 double sided pages. They shared with us that, with the amount of support and services available in the town, information can be easily lost. There were some discussions of how easily accessible the HS app would be for their community members.

Community Summaries Alberta (4)

4. Town of Slave Lake - Native Friendship Centre Representative

Key Findings:

- Described racism and discrimination when First Nations access services in the town
- Described lack of culturally sensitive shelters in the community
- Indigenous women experiencing racism when accessing a particular shelter
- Lack of Indigenous and culturally appropriate services in a town that is surrounded by many reserves
- The Native Friendship Centre sees Indigenous clients in many different situations and has trouble referring them to appropriate support services locally
- Years long waitlist for low income housing

Participant joined us who is currently working for the Native Friendship Centre from the Treaty 8 area in Slave Lake, Alberta. She works closely with members of various First Nations who live in

an urban area. The individuals she supports face all sorts of obstacles such as health issues, and lack of adequate housing or no housing at all. The rental market in Slave Lake is unusually high for a small town causing community members to access the local food banks. She also expressed that Indigenous peoples residing in Slave Lake face a lot of discrimination and racism. There is no support from the town to address and combat Indigenous Homelessness.

Despite participants describing best efforts in combating Indigenous Homelessness in Slave Lake, she faced many obstacles from the City Council. She has done tremendous work for her community. She opened a homeless shelter 4 years ago, and secured funding and maintained the operations until her board asked her to step back due to lack of support from the town, and understaffing. She was constantly working over 16 hour days trying to maintain the shelter's operations.

Recently, she also obtained technology such as computers, printers, and fax machines for an employment centre in the Friendship Centre so individuals could come fix their resumes and conduct job searches. The Centre also opened an Indigenous Mental Health Community Helper program in March of 2021 for youth and senior outreach.

This participant echoed the effects of racism and discrimination from issues with a particular shelter in town, and the treatment Indigenous Women face while accessing the shelter. Oftentimes she finds women who are clients of said shelter in Slave Lake coming to the Friendship Centre to access support and programs for their children.

There is a lot going on in Slave Lake with the lack of affordable and available housing, there is very limited homelessness support. No housing offices are open due to COVID and the Friendship Centre often supports individuals with housing applications only to find the client on a long waitlist.

5. Northern Alberta Treaty 8 Community

Director of housing from a northern Alberta Treaty 8 First Nation attended the Drop in call. This Nation has 1031 band members living off-reserve and 447 living on-reserve.

Key findings:

- "Never ending wait list for housing" - over 10 years long
- Acknowledges hidden homelessness

- Lack of social supports and infrastructure
- Employment centre with one computer that is set up in a closet space
- Described 85% of the reserve is affected by overcrowding in homes
- Lack of awareness of supports, programs and services located on the Nation
- Most members find out about services through word of mouth or by calling the band office

This participant was keen on acknowledging the hidden homelessness problem on his reserve, with many who are couch surfing and living in overcrowded housing, such as himself. There are not enough houses and infrastructure to support all of the families that need housing. There is a “never ending waitlist” to get housing that is running 10 - 12 years long by approximation. He said with many growing families, this wait list only gets longer and longer. He stated overcrowding in housing and lack of available housing affects up to 85% of the reserve.

One of the initiatives his Nation is working on right now is assessing the current houses for maintenance and repairs that need to be done.

Recently, this Nation acquired some townhouses in the nearby town, which is about 45 minutes from the reserve, where they are able to offer a subsidized housing program to some select band members. This is still not enough to fill the need, and many do not want to live 45 minutes away from their home community.

When asked about how community members find programs and services on his Nation, he acknowledged he was unaware of where to refer Nation members, and that there was a need to increase their social infrastructure. There is also a need to increase awareness amongst community members as to what the community actually offers for social support.

This participant was very impressed with the HelpSeeker app and felt this was a strong resource he would tell community members to use to locate supports in the nearby towns of Slave Lake and High Prairie. He said he often gets asked by community members about resources and support but he just doesn't know where to send them or how to help.

