MONTRÉAL HOMELESSNESS & INDIGENOUS HOUSING

A policy report with recommendations for action

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November 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Widespread modern homelessness has grown in Canada since the 1980s as the result of federal policies, including disinvestment in public housing and social supports as well as lax regulations around real estate speculation. The patchwork of emergency homelessness services that emerged in response was unable to address the root of the crisis, and in 2007, the United Nations declared homelessness in Canada a "national emergency." The COVID-19 pandemic has recently multiplied homelessness in Montréal and across the country, highlighting the degree of housing precarity faced by too many households.

Montréal rents grow increasingly unaffordable every year, with escalating numbers of low-income households entirely unable to find appropriate housing. The Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities commits the City to accounting for "the needs of vulnerable persons and particularly families with low or modest income" in the implementation of housing measures, but these needs are clearly not being met. The average yearly rent of a vacant Montréal single-bedroom apartment currently amounts to nearly 50% of the median income for a Montréal single-person household; being forced to pay such a high proportion of income on rent puts an increasing number of people at critical risk of homelessness. A 2018 count estimates over 3,000 homeless individuals on Montréal island alone, although this number has grown dramatically since the beginning of the pandemic.

Permanent reductions in homelessness require a return to public investment in low-income rental housing. Out of all advanced economies, Canada has one of the highest housing-price-to-income ratios, and one of the lowest proportions of non-market housing. Most other countries have recognized that the private sector cannot be relied upon to build housing that is affordable for lower-income households, simply because it is not profitable. Social housing is the only long-term way to ensure housing security for all, acting as an essential tool in the prevention and elimination of homelessness. Yet even as demand rises, with over 300,000 households experiencing core housing need across Québec, the supply of social housing has stagnated for decades.

Implementing long-term solutions to homelessness is far cheaper than allowing it to continue. A recent study found that homelessness costs the City of Montréal over $56,000 per homeless individual per year. Connecting homeless individuals with housing has been repeatedly shown to generate significant cost savings to municipalities through the reduced need for policing, emergency room visits, and other highly expensive trauma-related services.

Indigenous people experience homelessness at disproportionately high rates, an outcome of colonial legacies combined with ongoing systematic discrimination. The majority of Indigenous Peoples in Canada now reside in urban areas, a population that is expected to continue growing. However, Indigenous people often find inadequate support systems in cities, in addition to discrimination in housing and job markets. Montréal's 2018 homeless count suggests that an Indigenous person on the island is around 27 times more likely to be homeless than a non-Indigenous person, and an Inuk is roughly 80 times more likely. Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Montréal also tend to be underserved by shelter and transitional housing systems, experience more long-term and cyclical homelessness, and are more likely to be ticketed and detained by police. At the same time, Indigenous homeless individuals expressed more often than others the desire to receive many types of services, particularly help finding permanent housing.

In Montréal, recommendations from local organizations, researchers, and community consultations all point to the need for Indigenous-focused social housing. Most recently, Montréal's November 2020 Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples commits the City to supporting Indigenous social housing led by Indigenous organizations. Addressing Indigenous housing through general measures has typically produced inadequate housing solutions. However, a string of past efforts to secure Indigenous social housing in Montréal

have stalled from misguided pushback or insufficient funding. With the opening of its first and only Indigenous social housing project in 2018, Québec lags behind other provinces in addressing the qualitatively distinct needs of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

The primary responsibility of the housing question lies with the federal and provincial governments. While the City of Montréal must do more to permanently address homelessness, municipalities do not have the resources to implement their duty to provide adequate housing alone.

To address the growing homelessness crisis in Montréal, greater investment and coordination in providing culturally appropriate housing are necessary from all levels of government.

CONTENTS

CONTEXT

Widespread modern homelessness in Canada emerged in the 1980s and 90s, accompanying government disinvestment in affordable housing and social supports. Taking the lead from the federal government, provinces also withdrew from the housing sector and downloaded this responsibility to municipal governments. Cities were not equipped to match such skyrocketing demand because they typically rely on property taxes for their funding, a notoriously difficult type of tax to augment or adjust to shifting needs.

Although low-cost rental construction has stagnated, demand has continued to grow in Montréal and across the country. Since the federal withdrawal from social housing in the 1990s, on average only enough new social housing units are built each year to replace units lost to disrepair or redevelopment. Yet the population has continued to grow, particularly in urban areas where the need for low-cost housing is the highest.

While the government has decimated investment in housing for those most in need, it has only increased spending on homeownership subsidies. This includes government insurance for mortgage-backed securitization programs, which has made housing mortgages one of the most profitable operations for commercial banks. Aside from benefitting banks, these subsidies have mainly served already wealthy Canadian households: as homeownership rates among high earners has surged, homeownership has declined among lower-income households since the 80s.[1] The seemingly endless federal spending to subsidize homeownership for higher-earning families suggests that Canada's housing crisis is a matter of policy and distribution, rather than of insufficient resources. For instance, immediately after the coronavirus pandemic hit Canada committed $150 billion to purchase insured mortgage pools through the CMHC to ensure continued mortgage lending, which amounts to more than any other single part of the Economic Response Plan.[2] By contrast, less than $80 billion was set aside for the CERB to provide direct support for individuals, and there was no federal support set aside to make sure tenant households can continue paying the rent.[3]

In the last decades, government policy has also allowed landlords to become financialized, with real estate becoming an increasingly important method of building wealth for institutional investors. Private equity funds, real estate investment trusts, and asset management firms use homes as financial assets that can be traded on international markets, linking global capital with local housing markets.[4] In Montréal, the escalation of housing prices through financialization and speculation can also be seen in the proliferation of Airbnbs, which has taken tens of thousands of units out of the long-term rental market just on the island. Such dynamics reinforce each other, with increasing demand for real estate investment driving up housing prices and further adding to the perception that real estate is a desirable financial asset. The result is an overall shift from valuing housing for its 'use value' as a social good toward its much more expensive 'exchange value' as a commodity.

Across the country, growing numbers of people unable to find affordable housing has turned into a homelessness crisis. Non-governmental organizations attempted to respond through a patchwork provision of emergency services that resulted in little progress, and in 2007 the United Nations declared homelessness in Canada a "national emergency."

In 2017, the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing sent the Government of Canada an allegation letter[5] on Canada's homelessness record, noting that:

- **Canada is a relatively affluent country which has the resources necessary to ensure that no one is homeless in so harsh a climate.**

- **Homelessness lies at the extreme end of the spectrum of violations of the right to adequate housing.** As such, States should treat homelessness with the highest level of urgency.

- **Homelessness is also a product of broader systemic factors and structural causes, such as**

unregulated housing markets, scarcity of affordable housing and inadequate social protection or minimum wages. For example, "over-reliance on private market housing supply to respond to urban housing needs …may result in new housing supply being targeted mostly toward the rich, creating inflated real estate values, speculation and significant deficits of affordable housing."

From international government agencies to community organizations, practitioners and researchers have reached the same conclusion: a permanent reduction in homelessness requires more government investment in low-cost rental housing. In recent years, Canada has topped the OECD index as one of three countries with the highest housing-price-to-income ratio.[6] Almost alone among advanced economies, the overwhelming majority of Canada's housing supply is built, allocated, and maintained by the private market. Most other high-income countries have recognized that a housing system based on the market mechanism cannot respond to social need. For instance, homeowners in Canada have on average twice the income as renters,[7] so condominium developers will always be able to outbid rental developers for residential sites. The private sector cannot be relied upon to build rental housing that is truly affordable for low- and moderate-income households, simply because it is not profitable.

Cooperative and non-profit social housing represent the most comprehensive methods of implementing the right to housing for all, acting as essential tools in the prevention and reduction of homelessness. In contrast with "affordable" housing linked to the market rate or rent subsidies for market units, social housing can ensure long-term affordability. Because such units cannot be bought and sold on the market, prices cannot be inflated through real estate speculation. Social housing that reflects the actual cost of housing provision (rather than the maximum the market can bear) can offer permanent ways of meeting ongoing needs. And compared to public housing that is often implemented in a top-down and standardized manner, cooperative and non-profit social housing that is collectively owned or managed can foster community engagement and generate significant social benefits.

Indigenous homelessness

In Montréal and across Canada, colonial legacies combined with ongoing systematic discrimination place Indigenous people at a greater risk of becoming homeless. Today's exclusion of Indigenous people from housing has its roots in this intentional destabilization of culture. Examples listed below encompass a small portion of such history. These are not intended to represent the diverse experiences of all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, but are meant to illustrate how any efforts to address Indigenous homelessness must acknowledge and respond to deeply rooted structural violence.

RESERVES AND THE PASS SYSTEM

Colonial projects have ensured that Indigenous people are alienated from access to traditional land and resources, intentionally placing them in precarious and dependent economic positions. Set up through the Indian Act of 1876, reserves were seen as a way to overcome land disputes that arose from migration of settlers, who would occupy traditional First Nations lands without consent from the bands. While Canadian authorities supposedly wanted to force Indigenous Peoples into sedentary lifestyles, reserves were typically located on undesirable remote plots of land that were unfit for farming.

