

First Nations Housing Professionals Association

Resource Requirements for the Effective Management of First Nations On-Reserve Housing





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1. Executive Summary

Numerous reports on First Nations on-reserve housing over the decades have outlined a consistent portrait of deprivation. Now this report joins them.

At the outset, it is critical to underscore the inconsistent and sparing levels of data provided to researchers during their review of on-reserve housing programs. For this reason, this report is preliminary in nature. Its intent is to help set the foundation from which to build a path forward in addressing the First Nations housing crises across Canada, where many First Nations housing professionals are trapped in a set of cruel paradoxes: they have large pools of unemployed yet struggle to find workers to fill their vacant housing staff positions. The demand for their services grows, and so too their housing stock. However, as First Nations divert more of their limited financial resources into building homes, they are left with a shrinking pool of financial resources to provide the much-needed support services their growing membership requires. Year after year, housing staff are expected to do more with less. Year after year, housing administrators juggle the day-to-day crises which keep them too busy to address the roots of these crises with sustained long-term planning and strategic actions. Such is normal life in the communities, and the trouble with normal is it only gets worse.

COVID-19 and post-pandemic inflation are making it more difficult for housing departments to carry their growing burdens. Staff are getting older and in too many cases they lack of resources to recruit young people to replace them. The cost of building materials has skyrocketed along with the price of labour. Mental health conditions throughout First Nations communities have been further compromised by events of the past three years.

The gifts, strengths, talents, and wealth of First Nations people are subsumed by persistent crises. Somewhere in the distance is a better life and a better community. Somewhere down the road is the full expression of wellness, pride, dignity, and strength. But First Nations communities are often too mired in the moment to have the luxury of looking down that road. The consistent theme of this report is that housing staff are overburdened, over challenged, and burning out — emotionally and physically. Getting participants on the phone was not easy: deaths, suicide, sickness - these commonplace First Nations events were a daily encounter and a challenge to pulling off this project.

The truth about First Nations community housing workers, and community workers in general, is that many of them are idealistic, committed, and driven by a sense of duty. Several managers were candid about the fact that they could, and at one time did, make far more money outside their First Nation. But a desire to come home and to give back compelled them to absorb the cuts in pay and the loss of benefits and opportunities that coming home entails. Community work is unglamorous and largely unacknowledged.



It's commonplace to attribute social problems to poverty, but in many cases, it is due to the outsourcing of services which impacts community employment and income opportunities. Money flows from First Nations to outside vendors and tradespeople and have become an industry for contractors. Housing programs need more dollars, and they need them now, but in the long-term they will need a different kind of thinking and a different business model. Housing managers know this, and they want it, too. They know that old ways of thinking, combined with opaque and arbitrary funding arrangements hinder them. They know that housing should be run like a business.

First Nations communities know that substance abuse is killing their people, and they know that intergenerational trauma is behind the pain. To address the needs of the future, communities will need to develop a **community-wide holistic wellness strategy**. Mental health realities are placing enormous pressure on housing resources, from degradation of the housing stock to non-payment of rent, to employee safety. There are few aspects of this report unaffected by mental health. Healing will help with many of the challenges housing professionals have identified. If they can advance wellness among their people, struggling communities will have more of the innate talents and gifts of their membership contributing to the collective good. They will have more skilled people to employ. They will have greater revenue to invest.

The lack of long-term **succession and strategic planning** is another major theme of this review. In part, this is the result of ineffective governance systems and practices. Chief and Council do not necessarily separate governance and managerial functions, nor is the distinction necessarily appreciated. Another barrier is business. Too many communities operate in mere survival mode, and are forced to select the most burning priorities, with housing often being lost in this process. People and tasks do not align with shared and co-ordinated strategic community priorities. No one is attending to the big picture and the vision of a better future. People are divided and isolated and, most of all, exhausted. And because little changes, little changes.

Funding regimes and formulas should be informed by, align with, and support long-term strategic First Nations community priorities. Another major theme of the report is that communities need **meaningful, flexible, and transparent funding agreements** that respect community realities, needs, and aspirations. They reasonably expect governments to work with them in a collaborative partnership that places their reality centre-stage.

Last, but not least, housing managers are clear that they require additional targeted resources aimed at **recruiting and certifying more skilled tradespeople and hiring more housing managers, maintenance staff, inspectors, wellness workers, and administrative support**. Lack of staff and workers in these specific areas is a top concern.

A final note: some of the respondents in this survey were not familiar with the First Nations Housing Professionals Association. The FNHPA certainly plays a significant and much needed role in addressing some of the recommendations in this report, especially around training,



certification and direct support to First Nations communities through the establishment of national housing standards and management and operational tools to support their work. It is clear, however, that the FNHPA needs to accelerate its outreach strategy to reach First Nations housing professionals across the country with its compelling value proposition. This review should be the beginning of a larger and more comprehensive conversation. Going forward, outcomes of this research will be used to determine models for optimal service delivery of housing programs and services by identifying the appropriate level of human and financial resources required for the effective management of First Nations on-reserve housing across Canada.



2. Introduction

A. Background

The First Nations Housing Professional Association (FNHPA) has initiated several capacity development activities over the last several years to improve housing management and operational supports for First Nations communities. Throughout the course of this work, consensus was established that simply providing more funding to enhance local capacity will not suffice on its own. It will take an integrated approach that provides improvements to capacity building for First Nations On-Reserve Housing portfolios and its staff and leaders to affect meaningful and sustainable change.

As a result of FNHPA ongoing efforts, several capacity building mechanisms and standards of practice have been established: Code of Ethics and Standards of Ethical Conduct; First Nations housing curriculum scan; Competency Standards; Certification Standards and Policy; five courses; content for a Prior Learning and Assessment Program; start-up and delivery courses and webinars; and a growing Knowledge Centre.

Building on this important work, the FNHPA has completed a preliminary review of First Nations housing to better understand on-the-ground operations and management of on-reserve housing programs. This report is a direct outcome of this research and provides a series of recommendations to enhance capacity and strengthen housing programs using an incremental and integrated approach in a way that recognizes the unique needs of First Nations communities. To arrive at these recommendations, OCAP™ Certified researchers conducted cross-Canada outreach to take stock of the current state of First Nations housing programs and brainstorm with housing program staff to discuss ideas for a path forward. The result of this work is an articulation of 'where we are now' and 'where we must be in the future'. This report outlines several recommendations to support shifts from the current to desired future state by putting in place a road map of key activities and next steps.

B. About the First Nations Housing Professionals Association

The FNHPA is a national not-for-profit professional association exclusively serving the needs of individuals working for or aspiring to housing management positions with First Nations organizations. It is responsible for providing training, certification, and professional development opportunities in housing. It was founded on November 15, 2018, and formally incorporated on January 1, 2019.

The organization was informed by activities and lessons learned from the success of AFOA Canada and the First Nations Health Managers Association. Both capacity building membership driven organizations are engaged in certification and education related activities and have made significant strides in advancing competencies and, in turn, building capacity. The Board of the FNHPA, over time, aspires to be as relevant and successful as these associations.

The FNHPA's purpose is to expand housing capacity for First Nations in Canada by providing leadership to support housing professionals with services such as developing, promoting, and delivering quality standards, practices, research, certification, education services, and networking. Services are provided to individuals and member organizations that share the common purpose of the association and that meet the standards and criteria as established by the FNHPA Board of Directors.