The reserve does not have any shelters or homelessness support at this time, but does have a housing and infrastructure department.

He would like to use HelpSeeker in his community to enhance awareness and access to services

available. With his support we are currently in the process of setting up a meeting with leadership to introduce the Help Seeker Navigation App and back end of data, and providing the Nation with community pages and resource guides.

6. Treaty 6 - Enoch Cree Nation, located in central Alberta

Glori Sharphead - Social Housing Coordinator

This particular Nation has a notable service mix that supports Nation members. Enoch Cree Nation has approximately 2794 Band members, 1839 living on-reserve and 955 living off-reserve.

Key Findings:

- Years long wait lists for housing
- Does not have a shelter on-reserve, but has transitional housing programs
- Has six units to support harm reduction
- Has nine units to support those exiting treatment or incarceration
- Refers to Edmonton for immediate homeless shelter supports
- Interested in HelpSeeker's System Navigation app as a resource for community members, service providers and as a leverage tool for leadership to generate community data
- Interested in the data generation that HelpSeeker's Systems Mapping can provide to support community development

Enoch is unique as it is situated close to the City of Edmonton and is a Nation experiencing economic growth. Although it has higher access to capital than many reserves across Canada, Enoch still experiences difficulties in providing enough adequate housing to meet its Nation's needs.

Enoch representative Glori Sharphead, the Social Housing Coordination for the Nation, reports they have a housing wait list that is "years long" but can also be sporadic with some waiting longer than others. Glori is the coordinator for their "Kisikokamik" (meaning Spirit lodge in Cree) which has programs and services to support members experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Within the Kiskokamik that Glori works for, they currently have two housing social programs: one that supports singles and another that supports nation members on their path to sobriety and wellness. For homelessness and addiction support measures there are six units for harm reduction, and nine units for those coming out of treatment or incarceration. There is a wait list for both of these housing programs. Usually clients can stay in the program for six months but the program stays flexible based on their needs.

Kiskokamik also has a damage deposit program to help with securing off-reserve housing. This damage deposit program supports those Nation members who are marginalized, homeless, fleeing domestic violence, and youth.

Impressive about Enoch is their array of programs and services, referral processes and partnerships with Edmonton Service providers. Glori made a statement, “It’s not perfect, but we are trying”. She discussed how Enoch is setting up a coordinated access system between the different divisions of services and is working to fill gaps.

Their housing and infrastructure department has close to 140 units available in apartment buildings for singles or families, which members apply for. The wait list for this is also long. Many of the small families in the apartment units are now growing families, and are on waitlists for houses.

When Glori was introduced to the HelpSeeker Navigation App, she was so excited to share it across her networks, and get her nation involved in systems mapping. She wanted to share it with Nation members and colleagues because the catalog of programs and services in Edmonton would be very useful for members and Nation service providers to discover support nearby.

We are now in the process of setting up follow up steps with leadership to get proper consent for Enoch Nation to be involved with Systems Mapping.

7. Northern Alberta Treaty 8 Community

This participant, living and working in Edmonton, joined us for the Treaty 8 drop in call session. He is from a rural Nation in Northern Alberta Treaty 8. This reserve has approximately 3,551 on-reserve Nation members, and 4,743 off-reserve members.

Key Findings:

- Overcrowding in homes on-reserve
- Subsidy and rental units on-reserve
- Non-paid / “free” housing units on-reserve - this housing is neglected by the band and there is a “years” long waiting period to see any maintenance or repairs
- This reserve does have a shelter on-reserve, but this band member wasn’t aware
- Lack of awareness amongst community members as to what programs and services are available to Nation members
- “Years” long wait list for any type of on-reserve housing

Although he is an Off-Reserve Band Member, he stays involved through attending Council meetings and tries to keep up to date on his Nation’s current events. When asked how members usually find out about programs and services on his reserve, he said the main way is to call the band office and the receptionist would direct them to where to go.

