



Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

The Landscape to Home: Housing Research at CAP

**Prepared by CAP Research Department
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Introduction:

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is the national voice of off-reserve status and non-status First Nations, Métis, and Southern Inuit Indigenous Peoples. It is one of five National Indigenous (representative) Organizations recognized by the Government of Canada and it represents the interests of its provincial and territorial affiliate organizations (PTOs). CAP works collectively with its PTOs to promote and advance the common interests, collective and individual rights, and needs of their members. Well-respected and deeply connected to their local communities, CAP PTOs deliver assistance throughout the country in areas such as housing, justice, family programming, education, employment, mental health, and language. In terms of research, CAP is mandated to provide high-quality qualitative and quantitative research information in support of CAP's policy and advocacy work in areas of the health, rights, status, inclusion, and quality of life of its constituency. CAP's research activities are informed by CAP's Research Team and are directed and prioritized by the PTOs.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples has been advocating for improved housing for its members since its inception. Housing is a key policy priority for CAP, as the housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous Peoples are fundamentally different from those of on-reserve Indigenous Peoples. In 2018, CAP's Political Agreement outlined a commitment to "research plans and policies in a post-Daniels context to help identify needs and gaps in programs and services and to improve access to existing programs and services for non-status Indians and other off-reservation Aboriginal peoples in areas such as housing." Similarly, both the 2018 and 2019 CAP Annual General Meetings passed resolutions regarding the need to improve housing and end homelessness. For nearly 20 years, CAP has produced research and policy papers on key themes of housing needs in Canada.

In order to continue this advocacy, and build capacity for CAP, we have had ongoing projects that were focused on identifying the existing policy and research gaps to inform policy development. These projects through the years include research that looks at how housing is related to health, education, the labor force, and Indigenous languages. Further, our efforts have also been focused on understanding the experiences and barriers to housing for families, and communities facing homelessness. To undertake this work, community engagement and Indigenous partnerships have been at the core of our work. The next section illustrate, and summarizes, the various current and recent housing-related research conducted by CAP:

Current/Recent Housing-related Research at CAP:

Off-Reserve Indigenous Housing Needs and Challenges in Canada, Phase 1: Literature Review

In partnership with Big River Analytics Ltd. (BRA), a Terrace-based, Indigenous-owned consulting firm specializing in economics and data analytics with specific expertise in primary and secondary data acquisition, analysis, and modelling. Their Indigenous research expertise has assisted to support the development of a literature review that is funded by the Canada Mortgage Housing Agency (CMHC). The literature review identified key relationships between housing, education, the labor force, and health in the broader context. The review identified, the relationships between housing and labor market outcomes and potential relationships between housing and Indigenous languages. Most importantly, the literature review identified several gaps in previous research that provide opportunities for future directions of housing and health research.

More generally, the current literature did not distinguish between urban, rural, and remote off-reserve housing experiences and their interactions with the four priority areas. The review found that distinctions between status and geographic location were not mentioned, or the literature only focused exclusively on urban experiences. Therefore, additional research is needed with the assumption that correlations between

housing and the priority areas, especially for the rural Indigenous communities. To undertake further research focused on housing and the four priority areas in the off-reserve Indigenous context, we proposed that a correlation analysis is the best first step. A correlation analysis is a way of doing research where the researcher will look at data (ex. Census) at how factors like health, labour force, language and education are correlated with housing. At present, little is known about the significance of these relationships and how they impact the off-reserve Indigenous communities in Canada. Therefore, the correlation analysis will fill many of the gaps in our knowledge and research.

The goal is to understand and focus on improving the adequacy of housing for Indigenous peoples and looked for findings that report on overcrowding, adequacy, affordability, and occupancy of housing that can have direct or indirect positive impacts on educational attainment, physical and mental health, and employment. However, research showed that improved housing did not necessarily lead to increased employment rates among Indigenous peoples. Research has shown that further study is needed to determine how these factors interact for off-reserve Indigenous peoples. In addition, healing from the intergenerational impacts of colonialism may influence how housing interacted with education, health, and work outcomes. Avenues of research included studying how circumstances around housing like, accessibility, overcrowding, or adequacy may be affecting communities in a social context. Overcrowding or adequacy of housing may be influenced by the social supports available to off-reserve Indigenous peoples or studying the impact of educational attainment in urban neighbourhoods on Indigenous language outcomes. The researchers noted that the best way to better understand housing interactions specific to an Indigenous context is to track housing outcomes. The findings demonstrated that the best way to explore housing interactions is to track changes over time and to use sophisticated data analysis methods alongside community engagement.