The pass system, in place from 1884 to 1951, required First Nations people to obtain permission to leave the reserve, creating a prison-like situation. Particularly if a community was nomadic, semi-nomadic, engaging in seasonal hunts, or in need of accessing natural resources off-reserve due to the poor condition of many reserved

lands, the pass system could create severe barriers to subsistence.

Not only can such displacement from traditional lands lead to cultural and spiritual losses, but the disadvantages associated with being forced to reside on such remote and insufficient land put Indigenous Peoples at increased risk of homelessness.

HIGH ARCTIC RELOCATIONS

Although the Indian Act and reservation system apply only to First Nations, the Inuit have also had to deal with forced sedentarization in the High Arctic relocation of the 1950s. In part to assert sovereignty in the Arctic as the United States heightened its Cold War military presence, the Canadian government decided to move Inuit as much as 2000 km north to two barren Arctic islands. Authorities promised improved living conditions and the ability to return after two years if they wished, which both proved false.

Instead, the relocated Inuit found a far colder climate, with constant winter darkness and very limited wildlife compared to traditional lands in Northern Québec. As igloos could not be constructed on the frozen terrain, families were forced to live in canvas tents. Many Inuit were only able to leave the High Arctic when they were sent south for tuberculosis treatment, which created more family separation. Though Canada issued an official apology for the relocations in 2010, the government must do much more to assist Inuit people still living in the High Arctic and redress all who were impacted.

In addition to the High Arctic relocations, Canadian attacks on Inuit culture and livelihood also include residential schools and seal hunting bans. [8]

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Beginning in the mid-1800s, Indigenous children were placed in government-funded, church-run schools set up to force assimilation of Indigenous children. More than 150,000 children were placed in these schools, many taken coercively from their homes. Children were forbidden from speaking their own languages or practising their own cultural and spiritual practices. Although residential schooling was not uniformly negative for all people, its overall effects were devastating, with many Indigenous children were exposed to serious physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Studies have shown a significant proportion of survivors of residential schools have symptoms that meet the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. [9]

The last schools finally closed in 1996, and around 80,000 residential school survivors are still living today. The ongoing trauma of the schools has also had an intergenerational impact, and has generated a mistrust of public education and government services among many Indigenous people. According to a 2011 study, half of Indigenous respondents in Montréal said they have been affected by residential schools, either personally or through a family member. The majority (80%) said that this experience has had an impact on their lives and on who they are today. [10]

SIXTIES SCOOP AND CHILD WELFARE POLICIES

When the residential schools began to close in the mid-20th century, child welfare and the foster care system effectively became the government's new assimilation policy. Indigenous children are removed from their homes and communities by child welfare authorities and placed in foster care at even higher rates than children previously attended residential school. By the end of the 1960s, 30-40% of children in state care were Indigenous.

Without cultural supports for Indigenous children, non-Indigenous families may have been unaware of how to address issues of racism, prejudice and loss.

A 2016 study that showed that three out of five homeless youth were part of the child welfare system at some point in their lives, a rate almost 200 times greater than that of the general population. Youth who aged out of provincial care lose access to the sort of support that could have kept them from becoming homeless.

URBAN MIGRATION AND ONGOING HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

The proportion of Indigenous populations living in urban centres has grown steadily since the 1960s. As of the 2016 Census, 52% of Indigenous people lived in towns and cities with a population of at least 30,000.[11] This Indigenous urban population is expected to continue growing, particularly in larger Canadian cities. Montréal island alone is home to over 13,000 Indigenous people,[12] with nearly 35,000 across the CMA. This means that since 2006, the Montréal population identifying as First Nations or Inuit increased by over 50%, and the population identifying as Métis increased by around 150%. (According to Statistics Canada, this growth in numbers is partly due to the fact that over time more people are newly identifying as Indigenous—it is likely that some of these people were already living in Montréal but had not previously identified themselves as Indigenous due to an increased wish to acknowledge origins and a more positive perception of Indigenous identity.)

Many Indigenous people move to cities to study, find work, or to join family.[10] Additionally, there continues to be severe underfunding for on-reserve housing and infrastructure, encouraging migration to urban centres. For example, lack of plumbing and electricity, poor insulation, mould, lack of major repairs, and overcrowding continues to impact a significant proportion of reserves. Although Canada has more freshwater than anywhere else in the world, 75% of reserves have contaminated water, with some communities declaring a state of emergency because of toxic chemical levels in the water.[13] Many Canadian cities also occupy the traditional territories and reserves of First Nations.[14]

However, Indigenous people often find inadequate support systems in cities, in addition to discrimination in housing markets and job markets. A 2019 nationwide study by the Native Women's Association of Canada found that nearly half of participants experienced discrimination from a landlord when trying to rent. A report by the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association also found that Indigenous households experience significant racism in the non-Indigenous housing system and see themselves denied services and misunderstood by these providers. In the context of a generalized shortage of rental housing in Montréal, discrimination makes it even more difficult for many Indigenous people to find appropriate housing. Racism likewise affects ability to gain employment, perpetuating housing instability.

Jurisdictional issues regarding the responsibility of providing support for Indigenous families who are living off-reserve mean that many Indigenous people have been passed back and forth between systems, inadequately housed in their own community and not eligible for urban housing supports. According to a 2020 study, even when Indigenous families are entitled to certain supports, there is often "discrimination in the provision of services, resulting in barriers to access. Misconceptions from others (including service providers) led to assumptions that Indigenous families are given financial supports because of their Indigenous status." If they were eligible for funding from their home community, it was usually in small amounts that were insufficient in supporting their families. Nevertheless, "resentment against perceived funding for Indigenous people was evident, indicating a lack of understanding regarding Treaty legislation."[15]

Additionally, Indigenous Peoples often do not participate in the housing market on equal footing, as the government-imposed reserve system limits their ability to obtain mortgages or home improvement loans. The housing selection process includes credit history checks, which automatically excludes many Indigenous people

who often lack any credit history. Interviews with Indigenous housing providers have revealed that as a result of such issues, "Indigenous households in core need cannot be blended into the market rent or 'affordable' rent categories."[16]

Montréal is home to a more significant Inuit population than most other Canadian cities.[11] Among Indigenous Peoples in the city, Inuit are more likely to face acute economic and housing insecurity. This includes particularly high rates of unemployment, living in dwellings that require major repairs, and the prevalence of single-parent households. As many as 90% of Inuit residing in Montréal are originally from outside the city, most often Nunavik, and many Inuit have difficulty entering the job market in the city due to systemic, educational, and linguistic barriers. For example, almost 39% of Inuit in Montréal claim Inuktitut as their first language, and many are not proficient in the French language.[10]

A 2011 survey found that despite fairly strong connections to their ancestry, to their community of origin, and to other Inuit in the city, over half of Inuit in Montréal are concerned about how to maintain their cultural identity in the city.[10] This concern is likely related to being not only a minority group within Montréal, but also within the Indigenous community. For example, while 48% of Inuit in Montréal say there are at least some Indigenous cultural activities available in their community, these activities are much more likely to be related to First Nations culture than specific to Inuit culture.

Definition of Indigenous homelessness

Particularly in the last decade, Indigenous notions of housing and home are being increasingly recognized as qualitatively distinct. More attention has been paid to the connections Indigenous people have with homelands and kinship networks, as well as to the dislocation from traditional territories, that has led what is sometimes referred to as a "spiritual homelessness." An Indigenous-specific definition of homelessness advanced by Jesse Thistle and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness has been adopted by many researchers, community organizations, and government agencies as a guide to understanding and responding to Indigenous homelessness in Canada:

"Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships."[17]

Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, policy analysts and governments are calling for culturally responsive services that account for Indigenous social, historical and cultural contexts. Colonial legacies such as residential schools and the Sixties Scoop resulted in trauma and cultural disconnection, fracturing many people's ability to form trusting relationships with service providers.

Despite the realities of structural violence and cultural genocide, service providers have remarked on the resilience of Indigenous clients who have experienced intergenerational trauma, which has sometimes been attributed to many Indigenous-specific cultural and spiritual factors that facilitate healing.[18] [19]

Homelessness in Montréal

A 2018 count of the entire homeless population on the island of Montréal found a total of 3,149 people experiencing absolute homelessness. [20] The count included 678 unsheltered people, who were primarily concentrated in Ville-Marie (54%) and the Plateau (21%). Counts taking place the same night across 11 target regions of Québec estimated a total of 5,789 homeless individuals, meaning that Montréal homelessness accounted for over half of the province's total. [21]

Compared with Montréal's only previous Homeless Count in 2015, the 2018 Count marked an increase in the visibly homeless population. Researchers link this increase to the rising cost of rent in Montréal, which increased by 8% between 2015 and 2018. They noted that they would expect the resulting increase in homelessness to be even greater if there weren't so many programs in Montréal to help residents obtain and maintain permanent housing.

It should also be noted that the above numbers only includes those experiencing "absolute" homelessness. "Hidden homelessness"—staying temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency, such as couchsurfing or sex work—and other forms of housing precarity are not included. **Because a disproportionate number of Indigenous people, women, and young people experience hidden homelessness, these groups are likely significantly underrepresented in the count.**

Among those who were counted in Montréal, 23% identified as women and 3% identified as non-binary. On average, women had experienced their first episode of homelessness more recently than men, and 18% had lost their housing as a result of domestic abuse. **Women were also more likely to be part of demographic groups that put them at the intersection of multiple types of discrimination or violence:**

- The proportion of women was much higher for youth (39% of homeless individuals under 30 were women).