He told us the housing authority has a really long list to get into band housing. The band has rental housing, along with free housing for band members. He recently learned in a band meeting there is a long waitlist to get your house looked at for repairs if you are not paying rent. He made a point that with the amount of people that don’t pay rent, it is hard for them to get upgrades and repairs for those spaces.

We learned there are many services and programs his Nation offers, but he was not aware of anything related to emergency shelters. It was discovered after the session, through visiting the band’s website that his Nation does have a shelter related service for women and children that offers many supports such as domestic violence counselling, life skills, healing circles and much more. In addition they have a transition house where women and families can stay, permitting space is available, and that they have been using the women’s shelter for over 21 days.

During the session, our participant had the opportunity to use the HelpSeeker app and search for programs and services in his area. He was happy to see all the relevant services for Indigenous peoples listed in Edmonton, and also that his organization was listed. He was confident the Navigation App and back end of data would be of benefit to his Nation, and didn’t see a reason why it wouldn’t be. However, he also mentioned that with leadership changing every few years, there could always be some apprehension from the next Chief and Council.

Community Summaries Saskatchewan (1)

8. A South East Saskatchewan Nation

A Nation member joined us from a reserve located in Saskatchewan. His Nation has about 1471 band members, of which 591 live on-reserve and 880 live off-reserve.

Key Findings:

- Years long wait lists
- Overcrowding, hidden homelessness
- Has housing and infrastructure department
- Point system for housing waitlist on-reserve - based on family structure and service needs.
- This was noted to create difficulties towards application with “not being easy to navigate”
- Good relationships and partnerships with nearby city
- Sends Nation members to nearby city for housing supports off-reserve
- No on-reserve shelter service or homeless specific services --needs to refer off-reserve

When asked how Nation members find housing on-reserve, his response was to recommend them to look for off-reserve housing or else get on the waitlist for housing, indicating that there are no immediate available supports for housing and that Nation members would have more success finding housing off the reserve.

This community borders a small city where there are social housing programs available to people they can't support on-reserve. He told us his Nation has a good relationship with the City to provide housing support to those they cannot support on-reserve. The housing support service in the City is available to any urban Indigenous person and is not exclusive to his Nation. He shared with us his Nation does not have a homeless shelter on-reserve.

Being on the waitlist for housing on-reserve isn't easy to navigate as they run a points system for eligibility based on family structure, and current needs of, or engagement into services. Part of this system monitors the applicant's services they are currently accessing. It was indicated that it works in an applicant's favour if they are accessing social programs to “better” themselves. Additionally it was specified that the waitlist for housing is “years” long.

Community Summaries - Ontario (4)

9. Southern Ontario Nation

Elder participant joined us from a southern Ontario First Nation that has approximately 1910 band members, with 1059 living off-reserve and approximately 851 living on-reserve.

Key Findings:

- Transitional / homeless shelter transformed to COVID isolation centre - unsure of how long this will be in place
- Now sends members to nearby town to access homelessness supports
- On-reserve women's shelter now being used to house fully vaccinated elders to offer support and protection
- Years long waitlist for housing
- Identifies overcrowding in houses which has led to COVID-19 outbreak challenges in this community
- Hidden homelessness and many "couch surfers"

The elder described the hidden homelessness issues on her Nation and many people who are couch surfing and are experiencing homelessness. They were in the process of building transitional housing which had to be converted to an isolation centre due to COVID-19.

This Nation does have a women's shelter which is now being used to house fully vaccinated elders. Their Nation has experienced serious COVID-19 outbreaks which has led to lockdowns and distress amongst the community. They are utilizing many of their housing, emergency shelter and homeless resources to support self isolation. This Nation was described to have a large COVID-19 outbreak due to overcrowding in homes and a lack of places to go to comply with provincial health recommendations, which made it difficult to prevent the spread.