- There is an overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples who are faced with homelessness, due to systemic barriers, caused by historical trauma, colonialism, the residential school system, child welfare implications, and overall lack of funding and support to Indigenous organizations. The purpose of this research is to identify avenues and ways to improve the living conditions of Indigenous peoples living off-reserve. Indigenous peoples living off-reserve continue to experience precarious (unstable) conditions compared to non-Indigenous peoples. To provide an example: the forms of discrimination that Indigenous peoples experience when it comes to housing are "racial profiling and discrimination by landlords, employers, police, and social service agencies."
- More recently, there has been researched done, surrounding policies and programs created to improve housing and living conditions for Indigenous peoples in Canada. In Phase 1 of the research, it was noted that Indigenous peoples living in off-reserve occupied housing that was considered inadequate compared to their non-indigenous populations. In addition, it was found that off-reserve Indigenous peoples continue to live in housing that needs extensive repairs, unlike non-Indigenous peoples. It was noted that most of the off-reserve Indigenous peoples continue to live in rental accommodations compared to non-Indigenous peoples.

This socio-economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is linked to colonial policies and continues to have intergenerational impacts on the health and mental health of Indigenous peoples, their educational attainment, and their working lives. It is clear that adequate housing would contribute to an individual's educational success, quality of life, well-being, and good health, and would be an important factor in improving an individual's socio-economic status. Clearly, the impact of housing on education has implications for status and non-status Indians living off-reserve, Métis, and Inuit in southern Canada. Lastly, housing moves beyond just providing access to a safe and affordable home. It's about having a home in a community where there is a connection to culture, ceremony, and network of urban and rural Indigenous peoples who play a huge role in advancing this well-being.

- It was noted that the decline in educational attainment is strongly related to a lack of adequate housing among status and non-status Indians living off-reserve, Métis, and Inuit in southern Canada. As a result, they found that home ownership had a positive effect on the likelihood that a

child would be less likely to attain education. However, the studies do not consider the ways in which housing and education may differentially affect the experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children living off-reserve in Canada. Although overcrowding can be seen from the perspective of being inadequate to meet community needs, it does not always consider how communities feel about being in proximity and smaller homes with their families. Furthermore, the literature did not consider regional differences that may affect these correlations in an off-reserve Indigenous context. For example, it is likely that the correlations between education and housing in an off-reserve urban Aboriginal context are different from correlations in a rural or remote off-reserve Indigenous context. No studies that explored these nuances were identified.

In addition, the study showed a correlation between health and housing. It further demonstrated that Indigenous women living in inadequate housing had serious health problems. Therefore, the provision of good quality, affordable housing to vulnerable groups is important to closing the gap that existed surrounding health inequalities. While several characteristics of housing and health are related, the relationship is not necessarily universal. As useful as these studies are, there appeared to be little research undertaken in an off-reserve or urban Indigenous context, beyond the useful summaries produced by Indigenous research organizations and federal publications highlighting health or housing deficiencies. Canadian researchers point to the desirability of exploring the links between Indigenous language learning and the impacts of adequate housing, among other culturally appropriate factors, as well as the impact of education levels in urban neighbourhoods on Indigenous language outcomes. For example, higher unemployment in a neighbourhood may increase opportunities for Indigenous children to interact more often with more adult speakers.

Off-Reserve Indigenous Housing Needs and Challenges in Canada, Phase 2: Data Analysis

The second phase of the CAP-CMHC partnership project explored current data quantitatively related to housing was built upon the literature review completed during Phase 1. The previous Phase showed that there is a need for more work on Indigenous housing research. Phase 2 began in 2021 and was a data analysis project which had the aim to break down the findings to better understand the information that was gathered. Specifically, the objective of this part was to find out if off-reserve housing and housing conditions have an impact on an individual's outcomes in the following four socio-economic categories: (1) education; (2) health; (3) the labour market; and (4) Indigenous languages. We also aimed determine to which degree these housing conditions influenced individuals. The difference between phase 1 and 2 was that while Phase 1 laid out a broad research agenda to fill the gaps, the current Phase (2) only looked at the possible research directions which were previously suggested. The focus was placed on cross-sectional data, which is data of many different individuals at a specific given time. For this reason, this sort of analysis can only use to understand shorter term effects of dwelling and household characteristics, in comparison to understanding long term effects. Phase 2 used mathematical models called multivariate logistic regression which helped us explain the most important effects and any other important effects.