- Twice as many women identified as non-heterosexual (19%) compared to men (9%).

- A larger proportion of women were immigrants (25%) than men (18%), although this is still smaller than the total proportion of immigrants on the island (34%). In a separate report by the Conseil des Montréalaises based on consultations from 2015-2016, social workers noted there has been a massive influx of recently immigrated women, particularly in the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood, a common place of residence for new arrivals. Their services often do not have the resources to help these women, who are sometimes non-status, refugees, waiting to receive permanent residency, or struggling to navigate a complex system without speaking French or English. [22]

- The 2018 count found that higher proportions of women (22%) and non-binary people (40%) identified as Indigenous compared to men (13%). The Conseil des Montréalaises report also noted that Indigenous women are often accompanied by children, with more support including permanent housing needed for this population. **Both reports found that Indigenous women tend to be particularly underserved by homelessness services.**

Overall, 16% of respondents in the homeless count identified as Indigenous (5.2% First Nations, 3.7% Métis, 2.9% Inuit, and 4.3% of Indigenous descent), a stark contrast with just 0.7% of the general population identifying as Indigenous on Montréal island.[12] Among Indigenous respondents, Inuit were particularly overrepresented: 25% of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were Inuit, compared to 5% of the Indigenous population on the Island of Montréal. **Put differently, an Indigenous person on the island of Montréal is about 27 times more likely to be homeless than a non-Indigenous person, and Inuit are roughly 80 times more likely to be homeless.**

The homeless count found that respondents identifying as Indigenous were:

- **More likely to be unsheltered or be experiencing hidden homelessness**, with fewer staying in transitional housing.

- **More likely to have been stopped, searched, or ticketed by police in the last year** (57% versus 44% for non-Indigenous). One quarter (24%) had been detained during the past year, compared with 15% for non-Indigenous respondents.

- **More likely to express a desire for almost all types of services**, especially for physical health services (49% vs. 34%), for addiction services (35% vs. 24%), or for help with legal problems (40% vs. 30%). Overall, 64% of Indigenous respondents wanted help to find and keep their own housing—by far the most desired type of service among all groups, including outdoor sleepers.

- **More likely to experience long-term and cyclical homelessness.** Indigenous respondents had arrived in Montréal more recently on average, although more than half had been there for 10 years or more. They were proportionately more likely to report experiencing their first episode of homelessness 5 years or more ago, and to have spent the entire year in a situation of homelessness.

These findings are consistent with studies that cover homelessness across Canada, which indicate that Indigenous peoples tend to experience more "episodic homelessness" (when an individual experiences at least three episodes of homelessness during the year). Indigenous shelter users tend to cycle in and out of shelters with high frequency, but stay for shorter periods of time than non-Indigenous shelter users.[23] Frequent migration between urban centres and First Nations communities may partially explain this. Additionally, youth moving to cities for work or school often avoid traditional homelessness, but unstable housing can prevent them from completing school or maintaining work. **These gaps in services speak to the need for more low-barrier and culturally appropriate Indigenous housing—both temporary and permanent.**

Additionally, there are few services tailored to the distinct needs of Inuit residents. A 2018 survey that interviewed clients of Montréal community services found that Inuit participants, "isolated in part by language, seem more likely to form a separate community within Montréal, less connected to the public service network, and less attracted by this network, than First Nations people."[24] Québec's 2019 CERP report also documented a shortage of services for Inuit in Montréal, including homelessness services.

A 2017 consultation also found that "many Indigenous detainees end up in provincial detention centres, and upon release they are stuck in Montréal where a significant number become homeless due to a lack of a proper reintegration and prevention of recidivism programming."[25] Indigenous people make up 15% of Québec's detainees, although they only represent 2.3% of the population in the province.[26] There are no Indigenous-specific justice services in Montréal, and many of the services that exist lack the knowledge, information, and intervention skills to appropriately assist Indigenous clients.

The Montréal homeless population has dramatically increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began, with many people losing their jobs and being forced on the street—some estimate the homeless population has doubled since the beginning of the year. Large tent cities that sprung up during summer of 2020 included many people recently forced on the street in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. These encampments have shrunk since summer, but there are still dozens of tents outside as weather gets cold. The City has conducted no consultations with residents of the tent cities, but is increasing the number of emergency beds as a response. Yet according to housing advocates and residents of encampments, opening more emergency shelters is not the solution. Many unsheltered people say they do not want to go to temporary shelters, even with winter coming, because they are afraid of catching COVID, because of various restrictions in centres, or because they do not want to leave the sense of community developed in encampments.[27] **What many say they want is more social housing, and other means to secure permanent housing.**

The public cost of homelessness

Implementing sustainable, long-term solutions to homelessness is far cheaper than allowing it to continue. A wealth of studies in Montréal and beyond indicate that spending on low-income housing or rent subsidies offsets its own price by reducing the immense cost of policing and emergency care.

Most recently, a 2017 study found that in Montréal it costs $56,406 per year to provide services for one homeless individual with a mental disorder[28] (according to the researchers, this criterion includes a significant proportion of people experiencing absolute homelessness). This includes police and incarceration ($10,077); hospital stays, ER visits and ambulance trips ($21,186), as well as shelters and supportive housing ($10,123). The study suggests that a heavier focus on preventative measures and programming that addresses housing and mental health needs would be more cost-effective for society at large.

Similarly, although a 2009-2011 supported housing trial in Montréal was controversial (see below, *Canada's homelessness strategy: At Home to Reaching Home*), the program did show that it is feasible to provide hundreds of homeless individuals with safe housing in subsidized apartments at minimal cost to society.[29] For every $10.00 invested in the program, $8.27 was saved in reductions in costs to police arrests and social services for high-need participants, and $7.19 was saved for moderate-need participants.

These local findings are backed up by research from across Canada, finding that supportive and affordable housing can be much cheaper than institutional responses such as policing or emergency shelters.[30] [31]

Additionally, the status quo of high spending on emergency support services does not succeed in reducing or preventing homelessness. Compared to the financial cost, the human toll looms incomparably larger, as people experiencing homelessness face high levels of mortality and illness. Without access to permanent housing it is nearly impossible to address substance use or mental health issues, let alone improve education, secure a job, or otherwise have the ability to improve life circumstances.

POLICY RESPONSE

International framework: Right to housing

Canada has an immediate obligation under international law to prioritize resources available to addressing homelessness and to take action as urgently as reasonably possible to eliminate homelessness.[32] In 2015, Canada adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which includes ensuring "access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing."[33] The right to housing is also recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Canada is a party.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which is charged with monitoring the implementation of the 1966 treaty, has rejected definitions of adequate housing that focused on physical shelter and instead adopted a definition linked directly to the right to life. In its 1991 General Comment No. 4 the CESCR states, "The right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one's head or views shelter exclusively as a

commodity. Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity."
Characteristics of adequate housing are defined as:

1. **Legal security of tenure**: protection against forced eviction or harassment

2. **Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure**: housing contains the resources necessary for health, security, comfort and nutrition

3. **Affordability**: housing costs do not prevent people from satisfying their other basic needs

4. **Habitability**: housing contains adequate space, guarantees physical safety and protects occupants from the environment, health threats and structural hazards

5. **Accessibility**: housing must be accessible to those entitled to it, and disadvantaged groups are given some degree of priority consideration in the housing sphere

6. **Location**: housing is situated away from polluted sites and allows access to employment options, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities

7. **Cultural adequacy**: the way housing is constructed, the building materials used and the policies supporting these appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing[34]

The CESCR's 1997 General Comment No. 7 also clarifies that forced evictions are a gross violation of human rights, and must never render individuals homeless. All feasible alternatives to eviction must be explored, in consultation with affected persons. If, after meaningful engagement with those affected, relocation is deemed necessary, States "must take all appropriate measures, to the maximum of its available resources, to ensure that adequate alternative housing, resettlement or access to productive land, as the case may be, is available."[35]

UN 2015 and 2019 guidelines for rights-based responses to housing issues also include the following requirements for addressing homelessness:

- **States have an immediate obligation to respond urgently to the needs of persons who are currently homeless** as well as to implement plans to prevent and eliminate systemic homelessness as swiftly as possible.[36] Policy and planning must apply the maximum of available resources, including unused or vacant lands and housing units, with a view to ensuring access to land and housing for marginalized groups.[37]

- **Individuals and families should be provided access to adequate permanent housing** so as not to be compelled to rely on emergency accommodation for extended periods.[36]

- **The right to meaningful and effective participation is a core element of the right to housing and critical to dignity, the exercise of agency, autonomy and self-determination.** Those in need of housing or related social benefits should be treated as rights holders and as experts in what is required for a dignified life, not recipients of charity. They are entitled to participate actively, freely and meaningfully in the design and implementation of programs and policies affecting them.[36]

- States have a firm legal obligation to regulate and engage with non-State actors to ensure that all of their actions and policies are in accordance with the right to adequate housing and the prevention and amelioration of homelessness. **Regulation of private actors should include requirements on developers and investors to address homelessness and work in partnership to provide affordable housing in all developments**.[37]

The right to safe and secure housing is also codified in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Although Canada was one of only 4 states to vote against UNDRIP when it was adopted by the General

Assembly in 2007, the Canadian government eventually declared unqualified support for the document in 2016. UN guidelines[13] for realizing the right to housing articulated in UNDRIP include Indigenous-specific housing programs:

- **When addressing Indigenous Peoples' housing through general measures, there is a significant risk that the resulting interventions will not take into account the specific needs of Indigenous Peoples** and will be carried out without due consultation and respect for their right to self-determination. This may result in culturally inadequate housing solutions for Indigenous People.