In order to use the on-reserve women's shelter as a centre for fully vaccinated elders, they had to move women and children off the reserve to the nearest town shelter about 30 minutes away from the reserve.

This Nation does have homeless shelter and transitional housing supports on-reserve; however,

at this time, they are being used for COVID-19 supports, and this Nation must refer those experiencing homelessness to outside nearby town supports.

10. South Eastern Ontario Nation

Key Findings:

- Overcrowding in homes
- 2-12 year long waitlist for housing
- After many years of delay in constructing new homes, they are now on track to build 4-8 new homes per year
- Calling the band office is the main way people learn about programs and services on this reserve
- Hidden Homelessness is an issue
- Noted 150 homes with 1450 total band members, leaving over 1200 without permanent housing

Joining us was a councillor for his First Nation, who also supports housing for the Tribal Council, which is made up of 7 First Nations in Ontario. His home community has a total of 1,450 band members with 403 members living on-reserve, and 1,047 living off-reserve. For purposes of this case study, we specifically asked him for information on his home community.

He shared with us that there are currently about 150 homes in his Nation that house 350 people, not including children. He informed us that they hadn't built new homes for many years due to community members owing arrears payments. However, they are now building 4-8 new homes per year for a waitlist described as being between 2-12 years long.

When asked about "Kyle's" situation and where he would direct someone for housing support, he said contacting the band office to see how the community would best support him. He stated there are no homeless shelter related services on his reserve.

11. South Eastern Ontario Nation

This community has 1,353 members living on-reserve, and 1,702 members living off-reserve.

Key Findings:

- 8-12 year long waitlist for housing
- Can refer their members to other nearby First Nations to the shelters / homeless supports offered on other reserves within the tribal region
- Transportation is a barrier to accessing above mentioned services located on other nearby Nations
- Overcrowding in homes

The Construction Maintenance Coordinator for this Nation joined us at this drop in call session. He was unaware of how many houses were currently in his community but he did inform us that the waitlist is anywhere from 8-12 years, and there are over 100 people on the list. Overcrowding in homes was identified as a huge issue.

Two nearby Nations out of seven in the region have a crisis shelter; one is a women and family shelter and the other is a crisis/family violence shelter. These are not located on his reserve. He mentioned that transportation is often an issue when people want to access these supports.

When asked about “Kyle’s” situation and where he would direct someone for housing support, he said he would direct him to the housing department to fill out an application and to the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ISETS) office to apply for employment.

12. South Western Ontario Nation

This Nation has 793 band members, with 390 on-reserve and 403 off-reserve.

Key Challenges:

- Lack of social infrastructure
- Racism and distrust prevents members from accessing services outside of reserve
- No shelter or homeless support on-reserve
- Addiction issues - “Meth epidemic”
- Overcrowding in homes 8-9 people living in 2 bedrooms
- Hidden and visible homelessness

- Tent cities and chronic homelessness led their nearby town to criminalize homelessness which led to higher rates of institutionalization amongst band members
- “Why would anyone want to move back home to our reserve?” “We have nothing”

Described in this session was the dire situation of a woman from her community. It is common for 8 to 9 people to be living in a two bedroom house. She said it seems about half of the Nation has addiction issues and many are related to Meth.

Discussed was the lack of service structure on her Nation, where they have a housing department but not much else. The reserve does not have enough money to build houses for all of those who need a home. She said with a lack of services, including employment, treatment, mental health and addictions, many of her people have nowhere to turn for professional support.

She also described the nearby town as being the “racist capital of Canada”. Although there are programs and services in the town, band members are reluctant to access services due to racism and not feeling welcome in the town. It was pointed out that this region in Ontario had the most residential schools per capita across Canada, and the racism problem is deeply rooted.

Another interesting point brought up is that, with many community members experiencing homelessness, they created a tent city on their reserve which again is closely situated by the town. This said town has a huge tourism industry and did not like the tent city being so close in proximity, so their way of removing it was to criminalize being homeless. This created a huge rift in relations between the town and neighboring Nations, reinforcing the racism and the lack of support her Nation has available within the town.