The first part of this phase consisted of a "Trend Analysis", which explored demographics of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples over time from 2006 to 2016. It included comparison of different data which was available for the socioeconomic outcomes related to housing conditions for both Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people. The process of comparison was made possible and achieved by comparing descriptive statistics wherever possible, over time, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, between females and males, between different Indigenous identity groups (First Nation, Metis, and Inuit in this case), and between different geographic areas (on-reserve, off-reserve). Each of these comparisons was done with respect to demographic, housing, health, education, labour, and language characteristics and conditions. The information used to do the analysis came from three data sources: The Census of Population, the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS).

We were able to analyze the trends over time by using the three most recent Censuses of Population, which were released in 2006, 2011, and 2016. The CCHS and APS data was also released close to these years: CCHS, we used the 2007/2008, 2011/2012, and 2015/2016 cycles; and for the APS, we used the 2006, 2012 and 2017 editions. The level of detail for each statistic and comparison depended entirely on the availability of data sources. It is important to note that since the statistics from CCHS and APS do not include on reserve populations, all the statistics from CCHS and APS were only related to off-reserve populations. Additionally, since few Metis and Inuit peoples live on reserve, we presented data for Metis and Inuit populations off reserve while the data for First Nations was available for on reserve and First Nations off reserve.

Overall, we found that housing and housing conditions were important variables related to the socio-economic outcomes we were analyzing education, health, the labour market, and Indigenous languages. We discovered that for Indigenous people, having a secure place to live is especially important for their health, education, and job opportunities. We found that homeownership, affordable and adequate housing, and larger household income all help Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth go to school and complete their studies. Also, living in a multigenerational household can make it harder for Indigenous youth to attend school. The data analysis also showed that Indigenous children who have younger primary caregivers were more likely to speak an Indigenous language at home than children who had an older primary household maintainer. There was a trend in similarities for school attendance and completion, labour force participation, and likelihood of full-time work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people- both as a whole and depending on type of housing and other household factors. Household size and structure affect the job opportunities of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. For Indigenous people, those who own their homes or have affordable and adequate housing also tend to feel healthier. Data analysis also concluded that the type of housing, like living in a detached home or an apartment, also affected how healthy people felt. Having a secure place to live also makes it more likely that Indigenous children will have enough food to maintain nutrition.

Phase 2 concluded that the kind of house people live in and how well it is built are important factors that affect how well they do in school, how healthy they are, if they have a job, and if they speak an Indigenous language. The research found that having good housing is connected to better health, education, and job opportunities. However, having good housing could also have a negative effect on speaking an Indigenous language. Based on these findings, we suggested ways to continue research on the topic. We recommend the need to develop a better database to help us understand this topic more.

Off-Reserve Indigenous Housing Needs and Challenges, Phase 3: Closing the Housing Gap.

In 2023 phase 3 of the research study began, and data was collected on the housing conditions faced by off-reservation Indigenous people across Canada to estimate the degree and calculate the cost of closing gaps in:

- Housing affordability (household spends 30% or more of its income on housing costs) ;
- Housing adequacy (i.e., whether the housing is in need of major repairs) ;
- Housing adequacy (i.e., whether the unit has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of household); and
- Housing core need (i.e., whether a household can access adequate and appropriate local housing at the median market rent given their current income).

In addition, we will conduct an analysis of housing dynamics and policy impacts for off-reserve North American Indians, Metis and Southern Inuit peoples residing outside of Inuit Nunangat and NunatuKavut. Throughout Phase 3, CAP has sought, to the extent possible, to reflect the diversity of its membership within the statistics it produces. However, CAP is limited by the level of data available in the Census of Population that will be used. In addition to using the government of Canada data that is available, CAP has developed

a housing survey that explores the specific needs for individuals and their families to inform policy, and create new statistics for CAP's constituents including:

- Enrolled and non-enrolled First Nations.
- Métis citizens (i.e., members of a Métis organization who are not part of one of the five signatory organizations of the Canada-Métis Nation Accord and who do not live in a Métis settlement in Alberta)
- Self-identified Métis.
- Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat and NunatuKavut; and
- Southern Inuit (i.e., Inuit living in NunatuKavut or southern and central Labrador).

