



## Aboriginal Women and Housing

### Quick Facts

- In 2011, Ontario's Aboriginal population rose to 301,425 (in 2006, it was 242,495) – an indication that the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing population (Statistics Canada)
- In 2011, 63% of 201,100 Ontario's registered First Nations people live off-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2011; Pomeroy, 2009)
- Ontario's Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population (O'Donnell & Wallace, 2011)
- Lone-parent households are headed by young Aboriginal women with 3 or more children (O'Donnell & Wallace, 2011)
- Lone-parent households on single income are more likely to be in core housing need (Canadian Housing Observer, 2005)
- Houses occupied by Aboriginal people are likely to need major repairs (Statistics Canada, 2010)
- Housing shortages and overcrowding are housing circumstances experienced by many Aboriginal people (OAHT, 2009)
- Aboriginal people leave their communities for housing, education, and employment opportunities (Belanger, Weasel Head, & Awosoga, 2012)
- Aboriginal people are 3x as likely to be unable to afford housing (RCAP, 1996)

### Barriers to Accessing Safe and Affordable Housing Off-Reserve:

- Poverty, single parent families, unemployment (UATF, 2007)
- Racism and discrimination from landlords (Belanger et al., 2012)
- Finding supportive and culturally relevant child care so that mothers can pursue educational and/or employment opportunities (UATF, 2007)
- Security deposits, co-signers required for lease, lack of credit history, lack of rental history, illiteracy (Thurston, Milaney, Turner & Coupal, 2013)
- Sporadic employment and inconsistent income make it difficult to become a homeowner (Belanger et al., 2012)

### Impacts of the Lack of Affordable Housing:

- Increased risk of homelessness (Wente, 2000)
- Increased risk of family's involvement with child welfare agencies, loss of children (Ruttan, LaBoucane-Benson, & Munro, 2010)

- Constant moving causes instability thus increasing the risk of behavioural and mental health problems with their children, also impacting negatively on the children’s social and academic development (Ruttan et al., 2010)
- Impact on wellbeing (self and family) – mental, physical, emotional and spiritual (Reading & Wien, 2009)
- Increased risk of substance abuse (Belanger, Awosoga, & Weasel Head, 2013)
- Cannot pursue educational aspirations and/or become meaningfully employed (Wente, 2000)

## Recommendations

- Increase support services and programs for Aboriginal women to assist with issues such as, but not limited to, family violence, addictions, sex trade work, health, disabilities, and coping with motherhood on an on-going basis (before, during and after crisis)
- Include Aboriginal women in creating and implementing legislative and policy solutions that will guide the process of accessing safe, suitable, and affordable housing
- Housing programs must be designed, owned, and administered by and for Aboriginal people
- Increase opportunities for Aboriginal women to become homeowners
- Promote cultural awareness to non-Aboriginal housing and service providers
- Establish working relationships with organizations whose mandate is to provide safe and affordable housing
- Reinstate and increase funding for social housing and mortgage subsidies under the Aboriginal off-reserve programs of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Both federal and provincial governments commit to addressing Aboriginal women’s housing needs by way of increasing funding
- Pursue “Housing First” strategies for Aboriginal women

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