- **Generic housing programs can also exclude Indigenous Peoples entirely**. For example, Indigenous Peoples often cannot gain access to mortgage or credit schemes because they do not have proof of individual land title, or lack the resources necessary to secure a loan.

- **Policies aimed at preventing and addressing homelessness among Indigenous Peoples should be tailored** and respond to their specific cultural, historical, social and economic circumstances, and to the conflict and trauma incurred at the hands of past colonial governments, private actors, religious institutions, childcare and correctional service institutions, and their own communities or families.

Yet while Indigenous notions of housing and home are being increasingly recognized in Canada as qualitatively distinct, in practice the recognition of Indigeneity in urban housing policy is often lacking. Social housing provision is typically still tied to Eurocentric notions of "universal citizenship" that tend to neglect the specificity of Indigenous housing needs. Canada recently took a step in the right direction by including investment streams specifically for Indigenous housing in its first-ever National Housing Strategy, although the funding is still inadequate to address widespread housing insecurity.

Finally passed in 2019, Canada's National Housing Strategy Act officially recognizes that "the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law," and requires the government of Canada to "further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."[38] The UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing commended the Act for legally establishing "creative mechanisms to monitor and hold the Government accountable" in ensuring access to adequate housing for all. However, she also commented on the urgency of the policy's mandate—"despite Canada's global standing as a top 10 performing economy, there are at least 235,000 homeless people, and 1.34 million households in core housing need."[39]

It must also be noted that international human rights obligations extend to all levels of government, and effective implementation of the right to adequate housing cannot be achieved without the proactive involvement of local and provincial governments. According to a 2014 UN report:[40]

- Trends toward decentralization and greater responsibilities for local and subnational governments have meant that States' obligations under international human rights law increasingly rely on implementation by local and subnational governments.

- The drive for decentralization can resonate with many core values linked to the right to adequate housing, including local empowerment, meaningful engagement, and enhanced accountability and transparency. Local governments are in a position to bring forward the experiences of marginalized groups and others whose rights have not been ensured and to find solutions.

- **However, decentralization is not always favourable to the implementation of the right to adequate housing, in particular, due to the scarcity of financial resources at local levels**: "Lack of resources can lead subnational governments to make decisions that negatively affect the realization of the right to adequate housing. For example, at the municipal level it is not uncommon for available land or property to be used as an asset for real estate development rather than for the provision of adequate housing."

- **States must ensure that local and subnational governments have adequate financial and other**

resources for the discharge of their responsibilities, with capacity to respond to changing housing needs at the local level, particularly of marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

The report also notes that the responsibilities of different levels of government are not self-standing. Where national or regional governments provide funding for housing and related programs, the realization of the right to adequate housing does not rely solely on any one level of government, but on the relationship between levels of government.

Canada's homelessness strategy: At Home to Reaching Home

Until last year, most funding for housing programs to address homelessness came from the Harper government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), which used a Housing First approach through prescriptive top-down implementation. Because the strategy was premised on creating evidence-based solutions, many of the program's outcomes were studied by researchers, in particular the At Home / Chez Soi (AHCS) trial programs. As a result of this extensive documentation, we can draw lessons from the successes and numerous shortcomings of this approach.

The Housing First approach to homelessness was first developed as a response to the failure of existing programs, where clients would typically have to earn their way back into independent housing and prove they were clean of drugs. Housing First rejected the premise of housing readiness, instead providing immediate access to permanent housing, which was shown to act as a form of treatment in itself. Evidence from around the world has repeatedly shown how once housing is unconditionally provided, individuals are better able to overcome personal challenges that underlie their previous experiences of homelessness.

In Canada, Housing First was implemented as the solution to homelessness by the city of Calgary in 2008, where it was declared such a success: the vast majority of people who accessed Housing First services were able to retain their housing, with drastic reductions in emergency room visits, hospital stays, interactions with the police, and incarceration. The city found that, "Compared to the costs of running an emergency shelter system, the cost of providing longer-term housing and support is negligible."[41] The Housing First idea was subsequently picked up by the federal government, running the At Home / Chez Soi (AHCS) project from 2009-2013, an experimental intervention designed to test the effectiveness of Housing First across five Canadian cities, including in Montréal.

Studies of the AHCS intervention across these cities found that while the immediate provision of housing was effective for improving safety and longer-term outcomes for those who were able to participate, the narrow scope of the Housing First limited its effectiveness. For example, the Housing First definition of homelessness only includes absolute or "visible" homelessness. Those who are in core housing need, precariously housed, or experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g. those temporarily staying with friends or relatives, a type of homelessness disproportionately experienced by women and Indigenous people) were excluded from the program entirely.

Similarly, the lack of consultation and standardized implementation of AHCS was not ideal for all communities. In Montréal, a city with a strong existing network of organizations that address homelessness, many community organizations felt that project funding for these entirely new programs was undermining effective programs that had been in place for years. Additionally, the fact that rent subsidies were given to private landlords was frustrating to many long-time housing advocates, who believed that directly funding more social housing would be a more sustainable use of public spending.

Additionally, the Housing First strategy is not necessarily supported by local Indigenous ways of knowing, and is rarely focused on the specific needs of Indigenous families. Researchers looking at the AHCS trial in

Winnipeg[42] found that the project had a "mixed impact on the experiences of its Indigenous participants and their success in creating a sense of home in the city." Those interviewed expressed that their "sense of home remained disconnected from their housing experiences, in the sense of being connected to land, family, and community." The researchers noted "significant structural constraints, particularly the lack of culturally appropriate affordable housing in the city and the more general systemic erasure of Indigeneity from the urban sociocultural and political landscape." The researchers suggested that more family- and community-oriented housing programs, which facilitate inclusion of Indigenous ceremony and spirituality, would generally be more relevant to developing a sense of 'home' for Indigenous families. Along with increased investment in services on reserves and sustained collaboration between all levels of government to address the shortage of housing for Indigenous urban populations, the study also cited the need for "sustained financial support for urban Indigenous organizations working at the grassroots to enable them improve and extend their services to the growing number of urban Indigenous people."

Despite controversy among long-time housing advocates and community service providers, the outcomes of the ACHS trial informed the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) introduced in 2013, which delivered funding annually to a variety of agencies and local nonprofits. The program was highly prescriptive, requiring that 65% of the funding for recipient communities be used for Housing First. In Vancouver, Indigenous organizations reported that they struggled to successfully apply for the HPS. Additionally, according to the Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation, the redirection of funds toward Housing First programs between 2014-2018 contributed to the delay in the development of new social housing units.

In 2019, the Trudeau administration replaced HPS with Reaching Home, a more community-based approach, as part of Canada's first National Housing Strategy. Reaching Home aims to continue the outcomes-based approach of Housing First, but delivers funding directly to municipalities and local service providers. All Housing First investment targets have been removed to give communities more flexibility to address local needs and priorities. Communities have 3 years to introduce a Coordinated Access system to prioritize people who are most in need of assistance and match them to appropriate housing and services.[43]

Responding to the setbacks of the previous strategy, Reaching Home's Indigenous Homelessness stream intends to provide funding specifically to urban Indigenous organizations to ensure culturally appropriate services are available to Indigenous people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. A total of $ 413 million is earmarked for Indigenous homelessness issues in urban centres through 2028.[44] Organizations must apply for the funding and meet the program requirements—eligible applicants include permanent supportive housing, non-supported housing, and Indigenous housing options delivered by Indigenous organizations.[45]

However, the National Housing Strategy's emphasis on chronic homelessness may continue to overlook hidden homelessness as well as more holistic community-oriented approaches to implementing the right to housing. Additionally, many housing providers and advocates have argued that the Reaching Home goal of a 50% reduction in homelessness over the next 10 years conflicts with the NHS's stated objective of a rights-based approach to housing, which should ensure that everyone is appropriately housed.[46]

After three years of negotiations, the Ottawa-Québec agreement concerning the National Housing Strategy was secured in October 2020. This provides for the equal investments by the two levels of government for a total of nearly $ 3.7 billion over 10 years, which includes the finance of 2,800 to 4,000 housing units through the AccèsLogis program. However, these numbers are not nearly sufficient to repair the damage caused by the federal disinvestment from housing in 1994, which deprived Québec of 80,000 new social housing units.[47] Additionally, the agreement has too little focus on social housing compared with "affordable" housing, which is often unaffordable even for moderate-income households. Montréal's housing manager says Québec will have to deploy additional sums to meet Montréal's housing needs.