The results of Phase 3 presented a clear picture of off-reserve Indigenous housing, particularly highlighting the disparities between off-reserve Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across Canada. This information will be used as the basis for programs to close this gap. In Part 1, the number and cost of housing interventions needed to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations will be estimated based on census 2021 and new CAP housing survey data.

This analysis will present a clear pathway for closing the current housing gap, including a total cost estimate and regional breakdown. This analysis will enable CAP and other organizations to develop programs to address the specific housing needs of off-reserve Aboriginal people across Canada in the most cost-effective manner possible. In Part 2, which will take place after the fiscal year, CAP will assess the current state and historical context of the housing market and the specific implications for off-reserve Aboriginal people in Canada. The work in Part 2 will be partially informed by the results of Part 1 and will explore the housing dynamics related to home ownership rates, housing prices, vacancy rates, and the effects of monetary and general housing policy on housing outcomes for off-reserve Aboriginal people in Canada. To do this, CAP will (i) undertake a comprehensive literature review to examine how rising housing prices and market factors have affected off-reserve Aboriginal populations in Canada relative to non-Aboriginal populations, including the effects of general housing and pandemic response policies; and (ii) conduct further analysis of the data to untangle the implications of housing market trends on off-reserve Aboriginal populations in Canada. Understanding these dynamics will help CAP and other Aboriginal and housing organizations identify opportunities for off-reserve Aboriginal housing strategies across Canada.

Off-Reserve Indigenous Housing: Issues, Programs and Policy Priorities:

To compliment the work done in phase 1 of the CAP-CMHC multi-phased research project, in 2020, CAP had a paper prepared by Vink Consulting who conducted an environmental scan exploring housing issues, programs and policy priorities for off-reserve Indigenous peoples in order to help inform CAP of policy and programs priorities related to urban and rural (off-reserve) Indigenous housing. The report involved: research and analysis of key issues and themes, a review of Government of Canada policies, and programs and identification of advocacy and policy development work that other organizations are engaged in related to urban and rural Indigenous housing. Based on this research, recommendations for policy statements and priorities related to housing were developed for consideration by CAP.

This study points out that due to systemic barriers urban and rural Indigenous populations are socially and economically disadvantaged in comparison non-indigenous populations, which contributes to increased housing needs, and a lack of services/funding to meet those needs. Families, and communities have lower incomes, difficulty finding and keeping jobs, lower levels of education than non-Indigenous peoples. As a result, there are many Indigenous youth who live in precarious conditions, i.e., who do not have adequate housing or are even mostly homeless. Because of this, homeless Indigenous youth face greater mental health and substance abuse problems than non-Aboriginal youth. Child welfare system plays a major role in directly contributing to youth homelessness, especially for youth that age out of the system.

Likewise, elders, and older Indigenous populations who demonstrate a need for housing are faced with unique circumstances, and disparities can all be linked to colonialism, and its role in denying Indigenous peoples self-determination, despite their continued resilience. To meet the needs of CAP's constituents, it is noted that Indigenous families often prefer to live in multi-generational households whose members, and their numbers, may vary from time to time. "Therefore, housing that can be multi-generational, more adaptable and larger than the standard set for standard housing programs" is important in providing services based on Indigenous needs. In addition to systemic discrimination, Indigenous people often face issues of race-based discrimination when trying to access housing in the private market. Being routinely denied the opportunity to rent can be a significant barrier to accessing housing for Indigenous peoples. Although landlords are allowed to select tenants based on references and creditworthiness, some Indigenous peoples face additional barriers to housing due to poor references from previous landlords when living in an abusive relationship, poor creditworthiness, or lack of credit history. In addition, Indigenous peoples have limited access to subsidized housing. Waiting lists for public housing are long, despite the human right to housing. Yet, the rate of homeownership for Indigenous households remains lower than for non-Indigenous households. This is simply because there are gaps in savings for a down payment, awareness of homeownership, information about the homebuying process, and the challenges of accessing financing in remote communities.