Housing professionals are key stakeholders in their communities. They work directly with community members to help them access new homes and accommodations and support them in maintaining healthy and safe homes. To operate effectively, First Nations Housing requires fully trained staff in each community to meet all related needs, including the education and experience to plan, finance, build, manage, and maintain housing program assets. To ensure standards across the spectrum, a housing program capacity building organization with a national scope and mandate is required to provide housing staff with learning opportunities to expand their competencies to meet their operational and community needs. The FNHPA was established for that purpose and is leading capacity development for First Nations housing in that regard. The FNHPA is mandated to assist individuals to learn and apply new knowledge and skills, standards, and best practices in their respective jobs. The FNHPA is also mandated to provide direct support to its member First Nations including the development of strategic goals, the development, and the implementation of management and operational workplans to ensure the successful delivery of effective, sustainable and quality housing programs in First Nations communities.

Arising out of an Assembly of First Nations (AFN) approved Resolution 57/2018, and the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy, the Federal government provided the AFN with a copy of its nine-page report entitled “*Deep Dive on First Nations Housing On Reserves*”, which reported four key challenges in the transfer to First Nations of the care, control, and management of housing and infrastructure.

One of the key challenges was “*Capacity for Housing Management*”, which states, “...*(T)he role of the Housing Manager was highlighted as critical to accessing existing and new federal programs, successful execution of housing investments, good governance and ongoing management of the housing portfolio. Many people stressed the importance of ensuring communities have (housing managers), as communities understand their needs best.*”

Towards this end, seven recommendations were provided, three of which are directly applicable to FNHPA educational activities as follows:

- “3) *Expand support for governance capacity, including housing managers;*”
- “6) *Strategically use data to support outcomes, built better evidence base and support First Nation’s development of their own information base;*” and,
- “7) *Incorporate additional findings, including promoting best practices and innovations.*”

To fully address these critical First Nations housing and infrastructure needs, the FNHPA must be prepared to play a key supporting role to all stakeholders. To this end, FNHPA is creating and delivering the foundational education and training required to support housing staff become competent First Nations Housing Professionals (FNHPs). The nature of the competencies includes knowledge and skills that will allow individuals taking the education and training to also work in other speciality areas in First Nations.

As a professional association with a national focused mandate, the FNHPA provides the following types of services:

- Competency and Ethical Standards



- Certification: regular and Prior Learning approach, five formal learning modules including examination, and ongoing Maintenance of Certification (Professional Development) requirements
- An annual National Conference and AGM
- Regularly scheduled and on-demand Workshops and Webinars
- Website/social media/networking
- Job listing service and other career supports
- Publications
- Website Knowledge Centre, with tools, practice, articles, reports, etc.
- Promotion of both the designation and the profession
- Awards, scholarships and member discounts

Some of the FNHPA's major achievements since its inception are:

- Developing competency-based standards and a comprehensive professional education course path for a First Nation Housing Professional designation.
- "Filling the gap" in the identified areas of capacity development, education, and training for First Nation Housing.
- Providing a national voice for all management and administrative staff working in First Nation housing.
- Being a trusted and relevant association that is responsive to its members needs by developing the tools, resources, workshops, webinars, and publications to support day to day activities for those working within the First Nation Housing Industry.
- Continuing to partner with other associations that support First Nation Housing and provide holistic support within the partnerships. Example: healthy housing – FNHMA, building sciences – FNNBOA.

FNHPA Mandate and Priorities

The following infographic on page 9 describes the purpose of FNHPA and the key areas of focus that help the organization to achieve this mandate. Each of these focus areas are tied to this report's recommendations in Section 6, as we describe how FNHPA can support on-reserve housing programs and strengthen the resource capacity to be able to support First Nations communities in building for a better tomorrow.



FNHPA Mandate

The Association's purpose is to expand housing capacity for First Nations in Canada by providing leadership to support housing professionals with services such as developing, promoting and delivering quality standards, practices, research, certification, education services, and networking.

Specifically, FNHPA supports existing and future housing professionals in serving their communities by:



National Standards

Setting national standards for First Nations housing providers on-reserve



Education

Delivering housing management education and certification programs



Communication

Encouraging communication and knowledge sharing



Support

Offering direct support and access to First Nations housing professionals in Canada



Research

Undertaking relevant research aimed at identifying ways to improve First Nations on-reserve housing management in Canada



C. Project Scope

This project undertook a Canada-wide review of local on-reserve house programs to garner first-hand information about their respective operations, challenges, successes, and the capacity they require to deliver their programs and services effectively. To carry out this research, the FNHPA contracted four OCAP™ Certified Researchers to meet with First Nations communities, either virtually or by phone, due to time, capacity, and other constraints, to discuss the current management and operational capacity of their housing programs. The findings were analyzed and aggregated to determine patterns of consistency and distinctiveness of on-reserve housing programs from a national scope. Going forward, outcomes of this research will be used to determine models for optimal service delivery of housing programs and services by identifying the appropriate level of human and financial resources required for the effective management of First Nations on-reserve housing across Canada.

The data contained in this report is a result of the following scope of work as provided to each of the OCAP™ certified researchers:

- Conducting an **environmental scan** of current housing conditions in local communities noting pertinent housing policies and programs, the human and financial resources involved, and how they impact housing operations and conditions locally and regionally.
- Conducting a **literature review** of related housing research.
- Conducting **outreach** with local community leaders, housing managers, administrators and workers involved in housing operations and maintenance.
- Carrying out a **review** of housing program policies and implementation, funding arrangements for operations, capacity building, and availability of housing human resources, landlord-tenant relations, asset management and maintenance needs.

Ultimately, the intent of this work is to provide the FNHPA with qualified data to support the need for enhanced funding commitments from the Federal Government. The overall benefit of this project, then, may be increased management and operations funding to First Nations communities, and direct support from the FNHPA through national housing standards, guidelines, certification training and development programs.

3. Methodology

This section provides an overview of approaches used to collect data. An integral component to this research was ensuring its comprehensiveness so that a holistic picture of on-reserve housing programs in First Nations communities across Canada could be understood. This report is therefore built from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as outlined below. As well, it is important to underscore that with many research initiatives, there are limitations and restrictions to the breadth and depth of data collected, which we have articulated in section B.



A. Methodologies Used

At the outset, researchers were asked to conduct a background review of contextual documents, including:

- Housing policies;
- Relevant organizational policies; and,
- A literature review of relevant research as conducted by First Nations organizations, federal and provincial governments, and not for profit, and other stakeholder organizations and institutions.

Where these documents were provided to researchers, they were reviewed and considered within the overall research of this project. In some cases, these documents either (a) did not exist; (b) could not be located; or, (c) due to privacy restrictions, could not be shared. In such instances, information related to these documents was gleaned (when possible) through conversations with respondents. The intent of this review was to conduct an initial preliminary environmental scan of current housing conditions in local communities, noting any pertinent housing policies and programs, the human and financial resources involved, and how they impact housing conditions locally and regionally.

Following a review of documentation, a questionnaire was sent to respondents within participating communities to better understand quantitative matters such as the number of band houses, staff numbers and positions, budgets and the number of additional employees needed. As a follow up to this questionnaire, respondents were contacted via telephone or virtually to collect information around the current state of on-reserve housing within those communities. These discussions were typically one-to-two and a half hours in length. Interviews were affected by the availability of participants which was restricted by their workloads and other commitments, and particularly fiscal year-end preparation.