Québec and Montréal policy

Official strategies published by both Québec and Montréal governments over the last years increasingly recognize the importance of low-cost housing in addressing homelessness, and call for the creation of housing and homelessness strategies tailored to the specific needs of Indigenous Peoples.

After years of struggle by organizations working on homelessness, the Québec government adopted the *Politique nationale de lutte à l'itinérance* in 2014, which recognizes that homelessness constitutes a denial of rights and that it is necessary to act on several fronts to simultaneously prevent and to reduce homelessness. The framework views community supported social housing as an essential tool. Additionally, the *Politique nationale* recognizes the unique needs of Indigenous housing and commits to supporting Indigenous initiatives to prevent and address homelessness.

However, social housing construction has stagnated in Québec for decades, despite growing need. As of the 2016 Census, over 300,000 households in Québec were in core housing need, unable to afford adequate housing in the current supply. [48]

Additionally, with the opening of the first Indigenous-focused social housing project in 2018, and no Indigenous social housing in Montréal, Québec lags behind the other provinces in addressing the unique needs of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. Québec's Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services (CERP) was created as a result of events revealing the existence of systemic racism toward Indigenous peoples in the delivery of public services in the province. CERP's 2019 report calls on the Québec government to provide sustainable funding for services to homeless Indigenous clienteles as well as funding social housing initiatives for urban Indigenous peoples. [49]

Kijaté, Val-d'Or: Québec's only Indigenous social housing

Opened in 2018, Kijaté is the first Indigenous community housing project under the Québec AccèsLogis program, and to this day remains the only permanent social housing for Indigenous people in the province. The project began in 2009 as a community initiative to address homelessness and substandard housing among the Indigenous population in Val-d'Or, who often faced housing discrimination on top of a generalized housing crisis in the city. The project faced years of resistance from the city council, with the mayor claiming the project would create a ghetto and that Indigenous housing amounted to discrimination against the non-Indigenous population. The struggle was taken all the way to the Human Rights Commission of Québec, which ruled in favour of the Kijaté project—if housing for the elderly wasn't discrimination, they reasoned, then neither was housing for another population segment.

Finally, $6 million in support was provided by Québec, in the form of a guaranteed mortgage loan as well as grants in accordance with the AccèsLogis program. The City of Val-d'Or donated the land, connection to municipal services and 10% of the rent supplement program. All the tenants of the project benefit from the SHQ's Rent Supplement program, ensuring that they do not spend more than 25% of their income on housing.

Kijaté's 24-unit building integrates common spaces to facilitate organization of collective kitchen activities, various workshops, training, and counselling services. The project is run by the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Center, which also provides emergency shelters for men and women, assistance in finding housing, and a variety of culturally appropriate services.

The City of Montréal has also made significant commitments in recent years to implementing the right to adequate housing for all. To begin with, the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, adopted by the City Council in 2005 as a result of a citizen consensus, commits the city to:

- Providing homeless persons with temporary and secure shelter, as quickly as possible, should such persons have expressed the need;

- Accounting for the needs of vulnerable persons and particularly families with low or modest income," in the implementation of housing measures; as well as

- Maintaining, with the support of government partners, assistance measures for vulnerable persons that foster their access to appropriate and affordable housing.

Fifteen years later, there is still a critical need to improve on all these measures, particularly in helping low-income people access appropriate and affordable housing in Montréal. **In a city where two-thirds of the population are renters, Montréal rents grow increasingly unaffordable every year compared to even median incomes, and escalating numbers of low-income households are entirely unable to find appropriate housing:**

- Over 23,000 people in Montréal are currently on a waiting list for public housing.

- According to the 2016 Census, over 30% of households on Montréal island spent at least 30% of their income on shelter costs.

- In 2019, Montréal CMA vacancy rates hit a 15-year low at 1.5%, far below the 3% vacancy rates accepted as the sign of a healthy housing market. The rate was even lower for family housing with three or more bedrooms (0.7%).

- The average rent for vacant apartments is 43% higher than occupied apartments, which makes finding affordable housing nearly impossible for those who need to move or have been evicted.[50] The average price of a vacant single-bedroom apartment currently goes for $13,700 per year,[51] nearly half of the median income for Montréal single-person households according to the 2016 Census ($27,900).

- Even before the pandemic hit in early 2020, housing committees around Montréal reported that they've never seen so many people calling for help with an eviction or repossession case.[52]

To address its growing homelessness crisis, Montréal must shift its focus from temporary emergency housing to more permanent solutions, such as dramatic increases in social housing.

Montréal's 2018-2020 homelessness action plan took steps in this direction by recognizing that permanent housing is an essential component of addressing and preventing homelessness.[53] To this end, the strategy called on the need for:

- Ensuring a continuous production of social housing through AccèsLogis, with supports for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

- The SHDM to prioritize the allocation of units to people at risk of homelessness.

- A proportion of SHQ rent supplements to be reserved for those at risk of homelessness.

- Promoting the development of approaches that support residential stability generally.

- Culturally adapted services tailored to the specific needs of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

In the spirit of promoting the continuous production of social housing, in 2019 the City of Montréal proposed a

bylaw known as "20-20-20", initially requiring 20% each of social, affordable, and family housing in new constructions. After much pushback, the City revised the bylaw to limit its impact on developers by restricting the application of affordable housing criteria to a couple of densifying sectors. Social housing must still make up 20% of units in all developments larger than 450 m², and the bylaw is estimated to result in the construction of 600 social housing units and 500 family-sized units annually. However, FRAPRU points out that, as it will take 22,500 social housing units in Montréal just to meet obvious needs, the 20% required in new builds is not nearly enough. [54] On the other hand, critics worry that without consistent requirements across the metropolitan area, developers will simply move to neighbouring municipalities. Such regulations could be much more effective if implemented at a higher level of government.

In November 2020, Montréal released its Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, which also aligns with the recommendations of the homelessness action plan and specifically commits the City to supporting Indigenous social housing led by Indigenous organizations. In accordance with recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Québec's CERP, and the OCPM's 2020 report on systematic racism, the strategy commits the City of Montréal to:

- Supporting social housing for certain targeted Indigenous groups, such as transitional housing or homes for Indigenous women and families.

- Supporting culturally adapted projects in local plans to combat homelessness by prioritizing projects coordinated or supported by Indigenous organizations.

- Creating culturally appropriate services specifically for Inuit experiencing homelessness, including short-term as well as long-term accommodations. This must be done in collaboration with Inuit governmental authorities, community organizations, and the Government of Québec.

- Promoting the deployment of Indigenous design projects within municipal projects.

- Offering municipal employees training to raise awareness of historical and contemporary Indigenous realities, and promoting culturally adapted first responders who can respond to calls when a police presence is unnecessary. [55]

While the City of Montréal has recognized the growing housing crisis and taken some steps to address it, municipalities do not have the resources to implement their duty to provide adequate housing alone; Québec must address its deficit of low-cost housing by establishing a provincial housing strategy. This should include a plan to return to former levels of social housing construction, and include a specific fund for Indigenous social housing. The resistance to Montréal's 20-20-20 bylaw and the insufficiency of its expected results shows how the private sector cannot be relied upon for building new social housing. Mass investment in social housing construction would also help promote economic recovery from the looming post-pandemic recession.

Case study: British Columbia's housing strategy

In its 30-Point Plan for Housing Affordability, the BC government committed to help build 114,000 affordable rental, non-profit, supported social housing, and owner-purchase housing from 2018-2028. The plan includes:

- **A specific Indigenous Housing Fund,** which invests $550 million to support the building and operation of 1,750 new social housing units—twice as much funding as the federal government pledges for Indigenous social housing across Canada (over a similar time frame) in its National Housing Strategy. The housing projects are to be designed and implemented in collaboration with Indigenous housing societies and First Nations. Additionally, the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA), in partnership with BC Housing, provides provincial funding to off-reserve Indigenous community-based organizations.

- **A Supportive Housing Fund to help immediately house people experiencing or at risk of homelessness**, investing $1.2 billion to build and operate 2,500 new supportive housing units. This program is expected to create more than 2,000 jobs throughout the province.[56] Support services and 24/7 staffing are provided through the Rapid Response to Homelessness program.

  Thousands of temporary modular housing units have already been completed; modular structures carry a significantly lower cost and can be built quickly compared to conventional structures. Follow-up studies on the modular housing programs show extremely high rates of residential stability so far, with the majority of residents experiencing significant improvements in health and wellbeing.[57]

  While they are funded by BC, the modular housing projects are run by local non-profits. Municipal governments secure vacant land for new projects, whether city-owned or private lots awaiting development. While new modular housing construction has faced some NIMBY-related local opposition in Vancouver, this became less of a barrier several months after the first program was opened and neighbours saw that crime had not gone up and their fears were unfounded.

- **Implement policies to address problems with the entire housing system, including new taxes targeting the speculative demand that has warped housing prices.** Through the new taxes, foreign owners and those with vacant homes will contribute $115 million to BC in just the first year.

  A new Québec regulation in force as of October 2020 that collects data on real estate purchases by non-Canadians could represent a first step to similarly control real estate speculation in the province. Although this regulation does not yet apply a specific new tax, housing advocates are calling on Québec to follow the example of measures adopted in other provinces—in addition to BC's foreign buyer's tax of 20%, Ontario also has a non-resident speculation tax of 15% on the acquisition of residential real estate in certain metropolitan regions.