It was noted that Indigenous peoples living in urban and rural areas occupied housing that required significant repairs compared to their non-Indigenous populations. Those who lived in rented housing were more likely to be in housing in need of major repairs than those who lived in housing they owned. Noted that in 2016, 118,500 First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples living in urban and rural areas were in core housing need. For many Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas in core housing need, the issue is not just affordability, but also adequacy and suitability. They found that "structural factors, particularly the lack of affordable housing and the systemic erasure of Indigeneity in the urban socio-cultural and political landscape, have negatively impacted Indigenous peoples' sense of belonging and sense of place." Indigenous women were 15 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to use shelters. Indigenous men were 10 times more likely to do so when compared to non-Indigenous men. As a result, the study shows that Indigenous women, girls and non-binary genders are more likely to experience homelessness or housing insecurity than Indigenous men. Moreover, lack of access to adequate housing is an acute problem for Indigenous peoples living in high-risk environments and Indigenous peoples with disabilities. These groups often face increased barriers to accessing adequate housing. Notably, housing affects all aspects of life, including work, education, and family, and is therefore one of the most important determinants of healthy living for individuals and communities.

Indigenous Homelessness and Housing Need:

This in-house research report was written to inform organizations about ongoing advocacy work to improve outcomes for communities facing homelessness and gathering their needs. This report described the homelessness and housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous peoples. It also addressed the fundamental difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous homelessness in Canada: the ongoing legacy of colonialism. This report explored how Indigenous homelessness and housing needs are fundamentally different from the needs of non-Indigenous peoples and how this difference is overlooked by existing policies and programs. It is shown in this report that Indigenous peoples in urban centers face homelessness.

This is the result of "the historically constructed and ongoing colonization and racism that has displaced and dispossessed" Indigenous peoples across Canada. In addition, this report depicted that Indigenous peoples' households are in serious housing need, compared to non-Indigenous households which needed major repairs. It also described that overcrowding is a more prevalent problem among Indigenous households than among non-Indigenous households. For instance, the socioeconomic disadvantages of

Indigenous peoples are even more pronounced in cities, where Indigenous people are more likely to live in low-income housing than in Indigenous communities elsewhere therefore, they are mostly likely to be unable to afford the cost of the repairs. Similarly, urban Indigenous households are more likely to need repair than rural and suburban Indigenous households. Consequently, vulnerable groups such as women, youth, the elderly, 2SLGBTQQIA+, and people with disabilities who live in Indigenous Households are more disadvantaged socioeconomically because they are most likely to need housing to escape violence and danger.

For instance, this report showed that to advocate for and support Indigenous homelessness, we must address all the ways that Indigenous peoples are isolated from stable, permanent, and appropriate housing by the legacy of colonialism. We must base our work on an understanding that Indigenous homelessness is fundamentally different from non-Indigenous homelessness due to colonial rule.

Indigenous Scoping Review: Exploring the Systemic Barriers within Policy and Programs for Off-Reserve Communities, as it relates to Homelessness and Physical, Spiritual, Mental and Emotional Health Impacts

Drawing back to the importance of partnerships, and community inclusion, In 2022 CAP established an ongoing partnership with Waakebiness Institute for Indigenous Health (WIIH) at the University of Toronto to, both quantitatively (numbers) and qualitatively (community engagement), research Indigenous homelessness in Canada by investigating the systemic barriers within policy, and key elements to its root causes, and how these barriers cause various mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health impacts for urban and rural communities.

In this partnership, CAP's Research department has been working with A Traditional Knowledge Holder, Indigenous Scholar, one Indigenous graduate student, and two non-Indigenous students to write this in-house research report. We are currently in the process of drafting the manuscript (paper), some of the findings from over 400 peer-reviewed articles we found as it relates to homelessness and Urban Indigenous populations is found below.

We worked on an Indigenous Scoping Review -this is a method of doing research in which, 2-3 researchers will develop 1-2 research questions, and explore all the existing literature related to that topic to drive conclusions and recommendations. We call it Indigenous because, the work engages with community to develop the report. We try to use mostly research that was created from Indigenous scholars, authors, researchers, organizations, and communities to evaluate and share the findings in a condensed report. In addition to meaningful engagement with elders and Indigenous scholars to help guide the work. This is the first time CAP completed this type of research that was fully immersed through Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

Brief Summary of Findings:

- Homelessness is a systemic issue, rooted in racist and colonial policies that discriminate against all Indigenous peoples regardless of status.
- Many of the policies impacting individuals and their families facing precarious housing/homelessness include Income Support Policy, Municipal government Policy, and the exclusion of Indigenous voices at the municipal level, public housing policy, Residential School System, Child Welfare Policies (Bill 210), Policies related to addition and personal development, minimum wage, policies for peoples with disabilities, and landlord and tenant policies, Indian Act, 1938 Housing Act, Royal Proclamation.
- Decolonizing Social Services, practices, and policies (Social Service Workers moving beyond the bureaucratic frameworks in the governmental office and engaging in the community to help people,

which is much more accessible and safer for individuals) Decolonization has to happen from a framework that includes all Indigenous perspectives, and worldviews regardless of identity, status, and gender.

- As homelessness is a systemic issue, deeply interconnected with various levels of government and agencies, the work being done in children services especially needs to be indigenous centered, by including indigenous perspectives in cultural safety training of staff, family and community inclusion in the bureaucratic robotic system that exists.
- Our research found that healing through traditional Indigenous ways (ceremony, traditional medicines, safe Indigenous spaces rooted with cultural values) is a protective factor in the mental, physical, spiritual impacts.
 - Example. An intervention program was held to understand the experiences of homelessness, a large tipi was set up in Lethbridge, Alberta right in the main center and it was run by the Blackfoot community, where they provided warmth for people, daytrips, food, meal sharing, and ceremony. Many of the homeless population (Indigenous and non-Indigenous that came out to this program, were able to escape homelessness and those thoughts of life circumstances, and just be in a safe t space where they had friendship, food, and culture
 - Social Services was invited out to see the program and meet people and the result was that government and city workers were able to be on the level of normal people, no hierarchy. With this equity some people felt safe with the social services workers and were able to find housing.
 - The moral of this example is that empathy, kindness, and putting Indigenous worldviews at the forefront is extremely important for alleviating homelessness and mental health issues caused by related to racist colonial policies.
- The future of the research must emphasize how the impacts of the homelessness differ for those with status vs non status First Nations, Metis, Inuit peoples.
- The direction of our work aims to ethically collect data from Indigenous experts, organizations communities to better understand the personal experiences of being homeless/facing precarious housing, and the barriers for organizations in carrying out the work to inform the development of new government policies, and practices.

Following the completion of this scoping review will include a meta-analysis which is again another research method, and it will collect data from Indigenous experts in the field, of housing to inform policies, programs, and the development of research.

Exploring the Landscape: Child Welfare, Housing and Health for Indigenous Peoples Living off-Reserve in Urban and Rural Communities

As this review of CAP's research has already identified, housing is a complex issue, that impacted the health and well-being of not just individuals, but families, and communities and is exacerbated by the child welfare system. In which continually causes harm to families, through the forcible removal of children from their homes and into the care of non-Indigenous peoples/government. In 2022 CAP research department developed this in-house research paper which explored housing, health and child welfare for Indigenous peoples living in urban and rural communities. Further highlighting key issues and themes to inform CAP's priority areas of housing, child welfare and Indigenous health. The current report provided a review of current research, government policies and programs and further identifies recommendations for the development of policy and the continued need for advocacy and research, as it is related to off-reserve Status/Non-status North American Indian, Métis and Southern Inuit Peoples.

Key Themes within the paper

- Indigenous women represent around 35% of the homeless population in urban centers.

- Indigenous peoples living off-reserve continue to face worse conditions than non-Indigenous peoples, of which include higher unemployment rates, interactions within the justice system, poorer health outcomes, lack of access to healthcare. These issues are worsened by poor living and housing conditions.
- Policy needs to be flexible to meet the vast diversity of needs of all Indigenous peoples. Communities, both urban, rural, and remote need to be at the forefront of decision-making.
- Empathetic, and culturally safe practices that are person and community centered are needed to support the well-being and development of children, housing infrastructure and alleviating homelessness.
- CAP should also be working towards identifying the systemic barriers within policy, and research to better advocate for our constituents in receiving access to culturally safe services, housing, and improving the well-being of our communities nationally.
- Supportive housing is one of various solutions to alleviating the housing insecurity. This framework supports wellbeing, access to employment and the alleviation of poverty, while providing community access to safe and accessible housing.
- The jurisdictional issues within healthcare, housing and children services remains a major obstacle, the government of Canada needs to take clear responsibility to appropriately and efficiently respond to these growing issues to meet the needs of all diverse Indigenous populations nationally.
- In counteracting the distinction-based approach, all groups of Indigenous peoples regardless of status, gender, ability, sexual orientation should have an equal say. Women and youth should be treated with equity at these tables especially in the context of housing.