Respondents ranged from local community leaders, housing managers and administrators to community members, and workers involved in the operation and maintenance of housing programs. A set of questions was prepared in advance of the conversations, including:

- *What is positive or good; what do you like about any aspect of your work, organization, role or community?*
- *What needs to be done better or differently?*
- *What are the barriers to doing things better and differently?*
- *If you could change one thing, what would it be?*

Through these conversations, our researchers obtained different perspectives from those involved in community housing programs – what works, where there are gaps, and recommendations for improvements to First Nations housing management and operations. The data was then reviewed in aggregate across the different regions and assessed thematically to uncover similarities and divergences in terms of strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement (as detailed in Section 5 and 6 below). Findings are presented in ranked format, from most to least reported. A statement made by ten respondents is therefore weighted more heavily than a statement made by eight or five or one. Nonetheless the one respondent may in fact be identifying a critical, top priority for that one community, or workplace, or department.



B. Limitations and Restrictions

There were several limitations and restrictions that directly or indirectly influenced the level of detail researchers were able to collect, including:

1. Capacity in First Nations communities

An important component of outreach is the time and resource commitment required by First Nations communities to fully participate. Given that many communities lack sufficient resources to carry out these requests, outreach can be onerous on the individuals being asked to participate. In short, many communities do not have staffing resources to work through the current number of outreach, let alone the number of staff with the experience and expertise to lead these initiatives. Workload, time, and financial constraints also affect participation rates for training and development whether it's taken in the private sector or with the FNHPA.

2. Outreach Fatigue

Consistent requests for outreach and the resulting fatigue is a reality for many First Nations communities. The impacts of over-engagement can show up in a First Nation's resistance to participate in new initiatives, not only due to a shortage of resources to carry out the work, but also because of the apprehension to trust that a process will garner real change and meaningful results.

3. Emerging priorities

With any organization, there are competing pressures for time, budget, and resources. As priorities shift, so too does the focus of a First Nations community. In this regard, attempts at outreach were reprioritized and discussion times were cut short or did not happen within the allotted project timeframe.

4. Project timelines

For the purposes of this initiative, the number of in-depth conversations was dependent on project timelines. The project team made an informed decision to collect data across 56 First Nations communities and 8 urban organizations to form a baseline understanding of current state and future trajectory. On average, surveys have a response rate of between 5% and 30%. Of the 634 recognized First Nations communities in Canada, the 56 respondents are representative of 9% which falls within the average range. Further, the response rate would have been much higher if the FNHPA had sufficient time and resources for outreach. Moving forward, it will be important to continue to conduct outreach with more communities to ensure that those who wish to participate are given the opportunity.

5. Budgetary restrictions

Due to budgetary constraints, outreach was not conducted in-person. While virtual or telephone discussions produce satisfactory results, face-to-face conversations hold utmost value in understanding on the ground needs and being able to develop strong and trusting relationships between the FNHPA and First Nations communities.

6. Lack of Psychological Workplace Safety

There is a sense of hesitancy and/or fear to provide transparent feedback and data to researchers because housing staff do not want to cause dissension within their work units. This points to a lack



of psychological safety in the workplace, and that people who experience or witness challenges often do not report them due to fear of backlash.

4. A Federal Perspective – Canada's Housing Sector

A. Introduction

In Canada, social housing is traditionally funded by multiple orders of government and through complicated multi-party agreements. Prior to the 1990s, the federal government via Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) held administrative and funding responsibilities for social housing and provided these funds to the provinces and territories based on different program agreements. In the 1990s, the federal government began reducing its administrative responsibilities, making provinces and territories responsible for making decisions about the administration, design, and funding of housing programs (Leone and Carroll, 2010).

With the devolution of administrative functions at the federal level, data on social housing in Canada has grown increasingly fragmented. It is difficult to get a comprehensive picture of the country's housing ecosystem, as many provinces and territories have established their own approaches to data collection and administration. While this makes sense from a responsibility perspective, it also results in a lack of standardization of reporting requirements at a national level. Additionally, social housing programs in Canada are now administered through a variety of organizational bodies that often have different policies, mandates, and reporting structures.

B. A History of Canada's On-Reserve Housing Programs

The CMHC, a federally owned Crown Corporation, was formed in 1946 to address Canada's housing shortage, but did not get involved significantly in Indigenous housing on-reserve until the 1980s. Most of the Housing Managers interviewed spoke of their housing administration being established as a result of the surge in on reserve rental housing funded by the Federal Government through the pre-97 CMHC program in the 1980s.

The CMHC program, now referred to as the Pre-1997 First Nations Rental Housing Program, was designed for off-reserve but subsequently used on reserve despite the significant differences between the two settings. One can only assume that CMHC thought that, despite the absence of adequate funding and training in off-reserve approaches to housing, First Nations would have the necessary skills to administer housing much as board members of a non-profit housing society would.

In 1990, CMHC moved from its largely hands-off approach of the preceding decade (which had mirrored its relationships with off-reserve non-profit housing providers) to a more hands-on approach, visiting First Nations regularly and developing training materials to support First Nations housing administration. Also, CMHC created an 'Aboriginal Capacity Building' budget to fund training and related travel expenses for First Nations housing staff to attend regional workshops and training sessions.

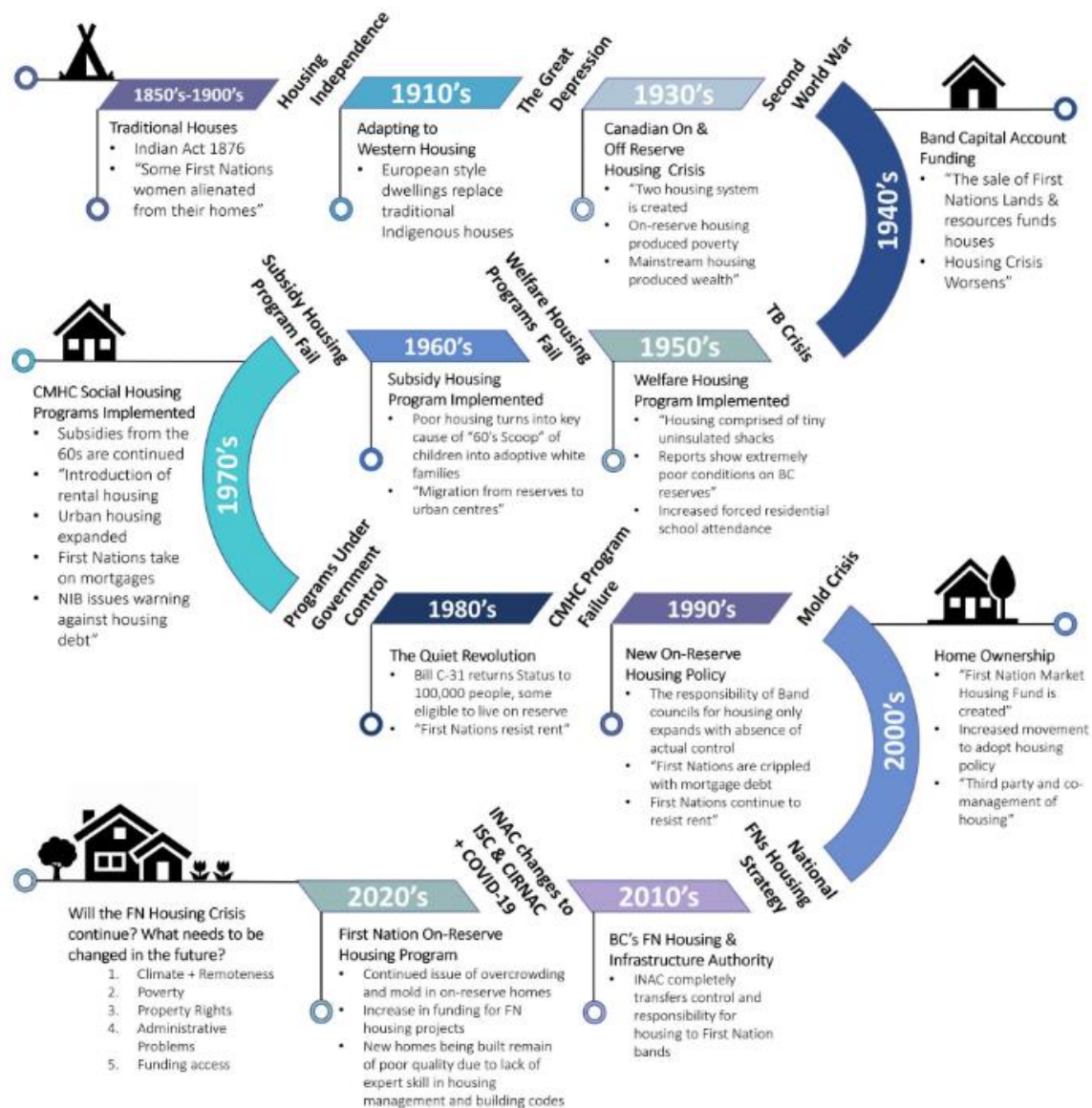
In 1996, the On-Reserve Housing Policy was introduced to provide greater flexibility and control to First Nations over their housing policies and programs. Those that opted into the policy were given access to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's (INAC) housing funds in support of implementing community-based plans. Where this policy was not adopted, First Nations would continue to operate under the