INDIGENOUS SOCIAL HOUSING

The struggle for Indigenous housing in Montréal

Recommendations from homelessness researchers and community consultations all point to the need for Indigenous-specific social housing projects. The creation of Indigenous-specific housing is recommended by the following Montréal community organizations and local consultations:

- **The Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal (OCPM)** in their June 2020 report on systematic racism, which highlights the urgent need for the City to support Indigenous social housing developed in partnership with Indigenous-led organizations (Recommendation #33).[58] The City of Montréal's November 2020 Reconciliation Strategy specifically commits the city to supporting this recommendation (in Strategic Objective 3). **Error! Bookmark not defined.** The OCPM report also recommended that AccèsLogis Montréal add a specific track for Indigenous projects accompanied by culturally adapted services.

- **Reports from 2013[59] and 2018[60] based on consultations by the Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK.** The 2018 consultation surveyed clients of 8 Indigenous community services around Montréal. Over two-thirds of respondents reported incomes below $750 a month, making it difficult to access suitable housing. When participants were asked what type of accommodation they would prefer, by far the two most popular options were (1) to have one's own apartment with a rent subsidy, and/or (2) permanent housing in a building reserved for First Nations people or Inuit, with culturally appropriate services (e.g. community or cultural spaces, peer support or spiritual healing services). Women expressed a strong preference for having their own apartment with a subsidy, while adults over 50 and Inuit men of all ages expressed the wish to live in Indigenous congregate housing.

  The report highlights the need to carry out pilot projects testing these housing options to conclude more definitively what programs and types of housing would best meet the needs and preferences of Inuit and First Nations people in Montréal. With respect to affordable housing, the researchers urge that there be responsiveness to affordable Indigenous-only housing, as well as more flexibility in funding.

- **Conseil des Montréalaises**, whose 2017 report following consultations with Montréal service providers and women experiencing homelessness noted that there is an acute need for permanent housing focused on homeless Indigenous women with children.

- **Conseil jeunesse de Montréal**, whose 2016 policy paper recommends that the City support social housing projects for Indigenous youth and families specifically. In addition, they argue that Montréal must work with the province for expansion of programs developing social and community housing in general, with dedicated funding for Indigenous housing.[61]

- **Native Montréal**, a local friendship centre, has been vocalizing the need for Montréal Indigenous social housing since its inception in 2014. The organization's director, Philippe Meilleur, has also long advocated for the development of an Indigenous design guide in collaboration with the Bureau du design de Montréal, to promote architecture and infrastructure that prioritize Indigenous design in the city.[62] Montréal has no buildings with Indigenous-focused architecture, lagging behind other cities in Canada and around the world.

  Native Montréal's Youth Council also recommended the creation of Indigenous housing in a report

drafted after the 2015 Aboriginal Youth Forum.[63]

- **A 2011 survey by the Environics Institute**,[10] which found 98% Indigenous respondents in Montréal believed it was important to have Indigenous housing services in addition to general ones (with 81% saying it was "very" important).

Despite this clear consensus, past attempts to build Indigenous-specific housing in Montréal have fallen apart or have been stalled due to pushback from a vocal minority of homeowners or insufficient funding. For instance, in 2010 a plan to open a temporary home in Villeray for Inuit who come to Montréal to receive healthcare fell apart due to NIMBY ("not in my back yard") protests by some neighbours. Leaflets were distributed through Villeray warning of drug addicts moving into the neighbourhood, bringing crime and affecting the neighbourhood's quality of life. Soon after, the borough council caved to the racially coded opposition.

However, there are currently several Indigenous-focused temporary and permanent housing projects being planned in Montréal:

1. For years, Native Montréal has been participating in consultations to advance a social housing project for Indigenous families in Verdun, opposite Arthur-Therrien Park. The goal is to build around 50 large, affordable, high-quality units in a LEED-certified building that would include culturally appropriate services for Indigenous families, such as childcare or healthcare. The project also aims to highlight Indigenous design by launching an architectural competition to include distinctive elements from different Indigenous cultures. Other plans include outdoor spaces set up for potlatches or for building sweathouses, ideas that already have precedents in Ontario and British Columbia.[64]

    In 2018, the borough reserved the property for the construction of up to 300 social housing units, through a collaboration of community organizations, including Native Montréal as well as Entre-deux-ages (which aims to build 120 supported housing units for seniors with a lack of autonomy). The goal is for a number of groups to combine resources to be able to finance the construction costs.[65] However, the site must first undergo decontamination, with costs estimated at $20 million.

2. Community group Projets Autochtones du Québec is launching a new pilot project to create long-term housing for Indigenous people with severe alcohol addictions. Although managed alcohol programs have been recognized as an effective harm-reduction strategy in other cities for decades, this will be a first for Montréal. Researchers will be studying the pilot project in order to understand what strategies are effective. The project is slated to open late 2020.

3. In September 2020, Montréal approved a funding agreement of $1.75 million from Québec to help build 23 temporary housing units for Indigenous women experiencing homelessness.[66]

Best practices for Indigenous-focused housing

Designing homes that better meet the needs of Indigenous communities is a growing area of research, with a particularly high volume of work undertaken in British Columbia. While best practices from Indigenous housing in other parts of the country will need to be adapted to the different traditions, needs, and preferences of Indigenous populations in Montréal, they can serve as a starting point for what questions to ask and options to consider.

The recommendations below are summarized from a number of reports based on consultations with Indigenous community organizations and housing providers[67 68 69 70 71] (mostly outside of Québec), as well as focus groups

with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. [72]

1. EARLY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY-DIRECTED GOVERNANCE

It is impossible to effectively provide housing that meets a community's needs without involving the community in the planning process. Consultations should be a necessary component of all decision-making. Understanding a population's priorities can be undertaken through a range of strategies from surveys and small workshops to presence at community meals and other events. Multiple opportunities and venues for engagement should be offered, and consultations should be conducted in a way appropriate to the target populations. Advisory boards, panels, committees or conversation circles should be set up to guide and align program design. Future residents must be included at the earliest stage of the project.

In addition to potential residents, consultations should also be held with local service providers and Indigenous organizations.

2. PARTNERSHIPS AND SECURE FUNDING

Many organizations find it essential to partner with a range of community groups and government organizations to assist in addressing the diverse needs of Indigenous populations. Particularly for non-Indigenous housing providers, partnership with local friendship centres and other Indigenous organizations is essential.

Combining resources can also result in more stable funding. Organizations serving Indigenous people experiencing or at risk of homelessness often lack the security of funding needed to achieve long-term plans. Making sure dependable funding can be attained before starting a project can be essential, as research shows how long-term approaches to resolving complex social issues are the most effective.

Some of the most successful programs are the result of collaborations between multiple community organizations and government agencies. For example, in a 2019 survey of Indigenous housing providers, many had positive partnerships with municipalities who helped identify ideal development locations and sold providers the land for a nominal amount.[16] Many housing providers also partner with other social services, such as Child and Family Services. Some housing providers have included transitional units for women experiencing domestic violence within their projects, as funding for such units can be significant and comes through other federal government offices. Other housing providers have single-mother education partnerships, where wrap around services and housing for single mothers who wish to go back to school. Other organizations have set aside halfway house apartments, funded through Correctional Service Canada.

A 2013 consultation[59] by Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK provided recommendations for improving housing services to homeless populations around Cabot Square through organizational collaboration:
- Take advantage of the resources that are already being offered to create a reference network for housing services and ensure that there is a complete follow up after housing services are used.
- Create a network for referrals and follow-ups between front-line workers, day centres, employment services, shelters, transition homes, long-term housing, and homecare and social work visits.
- Identify an organization with expertise in housing issues who will be able to take on a leadership role and develop an action plan to improve related services. This organization will evaluate the housing

needs in response to the request to increase housing. Support this expert organization in the development of the action plan to respond to the needs of the target population.

3. LOCATION

Before choosing a site for any housing project, a number of locational factors must be considered—this includes proximity to services relevant to the tenants as well as community and gathering places. In a 2011 study,[10] Indigenous peoples in Montréal were most likely to say their choice to live in a particular neighbourhood was influenced by the opportunity to live close to family and friends (34%). Other reasons included the affordability of housing (20%), the desire to be close to amenities (15%), the area's proximity to work or school (14%) and/or because the neighbourhood offered a safe environment (13%).

The importance of location for Indigenous perceptions of home was tragically highlighted when a shelter near Cabot Square relocated in 2018. Service providers expected clients to follow the shelter, but Cabot Square has long served as a meeting place for members of the city's homeless population, and Indigenous people in particular. Many were not willing to leave this community in the west end of downtown, and before Resilience Montréal opened to address the gap in services, as many as 14 individuals who frequented the park passed away.

