

HOUSING



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

Housing for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women

- Indigenous women are more at risk of becoming homeless due to the lack of community supports on reserve and in urban centres.¹
- The National Housing Strategy reinforces that housing is a human right.²
- Providing access to Indigenous-focused, women-centered, trauma-informed community supports and care solutions which are coordinated between violence prevention and housing programs, creates an inclusive, holistic approach to addressing homelessness.
- This provides Indigenous women with access to needed services and the ability to maintain their housing situation.

“Just as homelessness is multi-faceted so must be any response to addressing this as a social issue. A lack of comprehensive social policy that deals with the intersections between economics, social welfare, health care, justice, education, employment and housing increases the challenges associated with addressing homelessness.”³



Approaching Homelessness

- Community-centered approaches to maintain stable housing and initiatives to prevent homelessness should be implemented in an Indigenous stream. This allows for holistic community supports for Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people in maintaining safe, reliable housing.
- Lived experience should be at the forefront of the National Housing Strategy and Homelessness Partnering Strategy, allowing Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people to pass on knowledge and perspective to promote safe, stable housing and prevent homelessness.
- Violence against women (VAW) shelters must be attuned to the specific needs and risks of homelessness and precarious housing for Indigenous women who access their services. They must work towards ensuring more safe spaces within their facilities to minimize the potential for systemic harm to Indigenous women.
- Housing in the North has unique and varying factors that place Indigenous women and girls in those communities at greater risk of losing housing and having to rely on VAW shelters. These conditions, such as the cost of constructing and maintaining infrastructure,⁴ put women in the North at greater risk of becoming homeless and experiencing poverty.

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Risk Factors of Homelessness for Indigenous Women ⁵

- Gender-based, family and intimate partner violence.
- High rates of unemployment and of unaffordable housing.
- Poverty, economic insecurity and financial dependence.
- Lack of culturally-appropriate VAW shelters.
- Discrimination from landlords and service providers.
- Impacts of colonization and residential schools.
- Shortage of trauma-informed mental health and addiction services.
- Social exclusion and isolation.
- Criminalization.

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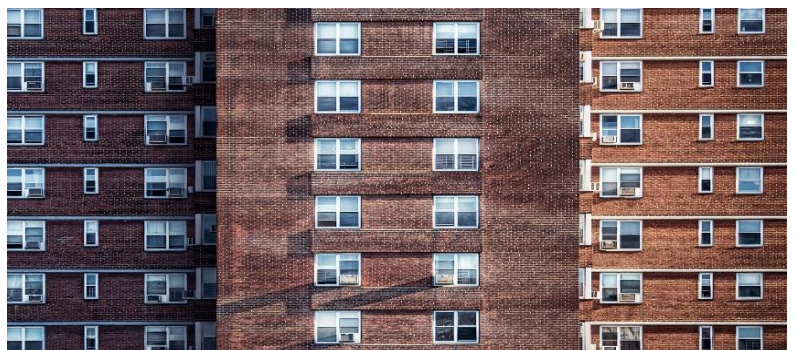
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- 8 See footnote 1.

Making the Connection to VAW

Indigenous women and girls experience violent victimization at twice the rate of non-Indigenous women. They also experience spousal violence at three times the rate of non-Indigenous women and experience more severe forms of abuse.⁶ For marginalized and victimized women, housing and safety from violence are inseparable. Efforts to address these factors must recognize their interconnectedness.

Establishing housing as a basic social support gives abused women and their children an alternative to VAW and homeless shelters. Despite the aims and intentions of VAW shelters, many Indigenous women have experienced discrimination, exploitation and violence in accessing them. Other women may be denied shelter space or feel excluded on the basis of their substance use or engagement in sex work.⁷

VAW shelters were not intended as a long-term solution for victims of gender-based and family violence. Some women may live for years in emergency shelters because there is no available affordable housing.⁸ In order to support women leaving abusive situations, access to safe, affordable housing is essential.



TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:

NWAC
613-722-3033
reception@nwac.ca