provision of the housing subsidy program; their housing capital funding only used for construction, rehabilitation, or renovation.

According to Wolf Collar (2020), ISC and CMHC continue to make decisions about how much and what kind of housing to pay for and no longer assure the provision of qualified construction workers or insured materials that has resulted in the ongoing deterioration of units until present. Further, building inspections are not guaranteed or consistently carried out across different provinces and territories, resulting in discrepancies in how the federal building code is followed. The onus of responsibility has shifted to Band governments to ensure housing meets federal standards; a role that can be difficult to carry out without the necessary skills, training, and capacity.

The graphic below depicts a timeline of on-reserve housing programs and developments, taken from *Economic Aspects of the Indigenous Experience in Canada* (Galoustian & Hageman, 2021) and based on Dr. Sylvia Olsen's *Short History of On-Reserve Housing* (2019). The graphic shows what Olsen refers to as the 'quiet devolution' of responsibility to First Nations; a passing of responsibilities that has created operational challenges for on-reserve housing, a selection of which are identified in Section 5: Current State Assessment.



As the end of the timeline shows, there is much to be done to manage and mitigate issues impacting the First Nations housing crisis. This report is a preliminary assessment of some of these barriers, including administrative challenges, poverty, and access to funding, as heard from First Nations communities across Canada. It is important to underscore that the work does not stop at the identification of these issues, but through deeper analysis of root causes, and working through the implementation of recommendations to begin mending the social housing crisis in First Nations communities.

C. The National Housing Strategy

In 2017, the Government of Canada launched its inaugural National Housing Strategy (NHS), an ambitious 10-year, \$40 billion dollar plan to support inclusive communities, strengthen the middle class and grow the economy. As one of its key priorities, the NHS is setting out a plan to co-develop federally



supported distinction-based First Nations, Inuit and Metis Nation housing strategies that are founded in the principles of self-determination, reconciliation, respect, and cooperation. To this end, First Nations are leading the development of a First Nations National Housing and Infrastructure Strategy that ensures the First Nations' perspective is embedded into the future of housing within Canada.

The NHS also recognizes the importance of focusing on northern and remote regions, where there is typically a history of poor planning and a decline in federal funding within these communities. Through the increased provision of funds to provinces and territories, along with additional funding for the North, the NHS is striving to offset some of the higher costs associated with building, operating, and maintaining housing in Northern and remote communities.

While the NHS provides a good start to addressing the First Nations' housing crisis in Canada, Indigenous groups have identified the absence of a dedicated urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing strategy. The Indigenous Housing Caucus of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) was established to fill this gap, releasing the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy for Canada. This strategy meets the housing needs of approximately 80% of Indigenous peoples not currently represented in NHS distinctions-based strategies (CHRA, 2020).

D. Moving Forward – the FNHPA's Role in Addressing the First Nations Housing Crisis

There are many concurrent initiatives being run to address the housing crisis on a national scale, as well as focused strategies and projects to disassemble systemic barriers impacting housing conditions for First Nations communities on-reserve. While many of these initiatives focus on funding, there is a growing need to address capacity related constraints facing First Nations communities. In terms of sequencing, it is not only important to have a healthy influx of funds to support housing-related programs and improvements, but to also have the skills and abilities necessary to make meaningful use of these dollars.

The FNHPA was established to provide leadership in housing management activities by developing and promoting quality standards, practices, certification, and professional development to expand capacity for members and First Nations organizations. There is much to be uncovered in this area, and the work will be ongoing to support training and development needs that strengthen both national and localized housing capacity. The FNHPA will continue to learn from and about the needs of First Nations communities across the country to encourage safer, affordable, and accessible on-reserve housing.



5. Current-State Findings

A. Introduction

The FNHPA has undertaken a review of housing management and operations across Canada to investigate common challenges and establish preliminary recommendations to support the effective management of First Nations housing on reserve. The focus of this report is mainly specific to on-reserve housing programs, looking at such factors as human and financial resources. As stated in the limitations above, there were barriers to being able to produce an in-depth study, namely due to time and budget constraints. Had there been more time for outreach, researchers would have been able to reach more First Nations communities and establish an even stronger cross-section of data from which to conclude the top-most priorities to address. This report is, however, a strong starting point from which to build. Project researchers were still able to reach many communities who varied in geography and population size.

A total of 56 First Nations participated in this review, along with 8 urban housing organizations. The rationale for including urban organizations was to determine whether they receive more funding than First Nations organizations; a finding that is inconclusive based on the data researchers were able (or unable) to collect. What was apparent is that urban organizations typically have more housing units and more housing department staff than on-reserve housing organizations, the cause of which cannot be determined without further investigation.

The different jurisdictions covered in this report include: Yukon, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces. Researchers reported speaking to a diverse range of communities with different geographic and population factors including isolated, rural/remote, or urban, and from populations with under 200 members to over 12,000. Where numerical data was provided, we have included it in the infographic on page 19.

B. Quantitative Data from Respondent Organizations and Communities

The following figure on page 19 captures the data gathered from the survey regarding number of housing units, and number of housing staff. To protect anonymity, no First Nation or Urban organization is directly named. Rather, data is shown in aggregate from a provincial and territorial perspective.