Indigenous populations are comprised of Status/Non-Status First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples with over 618 First Nations, 70 Languages, and- Metis Settlements. Each of these Indigenous groups have their own distinct cultures-and traditions. It should be noted that over 80% of Indigenous populations reside in urban centers. The foundations to the current housing crisis, was the legal policy separation from mainstream Canadian society. The current system cannot be understood without contextualizing colonialism, for thousands of years Indigenous peoples prospered on Turtle Island as sovereign nations through their diverse governance, traditions, cultures, ways of life, agriculture and more. With the expansion of British, French, and Nordic settlers grew disease outbreak, political and economic changes; the European settlers used health as a weapon to expand on the lands that were not theirs. This expansion yelled violence against women and children, displaced Indigenous peoples from their lands, and what would follow would be the creation of the *Indian Act* which would define “Indigeneity” through legislated policy that would remove Indian status in exchange for rights. This would also be a precursor to the nationalization of Indigenous children with the hopes of assimilation through the Residential School System, Sixties Scoop, and harmful child welfare practice

Policies such as the National Housing Strategy are generalized and exclusive of meeting the needs of distinct Indigenous populations. The policy itself mentions inclusion with vulnerable populations, however there is no capacity for Indigenous self-determination. In keeping with this, the government of Canada is generalizing its commitment to housing at a whole, and not recognizing the unique barriers Indigenous peoples face in terms of pre-carious housing/homelessness. The CMHC website indicates, 564.7 million in funding has been provided for Indigenous and Housing, yet their housing progress report provides very brief section on the progress of Indigenous housing. This still largely remains an issue that affects the health and well-being of communities nationwide.

Consistent funding remains a major issue, especially for Indigenous organizations and shelters that are working to advocate or provide housing programs directly. This is a major barrier as precarious housing itself can have very fast consequences for becoming homelessness. There is a goal of reducing chronic homelessness by 50% by the year 2028, however in the latest report from the auditor general, they state

that no organization has taken the lead on this goal, and Infrastructure Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada are currently unaware of how programs are improving the lives of those facing precarious housing and homelessness. They clearly articulate that government organizations are slow to use tools to be able to deliver results, in addition to data gaps that make it challenging.

Improving the quality of living of all Indigenous peoples regardless of status, geographic location and other identities is critical to improving the health and well-being of communities. Poverty is a force that is rooted in systemic barriers, and colonial harms, all Indigenous populations should be socially included to improve the health and well-being of communities. Sufficient investments need to be made to continue to meet basic needs of children and youth. Listed below is an outline of recommendations based on the review of literature that is outlined in this report.

Conclusive remarks and on a path forward:

To conclude, research conducted by CAP has focused on a range of issues affecting off-reserve Indigenous peoples, including education, health, employment, housing, and access to justice. The organization has also been actively involved in efforts to address the legacy of residential schools and the ongoing impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples.

In recent years, CAP has called for greater recognition of the rights of off-reserve Indigenous peoples, including the right to self-determination, the right to participate in decision-making processes, and the right to access culturally appropriate services and resources. In 2018, CAP's Political Agreement outlined a commitment to "research plans and policies in a post-Daniels context to help identify needs and gaps in programs and services, and to improve access to existing programs and services for non-status Indians and other off-reserve Indigenous peoples in areas such as housing." Similarly, both the 2018 and 2019 CAP Annual General Meetings passed resolutions regarding the need to improve housing and end homelessness. For nearly 20 years, CAP has produced research and policy papers on key themes of housing need in Canada. The organization has also been a vocal advocate for the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Canada. Specifically, as this review showed, the research department at CAP has made significant strides and advancement in relation to Indigenous housing research. The housing projects in partnership with the government and the non-government/academic institutions demonstrated the importance of house dwelling and housing conditions on various socio-economic factors.

Overall, the research conducted by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples has contributed to a greater understanding of the challenges faced by off-reserve Indigenous peoples in Canada and has helped to fill significant gaps to advance Indigenous housing research. Key recommendations are listed below, of how CAP, can move forward in a positive way to better advocate for Status/Non-Status North American Indians, Metis and Southern Inuit peoples living off-reserve in urban and rural areas.