When presented with the Case Study of “Kyle”, who moved back to his reserve after being laid off from his job in a nearby town, she was the only person out of all the Drop In Calls across Canada who could not relate. She asked, why did he even come back to the reserve? There is nothing for him, there are no services to help him, there is no way for the reserve to help him get back on his feet, he was better off to stay in the city, collect welfare and access support there.

The nearby town has experienced rapid growth in population over the years, and has not been able to keep up by building new homes & appropriate infrastructure. This has led to much chronic homelessness experienced by her Nation members and community members in general. She said there are still many tent cities in the town.

When talking about how people access services, she said her Nation’s Facebook page is the most

popular way people look for information. She also said the first initiative her community would benefit from is focusing on housing and getting more housing for Nation members, and the nearby town in general.

Direct quote - "Relationships are so poor and damaged that our own Indigenous Service Providers are prohibited from providing services in town". The new homeless by-law, that has criminalized homelessness, has negatively impacted her Nation.

This Nation has been unable to work collaboratively with their nearby town. There is a huge lack of services within the geographical region that are Indigenous led. The main Indigenous led organization is a First Nations friendship centre located in town.

Community Summaries Québec (2)

13. A South Central Québec First Nation

A Director of Education for her Nation joined us for the Québec session on July 28, 2021. This Nation is located in south central Québec and has 1,646 members living on-reserve and 1,843 members living off-reserve.

Key Findings:

- Language barriers - many Nation members only speak English which impacts their ability to access programs and services off-reserve
- Racism is noted as a regular experience of Nation members when they travel to nearby towns and cities to access supplies and services
- Concerns of high rates of mental health issues and suicide
- Overcrowding is an issue
- This Nation has some progressive housing infrastructure policies
- This Nation has a women's shelter on-reserve
- The Nation is 50% band owned and 50% members owned which allows their members to have ownership status of some of their homes
- Has weekly community newsletters delivered directly to every household to keep members informed of programs, services and community updates

Some notable barriers that were identified for Nation members were around language; many Nation members do not speak French which prevents them from accessing community services in their local towns / urban centres. Additionally, there is a lot of racism experienced by First Nations people when accessing businesses and services outside of their communities.

When presented with the case study of “Kyle’s” situation she was able to relate to his experience as she sees similar situations on her reserve all the time. She mentioned concerns of mental health and high rates of suicide on Nations. This is where she began to describe how their programs and services related to housing and homelessness work.

This Nation has a women’s shelter that is typically at about 50% occupancy. Their Nation has rental units within their community that mostly employed Nation members can access. They also have a First Nations market housing fund to construct homes off-reserve. Her Nation is also looking at building tiny homes to help increase their housing capacity for members.

Another interesting finding was this Nation has a housing lottery to assist with building new homes for members. To enter into the lottery Nation members must be employed and provide a down payment towards the construct of a new home. Additionally there is an extensive application process where they must also have construction plans and housing blue-prints already in place.

Another interesting fact learned is their lands are 50% Nation owned and 50% member owned. Through land claims and increase in land, they were able to create an infrastructure where members can self manage, own and maintain their own housing. Additionally as part of infrastructure for those who can afford a downpayment and are employed they have a loan system for up to \$100K to help with building costs. This is in essence like a mortgage the band provides. Once the loan is paid off, the Nation Member then owns their house and property.

The loan program is set up in a way that 30% of the participants main source of income will go towards their loan repayment, whether it’s a work pay cheque or income support. This Nation is set to build 5 to 10 houses per year, covering elders, single people and families.

In addition to their housing programs and infrastructure, the Nation has an on-reserve shelter for women and their children/families. Typically men experiencing homelessness would get referred to their nearby town to access a men’s shelter. She mentioned that sometimes if there are no women staying at the shelter they will allow men to access it for emergency support to stay for a night or two.