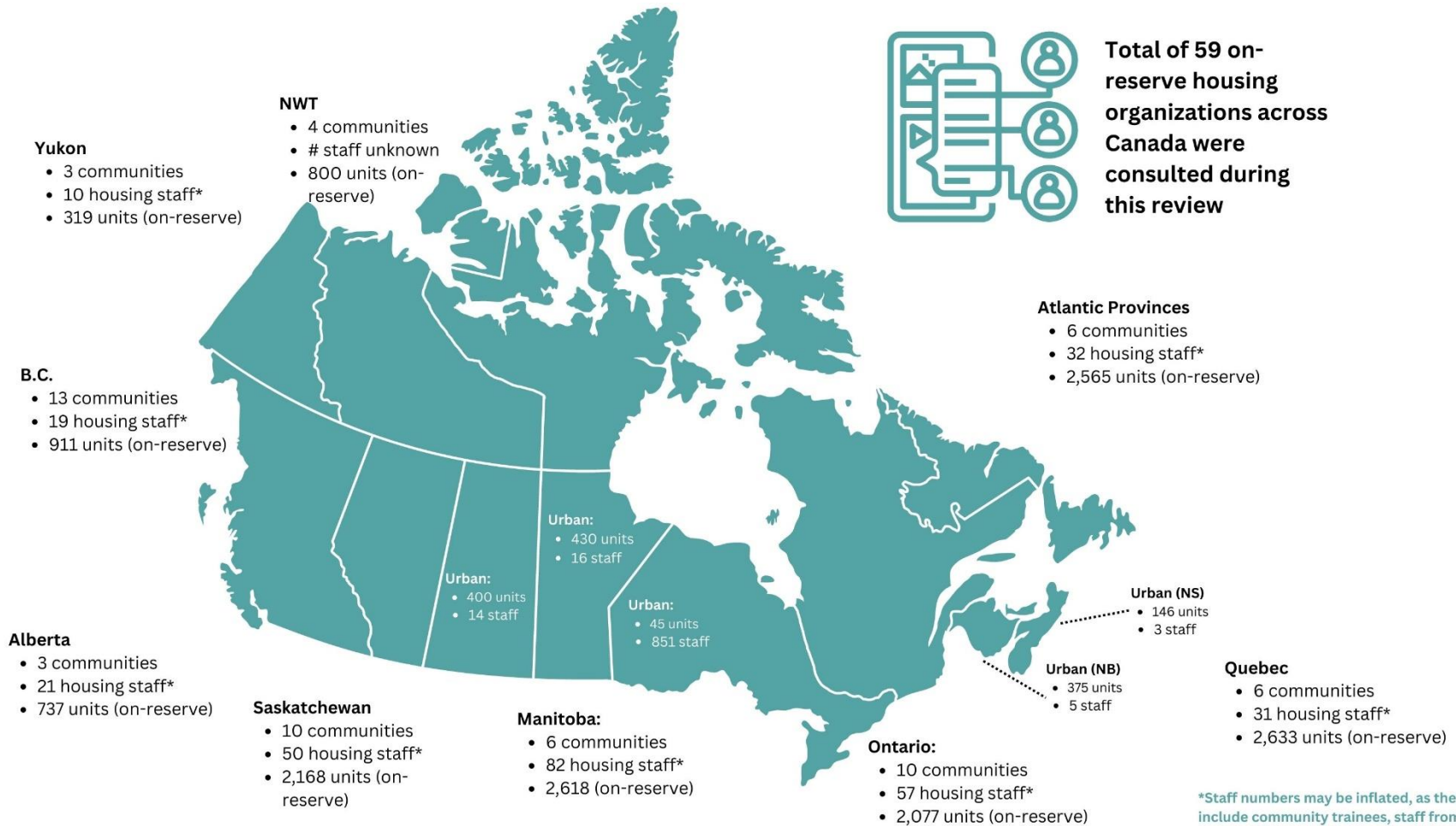
As the data suggests, the ratio of housing staff to on-reserve housing units is unbalanced. In many cases, First Nations indicated a fulltime employee count of one, which often means this individual is performing multiple roles and taking on an immense workload. It is difficult to determine the ratio of on-reserve housing units to staff in each region, however, there are a few contributing factors, including:

- Operating agreements and funding allocations for salaries that creates inconsistency across First Nations
- Different funding models that account for different climate conditions



The OCAP™ Certified Researchers also spoke to eight urban organizations. The intent was to compare and contrast the staff to unit ratios of on-reserve to urban organizations and determine if the level of funding provided to the latter plays a role in securing more resources for urban organizations. Due to a lack of data provided to the researchers, no concrete determination could be made





*Staff numbers may be inflated, as they may include community trainees, staff from the First Nation that are not dedicated to the housing program, contract workers, etc,



C. Foundational Change – Wellness in First Nations Communities

For real change to occur, it is important to acknowledge and address the roots that hold the First Nations housing crises in place. In this report, the scarcity of wellness, whether physical, emotional, or otherwise, is connected to many of the housing challenges being reported by First Nations communities in Canada. This interrelation is why wellness precedes the other named on-reserve housing issues in this report; not because it is necessarily any more or less important, but because it is a cornerstone to mending the other challenges below. Solutions to address on-reserve housing should therefore follow a builder's blueprint: start with a solid foundation as it relates to First Nations (governance and administration) readiness, either before or concurrently with capacity building for housing programs. Address any cracks that may impact the integrity of the structure. Then, and only then, can one begin to build upwards.

Housing is more than just four walls and a roof. It is a place to connect to the land, to communities, and to kin. It can be a place of solitude when times are difficult, and a place of celebration when times are good. For First Nations communities, difficult times have tended to overshadow the good in recent years, with the multiple discoveries of unmarked burial sites at former residential schools and the detrimental impacts of COVID-19. In such circumstances, the comfort of home can lend itself to a support system and safe refuge from the realities of the outside world. Unfortunately, this safety cannot be realized in many First Nations communities due to overcrowding, inadequate infrastructural integrity and a myriad of other health and safety concerns such as mould and flooding. These issues further exacerbate any underlying or existing wellness concerns, including addiction, homelessness, mental illness, and crime.

Safety is a key concern, not only for residents, but for housing professionals who are often not equipped to respond to social wellness issues. In these instances, there is a need to retain and deploy housing wellness workers with a background in social work and cultural and traditional knowledge and practices. Currently many communities lack the capacity to address underlying social issues related to the safety of both occupants and housing staff.

These challenges also expedite the deterioration of existing housing stock, where the burning down of houses occurs on an alarmingly frequent cadence. What is left is an ever-growing housing gap due to destroyed infrastructure and a lack of budget to renovate and replace homes. At the surface, degradation of property looks to be a matter of crime and negligence, however, at its root, it can be traced to human suffering, trauma, and a lack of support mechanisms to help mend injustices and build resilient communities.

The magnitude of the housing crisis in First Nations communities requires a systemic shift in thinking. Rather than calculating the number of additional housing units a community requires – or worse, judging those living in the homes who are grappling with extremely complex social issues – a holistic set of strategies are necessary to provide the required range of solutions over the long term.

D. Current State Findings for On-Reserve Housing Challenges

This section provides a preliminary assessment of on-reserve housing challenges, as heard through conversations with housing-related respondents across Canada. Challenges are ordered in the frequency



they were heard. This does not imply that any one issue is more important than another. Rather, it is a means of identifying common pain points across First Nations communities that should be addressed in a coordinated and collaborative manner, as opposed to unique issues that will require more bespoke solutions. Irrespective of sequencing, all issues will need to be assessed more thoroughly, as this is a preliminary report meant to identify areas of focus. Subsequent actions and initiatives through the FNHPA will then determine a roadmap for real change.

1. Human Resource Capacity

The primary issue heard across all conversations was insufficient human resource capacity, which is to say the availability of knowledgeable, experienced, and skilled individuals in an organization to carry out tasks and responsibilities. As the definition implies, there are different components that make up capacity, including roles and resources, the recruitment and retention of talent, and training to support knowledge building. Each of these areas are addressed in more detail below.

Roles and Resources

Outreach with First Nations communities across Canada yielded vastly different results related to full-time employee (FTE) headcount, job descriptions and titles, and recruitment needs. This is due to a variety of factors, including geographic differences (urban versus rural/remote), access to skilled labour, and differing housing requirements from community-to-community. For instance, in Ontario, the total number of Housing Department employees for the 9 First Nation participants was 56 compared to 148 employees for the 5 First Nation participants in Manitoba. It is clear that the cross-section of communities who responded to the request for outreach are diverse in their on-reserve housing composition. There is, however, commonalities across these communities – in particular, resource shortages and the resultant strain on existing staff to bear the workload of multiple roles.