Social housing in general and Indigenous services in particular are often met with resistance from a small but vocal minority of future neighbours, particularly homeowners and nearby businesses. This has been a severe hindrance in the past when Indigenous social housing has been proposed in Montréal. One recurring recommendation from organizations that serve a homeless clientele is to be discreet once a location is secured, so as not to stir media attention motivated by controversy that could derail a lease or municipal approval. For instance, when the Open Door shelter was securing a new location in the Milton-Parc neighbourhood, a supportive letter in favour of the project received 6 times as many signatures as an opposition petition letter even though the opposition still received more media coverage.[73]

While the opening of new homelessness services centres and social housing projects are often controversial, interviews with providers suggest that resistance generally dissipates once projects are opened, as it becomes clear that the fears such as concerns about public safety were unfounded (see above, *Case study: British Columbia's housing strategy*). Once a project is completed, it is often in an organization's interest to actively build positive relationships with the surrounding neighbourhood. For example, in some Indigenous housing on-site programming has been opened to the broader community.

4. INTEGRATION OF CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE DESIGN ELEMENTS

Prospective residents should be involved in housing design and, when possible, cultural considerations should be incorporated to accommodate traditional lifestyle practices. These practices will vary greatly depending on the individual and their community, and consultation in the planning stages of a project will help an organization determine the particular cultural needs of the target clientele. Urban Indigenous organizations often need to reflect in their design and programming several different cultures to meet the needs of their diverse tenant populations.

The specific needs of the target demographic group must also be considered—for example, individuals re-entering the community after being incarcerated, seniors, and lone-parent families will each have different preferences. Housing geared toward Indigenous families often incorporate larger units to accommodate multi-generational or extended family structures, which requires more bedrooms than most social housing offers.

Appropriate design elements are unique to each community, but may include:

- Housing design inspired by local traditional dwellings. Some successful Indigenous social housing projects have hired Indigenous architects.

- Using local materials such as exposed natural wood, appropriate use of colour, and featuring Indigenous artwork.

- Providing access to natural light and views of the outdoors.

- Using internal courtyards and porches to foster greater interaction between community members.

- Including flexible unit design or a mix of unit sizes that allow families to relocate to different suites in the same community when their family structure changes.

- Having a spacious, living room-like setting for residents to socialize.

- Developing outdoor spaces that include community gardens and edible landscaping, including native plants and trees.

- Providing a community kitchen for traditional food processing and feasts.

- Providing space for smudging ceremonies, which may require special ventilation and fire code considerations.

- Incorporating a studio or multi-purpose room for traditional craft making. For example, Open Door shelter in Montréal, where nearly half of the clients are Inuit, has a ventilated room to permit soapstone carving.

- Allotting space for ceremonies and other cultural activities, such as a sweat lodge or large space for community groups to practise traditional drumming, dancing, or singing.

In addition to making culture visible in the development design and programming, projects and rooms can be named in traditional languages, and traditional territory should be recognized (e.g., in signs, business cards, email signatures).

Across consultations with housing organizations, one of the most common themes was that "communities need gathering spaces." In many Indigenous housing projects, the communal gathering space can be booked free-of-charge or for a refundable deposit by building tenants. Some organizations open their gathering space up for use by the broader community and others charge a fee for use to help subsidize the cost of housing. In housing developments where space is limited, or in scattered single-family home models, other community gathering spaces are sometimes used, such as a Friendship Centre.

Additionally, a need for more short-term Indigenous housing has been identified in many communities. For example, a relative who has recently moved off-reserve may need a place to stay in the short-term until they can find an apartment, and Indigenous people travelling to urban centres to receive medical treatment often have difficulty finding appropriate and affordable accommodation. As mentioned in the case study below, Lu'ma Native Housing Society in Vancouver operates an Aboriginal Patient's Lodge in addition to long-term housing. Those in need of temporary stays could also be accommodated by making vacant units available to short-term visitors or setting aside some short-term rental units.

5. CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE PROGRAMMING AND STAFF TRAINING

Depending on the type of housing and target population, appropriate programming and tenant services will

mean different things—for example, healing, capacity building and training, advocacy, or childcare. Persistent themes in reviews of successful Indigenous housing organizations included:

- **Facilitating cultural programming in collaboration with Elders and Knowledge Keepers.**

- **Flexibility from staff and in programming**—for example, it is important that staff accept that some participants do not have an interest in cultural activities.

- **The importance of building trusting relationships.**

Homelessness services with Indigenous clients can accidentally perpetuate colonial marginalization when they ignore or exclude Indigenous cultural beliefs and healing traditions. Even though not all Indigenous people may embrace traditional approaches to healing, it may be relevant and effective for some. Particularly for youth, culturally focused programming can serve as connecting points for people who have lost touch with their home communities or their cultural and spiritual background. Furthermore, the re-introduction of traditional practices has been shown to be an effective part of healing for many Indigenous people.[71] [19]

Staff should be qualified and appropriately trained, with attention paid to hiring practices. Non-Indigenous organizations should also do their best to hire Indigenous staff, and to develop Indigenous leadership in the workplace. Indigenous staff members, especially those from the same backgrounds as the tenants, are more likely to have an understanding of where the tenants are coming from, including common life experiences, family structures, lifestyle practices, and the intergenerational effects of historical and current events. Indigenous employees are also more likely able to teach and practise cultural ceremonies with their tenants. This type of lived experience is particularly important in service provision Indigenous people who have suffered specific forms of discrimination, trauma and unsafe living conditions. Indigenous leadership and incorporation of Elders into the organizational structure should also be prioritized.

Some organizations require Indigenous cultural competency training for employees, saying it has created a culturally safe workplace and leads to higher rates of staff retention (for example, the Provincial Health Service Authority in BC). Training should include historical context such as impacts of colonization, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop so staff can best support clients who are struggling with personal or intergenerational trauma. Training should also include cultural teachings and explanations of supports available for Indigenous people. Cultural training should be offered to front-line workers as well as program designers and funders.

6. FOSTERING COMMUNITY

Mutual support and a sense of belonging to the community are essential to addressing a broader conceptualization of homelessness, and have also been shown to facilitate healing.[74] Some strategies Indigenous groups have used to build community in housing projects include:

- Building a diverse tenant community with members of different genders, ages, and abilities.

- Keeping the scale of a project relatively small. Even if one organization runs hundreds of units, they can be divided by into smaller units by project or by building.

- Hosting community gatherings and cultural events.

- Hosting communal meals, programs, discussion circles, and ceremonies for tenants.

- Keeping extended families together in the same neighbourhood or complex by providing a mix of housing types in a development, and allowing tenants to move within the same community when their housing needs change. In addition to helping foster a strong community, this can also prevent families from becoming disconnected from their support system.

Case Study: Lu'ma Native Housing Society, Vancouver

Lu'ma provides nearly 500 units of affordable, culturally appropriate housing to Indigenous households with low to moderate income. Lu'ma is cited as a case study by virtually every Canadian report on Indigenous housing, likely because it has proved successful for over 40 years, and has provided an ever-expanding range of housing programs and innovative services. These include:

- A Patients' Lodge that provides accommodation for Indigenous patients visiting the city for healthcare.

- Community Voice Mail, an extremely successful project that provides free phone numbers and voicemail to help people connect with jobs, housing, health care, and family. Lu'ma has partnered with many contributors for this program, including a telecommunications provider, a credit union, a crown corporation and a local nonprofit funding body.

- The Aboriginal Mother Centre, which provides fully furnished apartments for homeless Indigenous women and their children. Women in the Centre receive training and are connected with employment opportunities.

- The Circle of Eagles Lodge Society's Andersons Healing Lodge, an emergency shelter for Indigenous women that also offers culturally appropriate healing programs and activities such as resume writing, drum bag sewing, singing, and drumming.

- The Children's Village includes 24 affordable housing for Indigenous foster care children and their families. Some units are rented by the Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society, with units allocated to a child or a sibling set, so that if the relationship between the children and the foster parents doesn't work out, the children remain in their home and the parents move out. The Children's Village also features a large amenity room that hosts a variety of gatherings. After some resistance, Lu'ma convinced the City to accept the Indigenous architect's building design, which clearly stands out from the surrounding neighbourhood with its red, yellow, and black paint, yellow cedar house posts, natural stone siding, and colourful totem poles. Some of the bedrooms feature art done by children or have empty frames for children to add their own art.

Lu'ma also offers Indigenous youth mentorship and many other programs. Tenants that are placed in housing developments can live there as long as they show an ongoing financial need and are not over- or under-housed. Tenants can transfer between units within the organization's housing portfolio, which helps maintain a sense of community over time.

The project's community-driven and Indigenous-led model has resulted in culturally responsive programming. Much of the housing and social services were designed by an Indigenous architect with the aim of reflecting Indigenous architecture. The Society is also guided by the Aboriginal Homeless Steering Committee (AHSC), a federation of organizations and Indigenous Vancouver residents who are appointed by the greater community to represent Indigenous people on homelessness issues. Similar in some ways to the Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK, the AHSC identifies gaps in Indigenous homelessness services and funding criteria priorities through community consultation.

Lu'ma's projects are funded by a variety of public and private entities, including the BC government, other non-profits, member subscriptions and donations, and private businesses. For example, a local bank acted as a property developer and provided a construction loan for some of the buildings. While they are continuously searching for funding, Lu'ma has tried to turn these challenges into opportunities for developing new programming and partnerships, and much of their work involves coordinating with other agencies.