When asked how Nation members access or find out about programs and services, she said her Nation has excellent communications with band members. They put out a weekly newsletter that is usually up to 40 pages, and it is hand delivered to each household to give members updates. They also have a resource binder that every household has access to and should have a copy of. They have many community led programs relating to culture, justice, employment, youth support, family support, pre-school, head start, and more.

This Nation is a strong example of how some Nations are taking their programs and services into their hands and have expanded beyond what many other reserves offer when it comes to housing and infrastructure, as well as offering on-reserve shelter and homelessness support for women and their families.

14. North Western Québec First Nation

This Québec First Nation is located north west, close to the Ontario border. There are currently 2,600 registered band members of which 650 live on-reserve, and the other 1,950 live off community. The Housing Director for the community attended our session.

Key Findings:

- 5-10 year waitlist for housing
- 220 homes, for over 650 band members on-reserve
- 1950 members live off-reserve
- Only 8.5% of all Nation members have on-reserve housing
- 33% of on-reserve Nation members have housing
- Through CMHC funding, they can build one home per year
- Reports systemic racism and policies that prevent members from making a home in their own community
- Language barriers create barriers towards accessing any type services off-reserve
- Racism and discrimination noted to impact members accessing off-reserve services

After presenting her with “Kyle’s” situation, she shared that there is not much she could do for her own reserve about the housing situation. She said the reserve relies on CMHC for the yearly funding, which allows them to build 1 new house per year. To maintain and repair

homes the reserve applied for Investment Funds and grants through Canada. This participant tied this housing crisis to the prevalence of systemic racism, and forced assimilation from Canada by forcing Nation members out of their home communities due to the lack of housing accommodations available on-reserves. For the 650 members living in their home community there are only 220 homes on the reserve available to house them.

She informed us that the housing wait list is currently 5-10 years but at any given time there are at least 50 people on the list. In order to qualify for housing on-reserve a member needs to have lived on the reserve for at least 1 year. Also shared was the difficulties members face when accessing services off-reserve. The participant said she speaks French fluently, but for the many nation members that do not speak French, are known to experience higher levels of discrimination and racism when they are off the reserve.

We asked about Shelter related supports and we were informed that the only support available was in a nearby town which is one km away. They have an apartment building for community members to utilize for a place to hang out, take a shower or make a meal. It is very similar to a drop in centre and is currently utilized by community members who use drugs or alcohol. Also discussed was that the Health Centre on-reserve is currently working on obtaining a building for a safe house for people who have nowhere else to go.

Community Summaries Northwest Territories (1)

15. A Northwest Territories Settlement

The participant of this Nation has chosen to Opt-out of this report.

Community Summaries Yukon (1)

16. Nation is located in the Yukon.

This Nation has approximately 613 members who live on the Nation and 403 who live off the Nation.

Key Findings:

- Overcrowding in homes and long waitlists for on nation housing

- Strong utilization of urban/off-reserve services - especially related to homelessness
- Refers members to shelters located off-reserve
- Has excellent partnerships and collaborations with their nearby city
- Slow internet service, not many people have cell phones or find resources online

After many decades of negotiating, this nation signed its Final Agreement and Self-Governing Agreement, which became part of Canada's constitution, and came into effect in the early 2000's. Since settling the Self-Government Agreements, this nation has operated and negotiated with the Federal and territorial and all other governments as a self-governing First Nation government.

The Nation has approximately 613 members living within and 403 living off the Nation. The Nation is located in proximity to a major territorial city.

Joining us on the session were two Nation service providers who both work front line workers. One manages programs, and supports nation members with the most complex needs. The programs they are involved in are direct services that support Nation members.

Through the Drop in Call session it was determined that most members will find programs and services through the income support avenue, and through word of mouth. They have a strong community presence and good relationships between service providers within Whitehorse. With unreliable and slow internet service in their region, there are many who have barriers to finding information via online sources. The first and foremost barrier to internet access is financial accessibility compounded by unreliability and infrastructure issues that impact the community specifically is access to the internet.