Findings from conversations suggest that those with smaller populations are not resourced enough to have full housing staff and often perform multiple roles beyond management of housing. In these situations, it is typical for functions like tenant relations, finance, and information management to be absent or rolled into another role as a 'side-of-the-desk' responsibility. In these instances, job descriptions, whether known or unknown by the job holder, become irrelevant as housing professionals are tasked with multiple roles that can result in stress, burnout, and turnover.

When looking at outreach findings in aggregate, a pattern emerged regarding gaps in key housing management and operations roles. Due to a lack of numerical data, these roles are not sequenced in order of priority. Different communities will have different needs depending on factors like organizational structure and number of units. High priority roles include:



Housing Managers



The ratio of housing managers to number of homes is unbalanced in many communities. These managers are also highly accessible and receive multiple calls on a given day.

Inspectors



A lack of qualified inspectors causes delays in new building projects and jeopardizes housing funding.

Journeyman Plumbers



Limited numbers of tradespeople leads to backlogs in work orders and maintenance, with plumbing being a leading issue for service calls.

Electricians



Electricians, like other trades, are needed to maintain a reasonable backlog of work as well as to train apprentices and ensure proper succession.

Administrative Support



Administrative staff are needed to manage clerical tasks and help with reporting and project management workload, which would free housing managers to spend time on strategy and long-term planning.

Tenant Relations Workers



In many instances, particularly within smaller communities, housing managers double as tenant relations workers. In other instances, there is an extremely unbalanced ratio of tenant staff to tenants in the community.

Land Managers



Many communities reported land managers as dealing with public works, infrastructure, lands, and housing. Ideally these functions should be separated to balance workload and ensure focus.

Maintenance Staff



The lack of adequate maintenance workers causes inefficiencies which are expensive over time. It also undermines a scheduled preventative maintenance regime.

*This list of roles is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it is a glimpse into the most needed positions within the communities that were a part of this research.

Further assessment of findings show there is a consistent shortage of dedicated tenant relations roles and skillsets across First Nation communities. Challenges around this particular function are detailed below.



Tenant Relations

Tenant relations are provided by tenant counselors who, at a high-level, ensure good relations with occupants by helping families follow terms of their Tenancy Lease Agreements and working with health, social, and other departments as required to provide wrap-around support for families. As mentioned above, tenant relations tends to be a function that is absent in many of the smaller First Nation communities, and if it is present, is the responsibility of staff who also hold other job titles. Additionally, the responsibilities of tenant counselors vary drastically from community-to-community, and this lack of consistency can make it difficult to determine the types of skills and training needed and the level of commensurate salary required.

While there is consensus that an important role exists for tenant counselors, communities have different ideas about how far that role extends into family issues. Some First Nations make a clear distinction between rent and home condition issues on the one hand, and, on the other, issues that are to be referred to other departments. This second category can involve medical health, criminal or social issues. In most cases, it is unclear whether this latter category falls under the responsibility of a tenant counselor, or if a different role, such as a social worker, is needed.

When it comes to tenant relations management and training, there are various instances where communities provided check-ins, information sessions and events, move-in packages, and newsletters. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, much of this work has minimized or ceased. Some participants indicated an interest in developing and offering new programs to educate tenants on basic home maintenance, seasonal maintenance, taxes and budgeting, wills and estates, and life skills. This type of capacity building would help to support some of the other challenges identified in this report, particularly around the upkeep of current housing stock and finding safety in the place's communities call home.

A major concern brought up within the function of tenant relations was the lack of authority to remove tenants who need to be evicted or violate their tenancy agreements. This has been experienced in many of the First Nations communities. In some cases, tenants will reside in housing they have not paid for in years, and this issue has grown because of COVID where First Nations stopped collecting rent or temporarily suspended mortgages. The concern falls onto the housing departments who will issue notices and evictions, however, do not have the authority to remove tenants. Some of the communities do however have tribal police services who will remove non-members from living on reserve, although due to jurisdiction and regulatory issues will not remove members ignoring their eviction notices.

Across most conversations, it is apparent that the function of tenant relations is unclear and amorphous depending on the day-to-day needs of the communities. This ambiguity can be challenging for those fulfilling the role. Not only are they uncertain of their responsibilities or the tasks they will encounter on a day-to-day basis, but the role itself can be challenging when working with people who are at their most vulnerable. Focusing on how to best support these workers, who in turn, support community members, is vital to the success of any housing program and is a high priority focus area for many of the First Nations who participated in this report.



Recruitment and Retention

First Nations communities face many barriers to recruit and retain employees. Amongst the most prevalent is the lack of funding for community staff, and the inconsistent funding levels between First Nations communities. This is true in a few respects: the first is a lack of funding to adequately compensate workers who are currently employed by the First Nation, some of who are poached by communities who receive more funding (retention). The second is a lack of funds to hire additional FTEs to support the imbalanced ratio between housing units and employees (recruitment).

Whether recruiting or retaining, outreach findings provided skewed results. Some First Nations reported having salary grids, while others remarked on not knowing if they had them or not having them at all. Where salary grids exist, many feel they are in-line with their industry but are far below what community members can earn off-reserve. Even in the case where workers have a preference to stay in their community, there is often not enough housing to accommodate them. Additionally, the existence of salary grids does not necessarily determine commensurate compensation. In many instances, the lack of clear organizational structures and job descriptions results in uneven remuneration. For example, one community noted their maintenance staff earned more than their housing manager.

A lack of competitive salaries can often result in high turnover in First Nations communities. The impacts of this are only concentrated by high rates of employee burnout due to unmanageable workloads and a lack of succession planning that would normally ensure critical roles are backfilled. When employment gaps persist, it is common for First Nations to outsource required functions to address a growing backlog of housing needs. Communities had mixed views about the benefits and drawbacks of outsourcing. Some communities found outsourcing to be counter-intuitive to becoming self-sufficient and were reticent of the heightened price-for-service that quickly draws down on a community's allotted budget. Given the challenges with funding allocations, First Nations feel that outsourcing can often exacerbate the inability to hire internal staff. Despite these challenges, some First Nations found the benefits to outweigh the costs when external support doubles as mentorship with the intent of returning said function to the First Nation's Housing Department when capacity building is complete.

It is difficult to determine a set ratio of workers to units for on-reserve housing programs. This is largely due to the inconsistencies in operating agreements and funding allocations between provinces and territories and within First Nations themselves. Community on-reserve population size is currently factored into ISC's housing operating budgets; however, a population-based approach is not effective for First Nations housing. Population based factors are just one of the identified needs when resourcing housing programs, and should also include geographical and socioeconomic factors, unemployment rates, population growth rates, political environments, inflation, and climate change (amongst others).

While exact ratios of workers to units is difficult to obtain, a pattern emerged in the findings that suggest that, as a general rule, for every 100 units, there should be a staff person / persons designated to each of the housing management and operations functions, including a housing manager, administrative support, maintenance staff, and tenant relations coordinator/service navigator. It is also clear that as the number of units increase, so too should the number of staff to support operations and management. This is true up until a certain point, where the law of diminishing marginal returns is activated and capacity-to-value-add plateaus. This report does not have the data to ascertain these

figures, as it is ultimately at the behest of each First Nation to determine recruitment and retention needs, only to be met by barriers like limited funding, housing stock, and uncompetitive compensation.