- The current mandate letter for the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion outlines with Indigenous partners, the co-development of an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy should be supported by the work of the Minister of Northern Affairs and supplemented with dedicated investments. Of which would work to create Canada's first-ever National Indigenous Housing Centre. An inquiry should be made to see the progress on this investment, development, and engagement with consulted Indigenous organizations such as CAP to ensure that discussions are inclusive of all distinct Indigenous populations including the Non-status First Nations, Metis and Southern Inuit peoples so that all perspectives are heard.

- Grounding Policy and research in Spirit – Policy and ways of doing research need to be flexible to meet the vast diversity of needs of all Indigenous peoples. Communities, both urban, rural, and remote need to be at the forefront of decision-making.
- Person Centered Approaches: As evidenced by research by providing individuals, and families access to culturally safe case management, access to mental health, spiritual guidance or peer support, communities can reclaim control within housing services.
- Cultural safety training within children services, and community inclusion in adoption. CAP should also continue to advocate for mental health programing, access to ceremony and traditional activities to support community and collective healing.
- Housing Needs Assessment for Indigenous peoples living in Rural, and Urban Centers. CAP should also be working towards identifying the systemic barriers within policy, to better advocate for our constituents in receiving access to culturally safe services, housing, and improving the well-being of our communities nationally.
- The solution to homelessness is supportive housing, a supportive housing framework supports wellbeing, access to employment and the alleviation of poverty. Economically speaking every dollar invested in supportive housing generated social and economic value nationally.
- The jurisdictional issues within housing services remains a major obstacle, the government of Canada needs to take clear responsibility to appropriately and efficiently respond to this growing issues to meet the needs of all diverse Indigenous populations nationally.
- CAP should advocate for the expansion of Indigenous led construction projects, that seek Indigenous perspectives in providing educational training on building sustainable and sustaining homes for people to enjoy with their families. This advocacy should work on the municipal level by ensuring that Indigenous perspectives are always at the forefront and in discussions when city planning.
- In counteracting the distinction-based approach, all groups of Indigenous peoples regardless of status, gender, ability, sexual orientation should have an equal say. Women and youth should be treated with equity at these tables, especially in speaking for the best interests of the well-being of children.
- CAP must call on the Government of Canada to close this gap by funding a fourth strategy for Indigenous households in housing need in urban, rural, and northern areas. The funding for this strategy must be greater than the current funding commitments in the National Housing Strategy.
- A new structure should be created, designed, owned, and operated by Indigenous peoples, using a service-oriented approach, to address the affordable housing and support service needs of Indigenous in urban, rural and northern Canada.
- Financial investments to increase the supply of stable and secure affordable housing must be made at a scale that aims to equalize basic housing needs between Indigenous and non-Indigenous households.
- Our research found that healing through traditional Indigenous means (ceremony, traditional medicines, safe Indigenous spaces rooted in cultural values) is a protective factor against mental, physical, and spiritual impacts. The moral of this example is that empathy, kindness, and putting

forward Indigenous worldviews are extremely important in mitigating homelessness and mental health issues caused by racist colonial policies.

- Housing assistance services need to incorporate larger units. According to a 2013 study, the off-reserve Native population has a much higher representation of family households than the non-Native population. The problem of housing overcrowding needs to be addressed both through density measures, allowing individuals to disperse into other units, and through culturally appropriate housing, allowing families to live together safely.
- Advocacy work on housing and homelessness must address the danger posed by vulnerable populations both in their own homes and in support systems.
- CAP must advocate for support services that provide youth and 2SLGBTQQIA+ adults with safety and opportunities to express their identities. It must also support similar programs for women and children.
- CAP must also advocate for homeless seniors, for whom there is a significant lack of specialized support services.
- All Indigenous peoples deserve safe housing, no matter what. Harmful homelessness must be addressed immediately. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples has been advocating for improved housing for its members since its inception. Housing is a key policy priority for CAP, as the housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous Peoples are fundamentally different from those of on-reserve Indigenous Peoples.
- Future research needs to focus on how the impacts of homelessness differ for registered and non-registered First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.
- CAP Annual General Meetings passed resolutions regarding the need to improve housing and end homelessness.