Within the other participants role, she directly supports members with writing housing applications, finding or providing support letters and navigating the system of support in their area.

There is one low barrier emergency shelter in the territory. It's quite large. No one gets turned away, at the very least they will get a cot and may not get a room. Anyone can access it, intoxicated or not. There is food and harm reduction measures. This Nation was described as very unique since it's in the urban city centre. There is also a domestic violence shelter for women. Some avoid the shelter because they are trying to stay away from substance abuse. Walking to the shelter in the winter conditions can be dangerous as well, and can take up to one hour from the nation.

This nation is a strong example of successful collaboration and positive relationships with their close by urban centre resulting in greater access to overall support services for their members both on the nation and off the nation.

Although not able to give numbers, the participants on the call were aware overcrowding in homes on Nation land was identified as a huge issue as well as waitlists for on Nation housing. Many will take up residence in the urban centre in proximity, and are close enough to their community to access their Nation's support services.

3.0 Raw Dashboard Data

Shared Appendix Document Folder:

3.0 Appendix Document - AFN Indigenous Housing and Homelessness

3.01 Appendix Document - AFN On-Reserve Community Population

3.02 Appendix Document-AFN Report by HelpSeeker - AFN On-Reserve Dashboard Data
File Name

3.03 Appendix Document-AFN Report by HelpSeeker - AFN Off-Reserve Dashboard Data

How to interpret data:

All on-reserve data has been collected on one Google sheet named "on-reserve Community population" and is divided by province and territory using tabs (located on bottom of the G-sheet). In addition there is a summary sheet which gives a high-level view of information collected and summed totals from all provinces and territories.

There is a master list of all First Nations we identified throughout our work, with an additional column (A) to identify which province (tab) additional information can be found. Within each tab, the top left summarizes the provincial or territorial resources found and further identifies those resources with a "housing" or "homeless" focus.

To find detailed information scroll down to each Nation to understand programs and services located there. Programs/services that have been identified as housing / homeless support includes the tags/categories "housing", "transitional housing", "supportive housing", "shelter", & "homeless". It is possible that more than one email address was collected for individual First Nations and/or programs. Please ensure you check the cell for additional emails. Each provincial data tab has a column "D" and column "L".

1. Column D - scroll to the end of each First Nations information and you will see a total number of programs/services identified. This number is rolled up into the top left hand summary chart.

2. Column L - scroll to the end of each First Nations information and you will see a total number of programs/services identified as "housing/homeless". This number is rolled up into the top left hand summary chart.

3.1 HelpSeekers Current Systems Map of Services

Shared Appendix Document Folder:

3.1 - Appendix Document - AFN Report by HelpSeeker - Off-Reserve HelpSeeker Systems Map data of Indigenous Housing and Homeless Listings breakdown Located in the documents in

Shared Appendix Folder

4.0 AFN Resolution 79/2019: Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off-Reserve

Shared Appendix Document Folder:

4.0 Appendix Document - Page 1 - AFN Resolution 79/2019

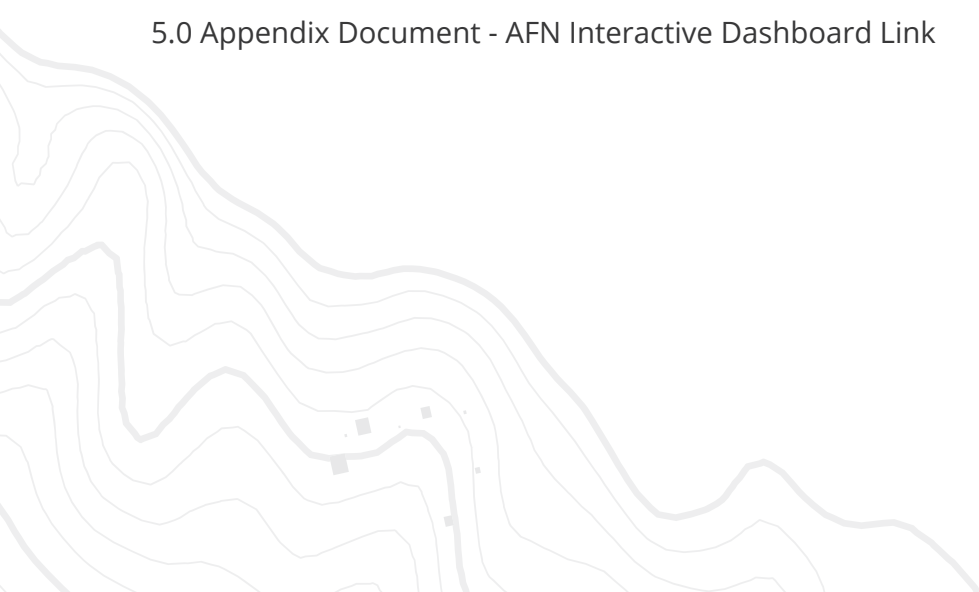
4.01 Appendix Document - Page 2 - AFN Resolution 79/2019

4.02 Appendix Document - Page 3 - AFN Resolution 79/2019

5.0 Interactive Data Dashboard Link

Shared Appendix Document Folder:

5.0 Appendix Document - AFN Interactive Dashboard Link



REFERENCES

- 1** Report: Housing on First Nations Reserves, The Current State of Housing on Reserves <https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/Committee/412/appa/rep/rep08feb15b-e.pdf>
- 2** Report: Indigenous Policy Making, The blueprint for systemic racism in First Nations Housing <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/april-2021/the-blueprint-for-systemic-racism-in-first-nations-housing/>
- 3** ENDAAMNAAN: HOMES FOR ALL NATIONS A First Nations Homelessness Literature Review Jessica Rumboldt, 2021, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH)
- 4** See Appendix Document 5.0 to view the interactive data dashboard (only available to the Assembly of First Nations [AFN] and those authorized by AFN)
- 5** The number of housing departments is available for on-reserve locations only.
- 6** Please refer to our Methodology & Approach section for details about this process.
- 7** References to the mapping and tagging process can be found under the Methodology and Approach section above, located in section 4.1 On-reserve Methodology.
- 8** References to how these listings were categorized can be found under the Methodology and Approach section above, located in section 4.1 On-reserve Methodology.
- 9** History of Housing. (n.d.). BC First Nations Housing & Infrastructure Council. <https://www.fnhic-bc.ca/engagement/phase-2/history-of-housing>
- 10** Belanger, Y. D., Awosoga, O., & Weasel Head, G. (2013). Homelessness, Urban Aboriginal People, and the Need for a National Enumeration. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.5663/aps.v2i2.19006>
- 11** UN General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html> [accessed 17 September 2021]
- 12** Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Second session, Forty-third Parliament, Elizabeth II, 2020-2021
- 13** UN General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295. Accessed September 17, 2021 at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html>
- 14** Assembly of First Nations (2019). Resolution 79/2019: adopted by the Assembly of First Nations, December 3, 2019. Accessed September 17, 2021 at <https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Special-Chiefs-Final-Resolutions.pdf>
- 15** Employment and Social Development Canada (2020). Funding Streams Under Reaching Home. Accessed September 15, 2021, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/homeless.html>
- 16** Employment and Social Development Canada (2020). Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives. Accessed September 15, 2021 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/homelessness/directives.html>
- 17** Employment and Social Development Canada (2020). Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives. Accessed September 15, 2021 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/homelessness/directives.html>

Advancing the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan

On-Reserve Systems Mapping Insights from 230 First Nation Communities

Authored by :
HelpSeeker Technologies



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
alina@helpseeker.org