Capacity Training and Education

As mentioned above, participating First Nation communities voiced their concerns around workload pressures and the resultant burnout that many of their staff face. This issue not only stems from a lack of resources, but also from gaps in training to support the development of skills and knowledge of community members. This is not to say that participating communities do not provide capacity building opportunities to its members; on all accounts, First Nations are supportive of their members' growth and professional development. There is, however, an absence of community training plans to identify and prioritize professional development needs. This can be a reflection of the management's capacity to plan within the housing department or the overall First Nation's human resource development planning. In fact, many communities stated they were unable to be proactive in their planning and that this state of reactivity reinforces and exacerbates stress, burnout, and employee turnover.

Financial capacity is another gap in many First Nations communities. In many instances, housing managers did not have access to financial information and are generally kept at arms length from the Finance Department. These silos may be the result of decades of inadequate housing administration that has created a situation where finance departments have become accustomed to neglecting to confer with housing departments. The problem is only compounded when inexperienced housing staff do not know what questions to ask and the information to request

While not an exhaustive list, the following table provides a starting point for the qualifications and skillsets needed to effectively manage and operate housing (as indicated by several housing director participants):

	Property Management		Information Management		Tenant Relations
	Project Management		Staff Management		Trades Certification
	Conflict Resolution		Proposal Development		Database & Software
	Administrative Skills		Budget & Finance Management		Community Engagement



Many of the above skillsets can be developed through capacity building resources from sources such as ISC or CMHC. About half of respondents indicated they access these types of resources for staffing and internships, education and certification, housing training programs, and tenant-education workshops. This uptake is a good news story, and one that First Nations should continue to build on to support their capacity building needs. The FNHPA is an extremely valuable resource to support the development of housing acumen, along with many other First Nations organizations that provide guidance, mentorship, and access to educational opportunities to obtain housing management and operations designations i.e. First Nations Housing Professional, Red Seal trade endorsement.

2. Planning

A majority of respondents confirmed that their housing operations and management is in a reactive rather than proactive state. While strategy and planning should be at the centre of a successful housing program, it is often pushed to the periphery by crisis management. In fact, very few First Nations have a clear picture of their current and future housing demand. This data, if known, could support long range planning, not only for the number of houses required, but for the number of resources, types of roles, and capacity requirements needed to support current and future growth trajectories. As an example, a database of member statistics could help estimate when children will need their own homes.

In conversations with communities, two types of planning emerged as critical to the future success of on-reserve housing programs: strategic and succession. The former provides direction and rationale for the decisions to be made around housing needs. Each community would generate their own desired outcomes based on factors such as urgency or impact and ensure actions such as funding allocation and capacity building are aligned to and support these outcomes. The current reality, however, is that day-to-day workloads of resource-poor housing departments compel staff to focus on immediate needs at the expense of planning that, paradoxically, could remedy their current challenges.

Succession planning is also a key success factor for many on-reserve housing organizations. Many housing managers spoke to having an “aging housing workforce”, and that transitions, if not already underway, will occur over the next five years as managers, staff, and local housing labour age out into retirement. While proactive communities are addressing this with trainee and internship programs, many others are struggling to attract, recruit, and/or retain youth to succeed the soon to be vacant positions. The limited pool of youthful talent presents challenges beyond intensifying the strain on limited resources. It also creates a loss of historical knowledge that disappears when a person retires without having someone to share their experiences with. Multiple respondents indicated that knowledge loss can be especially debilitating given that many communities do not have effective records management practices.

3. Policy

Most First Nations interviewed have and are aware of their Community Housing policies, but in many cases, these policies are outdated or under review. The more central issues surrounding policy was not the lack of their existence, but rather, their relevance, and application. Many respondents reported that heavy workloads often interfere with regular updating of policies, and that over time, their relevance and adequacy diminish. Additionally, the application of policy is often hampered by politics. Policies are not and cannot be enforced objectively and consistently in many communities because family and clan ties play a large role in how decisions are made and whether policies are applied. This type of political



involvement is true in many instances of eviction, where Chief and Council can and often does override these decisions.

4. Maintenance

Effective housing maintenance is the product of many factors, including labour, equipment, supplies, budget, and planning (amongst others). However, within this report, outreach focused on the accessibility of equipment and resources, and the challenges in developing and maintaining programs and schedules. In the case of accessibility, the primary cause for concern is rising price of material and labour without a concurrent boost to First Nations' budgets. In some instances, staff will use their own personal equipment without being properly compensated, while other times, external contractors will be brought in to provide specialized equipment that costs the First Nation significantly more than what would be quoted internally had the equipment been available.

Beyond equipment and supplies, participants were also surveyed on how frequently they scheduled inspections or if they have established housing schedules. Some participants indicated having regular maintenance programs/schedules, however, most cited the need to react to emergencies and requests for repairs as they come in and are unable to conduct consistent and proactive maintenance checks on the current housing stock. A contributing factor to this reactive state centres around capacity issues, where communities are having difficulty attracting skilled tradespeople who are offered higher compensation off-reserve and often a better chance at finding accommodation. Maintenance crews are in need of Red Seal designated trades workers, and First Nation communities must come up with recruitment and retention strategies that mitigate the barriers to hiring these workers.

5. Funding Agreements

Funding agreements with ISC and CMHC are very prescriptive and inflexible, which, in most cases, makes it difficult to operate a housing department effectively. In most cases, First Nations asked to see more transparent, manageable, and flexible funding agreements to enable a clearer understanding of processes to help with on-reserve housing plans. At present, there is limited insight into understanding the formulas being used to provide more or less money to First Nations. In one instance, a respondent commented on getting an influx of \$50,000 after the community had built over 250 homes – a quota the First Nation did not know existed to obtain more funds. It is also important to note that this figure may not be consistent across different regions, which only adds to the confusion around process.

Many respondents also spoke to the restrictive nature of funding agreements. There are stipulations on what a First Nation can and cannot spend their budget on, and because of this, high priority needs such as the purchasing of major equipment, must be acquired through immediate needs funding for procurement of contractors and vendors outside the community. Additionally, federal policy frameworks are narrowly focused on population size as the largest determinant of funding allocation, preventing many smaller and isolated communities from being able to diversify and grow their portfolio mix. By maintaining these thresholds, certain communities become the haves, while others become the have-nots – a competitive inducing circumstance not favoured by any First Nation community.

6. Band-Based Capital Budgets

A selection of respondents referenced the inertia of change to band-based budgets, where there has been minimal increase since 1996. Given how drastically things have changed over the years, including rising housing costs, minimum wage, and inflation, First Nations communities are often operating at a



deficit, with housing being in the red year over year. This causes many First Nations to apply for immediate needs funding – a process that can feel redundant for many communities who expend their capacity to jump through administrative hoops only to receive funding that could have been provided upfront through a streamlined and updated budgeting formula/process.

7. Collection of Rental Income and Repair Payments

The majority of respondents reported challenges in collecting rent and repair payments, and that there are no mechanisms in place to address rent arrears. Not only does a lack of rental income undermine the ability of housing departments to finance maintenance and repairs, it can also lead to CHMC rent defaults and even third-party management. Additionally, in some provinces, housing policy identifies tenant-caused damages as the tenant's responsibility. Some participants confirmed they currently cover the cost of these damages and repairs due to the difficulty of enforcing the policy.

Participants identified several factors that contribute to non-payment and non collection of rent, including:

- A tenant's belief that housing is a right to which they are entitled
- A lack of serious consequences for non-payment
- No sense of investment, ownership, and/or pride for one's house
- Minimal capacity building on caring for one's home

8. Information / Records Management

Many communities still rely on paper-based filing systems to maintain their records. In some instances, respondents felt there was a real sense of intimidation toward technology, and that the community did not have the resources nor skillsets to be able to maintain records digitally. There is, however, a prevailing attitude amongst most communities to adopt data-driven systems to help streamline housing programs. Systems such as GIS or RenoWorks RW software are amongst those respondents feel would be useful, as it would help to track everything all in one place rather than searching through a hard-copy repository of static data.