Please refer to *Best practices and case studies* below for more detailed guides that address Indigenous homelessness, accompanied with successful examples and case studies. This report focuses on Indigenous social housing, although Indigenous transitional and supported housing projects have also been documented at length and could provide additional lessons learned. While research must be undertaken to identify best practices in other jurisdictions, case studies must also be evaluated in the local context to ensure that the model is targeted and appropriate.

CONCLUSION

Access to housing is the only permanent way to address homelessness. This response must include temporary and permanent housing with supports geared toward immediately housing those experiencing homelessness, as well as an overall increase in the supply of social housing to address Canada's low-cost housing deficit. Cooperative and non-profit social housing models have proved the most effective at ensuring long-term housing stability and affordability, as well as generating additional community benefits.

Canada has one of the lowest proportions of public housing out of all advanced economies; most other countries have recognized that a housing system based on the market mechanism cannot respond to social need. Canada's willingness to continue massive spending on homeownership subsidies, which primarily benefit higher-income households, indicates that the current homelessness crisis is a matter of distribution rather than insufficient resources. Additionally, spending on social housing with supports for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness has been repeatedly shown to pay for itself through decreases in the cost of policing, incarceration, and emergency services. Increased funding for social housing will also have the added benefit of boosting employment and acting as a stimulus[75] in the expected post-pandemic recession.

An adequate response to the homelessness crisis must also incorporate Indigenous-specific housing programs. Universal housing measures typically produce inadequate solutions.[36] Policies aimed at preventing and addressing homelessness among Indigenous Peoples must respond to their specific cultural, historical, social and economic circumstances.

Greater investment and coordination regarding culturally appropriate housing and supports is necessary from all levels of government.

While a thorough discussion is outside the scope of this paper, it must also be recognized that the right to housing for many Indigenous Peoples will improve through the pursuit of land claims, treaty negotiations and urban Indigenous self-governance. For instance, the creation of urban reserves in Canadian cities is becoming more common across the country.

Recommendations for the City of Montréal

To comply with recommendations of the OCPM's 2020 report on systematic racism as well as commitments made in City of Montréal's Homelessness Action Plan, Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, the City must:

- **Make underused properties available for new social housing.** Land that is already publicly owned should be reserved for this purpose, and private-owned land awaiting development should be added to a database of vacant land and buildings to assist community development of social housing.[22]

- **Support and prioritize the creation of Indigenous-specific social housing**, including both temporary and permanent housing, as well as projects tailored to the distinct needs of the Inuit population in Montréal.

- **Planners must meaningfully engage with Indigenous populations when creating new low-cost housing policy**. Specific housing strategies should be facilitated that honour Indigenous desire for self-determination in urban programming. Culture should be recognized as a key element in urban sustainability through providing tailored social services, including those addressing homelessness and housing insecurity. The City must also offer training on cultural competency for all municipal employees.

- **Hold developers accountable for including social housing in new projects.** FRAPRU has made the case that the proportion of social housing required in all new projects should be increased to at least 40% housing in order for Montréal to make a dent in its critical deficit of low-income housing.[76] Additionally, the City should tie its definitions of affordable housing to local median incomes rather than 90% of the market rate of housing, which has little relationship to what even moderate-income households can actually afford.

- **Implement tools to prevent evictions,** such as a rent bank that provides assistance to low-income households at risk of eviction due to a temporary shortage of funds (as in Vancouver).

While the City of Montréal must do more to permanently address homelessness, municipalities do not have the resources to provide adequate housing by themselves, so must partner with provincial and federal governments.

Recommendations for the province of Québec

In order to comply with recommendations in Québec's 2014 *Politique nationale de lutte à l'itinérance* and 2019 Commission of Public Inquiry on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services (CERP), the provincial government must:

- **Establish a provincial housing policy to address the province-wide deficit of low-cost housing and guarantee access to appropriate and affordable housing for urban Indigenous Peoples.** Reinvestment in social housing should include a specific fund for Indigenous social housing (as British Columbia has implemented with the Building BC Indigenous Housing Fund). An Indigenous-specific provincial housing plan must be created in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples to ensure the right to self-determination in housing. More detailed recommendations for a provincial housing policy can be found in a report by the *Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec*.

- **AccèsLogis should have a specific track for Indigenous projects accompanied by culturally adapted services.**

- **Require real estate developers to build a significant proportion of social housing units in all new projects.** While the City of Montréal has attempted to set social housing requirements for private developers, such strategies will never be as effective if developers face different requirements in neighbouring municipalities.

- **In addition to building new units, additional measures must be taken to maintain housing affordability in the face of skyrocketing costs.** For example:

○ Setting up a public rent register to allow new tenants to find former rent prices and more easily contest exploitative increases.

○ Taxing real estate purchases by non-residents of Canada to curb speculatory inflation of housing prices, and channel revenues toward the financing of social housing (as already implemented in British Columbia and Ontario).

Recommendations for federal government

To meet the objectives described in Canada's 2017 National Housing Strategy, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to comply with Canada's endorsement of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (to which Canada is a party), the federal government must:

- **Devote more funds to the development of new social housing and Indigenous housing, as the amount allocated in the National Housing Strategy is insufficient.** By focusing on "affordable" housing (which is often not affordable in practice to low-income families), the NHS is missing its stated goal of implementing a right to housing for all. While ensuring that middle-income households have access to affordable housing is important, meeting the needs of low-income households is most urgent to preventing homelessness and address core housing need. Additionally, if the lowest-income households are able to move into social housing, the housing they vacate will then be available to moderate-income households. [77]

- **Continue and expand subsidies past the expiration of operating agreements to preserve the permanent supply of low-cost housing.**

- **Avoid competitive applications in housing funding systems**, and instead foster collaboration among providers. Competition between providers for scarce resources can undermine their ability to contribute or create useful partnerships.

- In addition to creating an adequate supply of affordable housing, creating a guaranteed basic income and increasing access to mental health resources should also be considered as means to ending chronic homelessness.

All levels of government must increase funding for social housing programs, including Indigenous-specific housing, as part of their obligation to implement the right to appropriate and affordable housing. Government housing projects must also partner with community organizations and consult with future clients to ensure their right to self-determination in housing. Finally, close collaboration between federal government ministries, the province of Québec, and the City of Montréal is essential to addressing homelessness and the housing crisis. Policies at all levels of government must reinforce each other.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

UN guidelines on homelessness and the right to adequate housing

COVID-19 and the right to adequate housing: impacts and the way forward, UN report of the Special Rapporteur (A/75/148), 2020

Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing, UN report of the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/43/43), 2019

The right to adequate housing of Indigenous Peoples, UN report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing (A/74/183), 2019

Obligations of provincial and local governments in the implementation of right to adequate housing, UN report of the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/28/62), 2014

Guiding principles on security of tenure for the urban poor, UN report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/25/54), 2013

Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement, Annex I of the UN report of the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/4/18), 2007

Indigenous homelessness, housing policy, and reconciliation

2020-2025 Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, City of Montréal, 2020.

Vers une politique nationale de l'habitation, Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, 2014. Provides recommendations for a provincial housing policy in Québec that would better meet the needs of urban Indigenous Peoples.

Urban, Rural, & Northern Indigenous Housing: The Next Step, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2019. A survey of housing provider's views of Indigenous housing and the importance of Indigenous leadership and control of social housing, with suggestions for the federal government.

Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2018. Explains a definition of Indigenous homelessness widely adopted in Canadian policy and research, elaborating on the Twelve Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness.

Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review, Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2014. Overview of existing research related to Indigenous homelessness. Includes summaries of national and provincial policy recommendations to better address Indigenous homelessness and housing, as well as an extensive discussion of Indigenous youth homelessness, gendered experiences of homelessness, health issues, and the role of historical trauma.

Indigenous Ally Toolkit, Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK, 2019

Montréal surveys

Dénombrement des personnes en situation d'itinérance sur l'île de Montréal le 24 avril 2018, Ville de Montréal et CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, 2019

Housing needs and preferences of Indigenous people using community resources in Montréal (full guide in French only), Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK, 2018

Learning from Cabot Square - Developing the Strategy for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Montréal Indigenous Community NETWORK, 2013

L'itinérance des femmes à Montréal : Voir l'invisible, avis du Conseil des Montréalaises, 2017

Best practices and case studies

Localized Approaches to Ending Homelessness: Indigenizing Housing First, Institute of Urban Studies. University of Winnipeg, 2019. Draws on experiences of Winnipeg's AHCS trial to create a reference guide for to make Housing first more effective within a local, Indigenous context. In Winnipeg, early resistance by Indigenous leaders to AHCS greatly influenced the local approach, which sought to ensure cultural practices and people were front and centre.

Indigenizing Housing: A Guide to Providing Culturally-Appropriate Housing for Aboriginal Communities in British Columbia, 2015

Interim Indigenous Housing Development and Design Guide, BC Housing, 2018

Homes for B.C: A 30-point plan for housing affordability in British Columbia, 2018. This provincial 10-year housing plan includes record levels of capital investment. The strategy includes encouraging new social housing and solutions to address homelessness, making rentals cheaper and more stable, and creating new taxes aimed to curb speculation.

Feeling Home: Culturally Responsive Approaches to Aboriginal Homelessness, Social Planning and Research Council of BC, 2011. This case study project collected information from organizations across Western Canada who are working to provide services for Aboriginal peoples who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

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