E. Current-State Summary

The seven factors in Section 5C are the primary challenges identified across all First Nations community participants. While this paper recognizes that other issues exist beyond those mentioned above, these are out of scope for this report, which focuses on the management and operations of on-reserve housing programs. In identifying the common challenges across First Nations communities, targeted strategies can now be developed and deployed to address the First Nations housing crisis, beginning with a series of recommendations to bridge where communities are today with where they want to be in the future.

6. Recommendations






A. Introduction

This report offers a series of recommendations that align with and support each of the FNHPA's core areas of focus: national standards, education, communication, support, and research. These recommendations aim to strengthen First Nations on-reserve housing programs through capacity building and advocacy in support of factors like increased funding and the consistency of housing program standards across Canada. Given the difficulty of collecting concrete numerical data and the smaller sample size of respondents in this report, recommendations are preliminary and broad in nature. As mentioned below, the FNHPA will continue to conduct outreach with First Nations communities not only to understand the common patterns that exist from First Nation-to-First Nation, but also the unique needs communities must better support their housing programs.

It is important to acknowledge the existence of past recommendations, many of which lay entombed in past reports regarding on-reserve housing. While efforts have been made to support better housing conditions in First Nations communities, there tends to be a lack of follow through that leaves many recommendations half finished before being shelved. The start-stop nature of implementation can cause change fatigue and weariness amongst First Nations, who frequently lend their already limited time to contribute to these processes. This report underscores that the status quo is not acceptable, and that immediate action needs to take place to address challenges and remove barriers impeding on the success of on-reserve housing programs. The FNHPA is dedicated to moving the dial and making improvements to the management and operations of on-reserve housing organizations and will do so through its areas of focus and expertise.

The approach to implementation is incremental. It acknowledges that change takes time and that resources are not readily available to facilitate these shifts. Recommendations are therefore ordered sequentially to account for the limited capacity and draws on First Nations' time, while also establishing a connection between each recommendation, where one builds off the momentum of the next.







Please use the following legend to read the recommendation tables below. This legend indicates what icon is associated with what FNHPA area of focus.

Communication	Support	Education	National Standards	Research
				

B. Recommendations










I. Funding

Core funding for housing administration should be a top priority. As noted in the historical recap at the beginning of this report, the lack of adequate funding has been a chronic problem in First Nations on-reserve housing as far back as the 1980s, and this has been a significant contributor to many of the operational problems in housing that are still impacting housing administration to this day.

#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
1.	Enhance financial capacity of First Nations housing professionals to be able to identify the different housing programs and funding available, develop payment regimes, and understand financial and management accounting practices for housing program management	Staff feel confident in making decisions with financial impacts, and are proactive in applying for and procuring funding from different sources.	 
2.	Work alongside organizations like ISC and CMHC to update the factors used to determine annual funding allocation and disbursement for First Nations communities, as well as creating a process to determine funding based on location and number of units. This should extend beyond population to consider other determinants like climate change impacts, inflation, and wellness (amongst others).	There is a level of fairness to funding allocations that minimizes competition between First Nations and allows all communities the opportunity to thrive and focus their funds on the areas that are of priority to them.	 
3.	Core funding should be targeted towards the recruitment of housing staff, including Housing Manager, Administrative Support, Maintenance Staff, and Tenant Relations Coordinator/Service Navigator.	On-reserve housing organizations have a more balanced unit to housing staff ratio that distributes workload more evenly and reduces stress and burnout for its employees.	
4.	Implement community education programs and training department initiatives to support the certification of skilled trades workers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This should be paired with a housing portfolio strategy that assesses the number of units needed in a community and aligns this to the number and type of positions that will be needed to support /maintain these units. 	On-reserve housing programs have more workers to support the workload, allowing for more strategy and planning to take place.	

II. Education and Training













A core part of this report was the identification of capacity building needs for First Nations communities. It is important to provide accessible and consistent growth opportunities to members, as well as different entry points into professions of interest. It is important to highlight that education should meet people where they are and is not based on societal standards on where people ought to be. Those that are being reintegrated into their community deserve as much an opportunity as others. The path that is created for each person may be different, with the ultimate goal of having community members be active participants in the bettering of their own lives, and the lives of others.

#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
5.	Enhance career pathways that illustrates the progression of different on-reserve housing program careers, the education and training needed, and the types of benefits and compensation that comes with choosing a particular path. Make First Nations aware of this material through outreach initiatives.	Career path clarity increases people's interest in applying for on-reserve housing positions.	   
6.	Provide education and training for housing teams, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information management and organization Leadership workshops Strategic and succession planning Running tenant events and information sessions Templates for training plans Psychological safety seminars 	Housing teams take part in consistent training that supports their professional development and capacity to effectively conduct their work and collaborate with others.	 
7.	Enhance educational resources for housing occupants, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webinars and workshops Demos on basic home maintenance, seasonal maintenance, etc. 	Occupants are knowledgeable about homecare management, and value their homes and the community around it.	  

III. National Standards

The FNHPA supports existing and future housing professionals in serving their communities by setting national standards. This function is critical to the success of on-reserve housing programs, as there is a complete lack of consistency in how these organizations are run and funded. Establishing best practice standards in areas such as the ratio of units to staff or consistent job descriptions and responsibilities will allow First Nations to make informed choices about their programs. It will also allow for a more














accurate comparison of these programs to determine where some First Nations are having success and where and why other First Nations are having challenges with their housing programs.



#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
8.	<p>Establish national standards for the ratio of units to number of staff, along with the types of roles that are required for these ratios.</p> <p>For example, for every 100 units, there should be a staff person / persons designated to each of the housing management and operations functions, including a housing manager, administrative support, maintenance staff, and tenant relations/service navigator.</p> <p>There should also be consideration given to communities with over 300 units that would benefit from a revised ratio that reflects the needs of large and growing communities.</p>	There is a well-established baseline of units to staff that allows housing programs to know where they stand and what needs to change if they are sitting below standards.	   
9.	Set a national standard / leading practice for First Nations around residential tenancy acts and landlord-tenant relations. Particularly around how to manage evictions without political intervention, escalation paths, and social intervention requirements.	The political intervention associated with evictions is minimized, ensuring that the process is fair and without political, family, or community interference.	   
10.	Develop national standards to ensure job descriptions and titles are consistent, accurate, and aligned with comparable salary grids. Job descriptions should be reviewed for their accurateness annually, ensuring that changes and additions to accountabilities are included and reflected in compensation structures	Job roles and compensation are consistent across the country, minimizing resignations, staff poaching and competition between First Nations.	   

IV. Plans and Strategy Development

Planning is integral to the operation of any organization. It enables a community to be proactive in thinking about the needs of the future and setting things up in the present to prepare for what's to come. Many respondents acknowledged the importance of planning, while explaining that the issue is rooted in a lack of capacity that results in reactivity and firefighting of issues. This set of recommendations therefore focuses on factors that will build up capacity first, followed by the development of the plans themselves.




#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
11.	<p>Support First Nations on-reserve housing programs in developing and carrying out a workload assessment that determines where time is spent and what can be stopped or put on hold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement an assessment tool to assist in determining the capacity building needs of staff. 	Housing program staff understand where they are expending their time and the changes they can make to free up capacity.	 
12.	<p>Develop recruitment plans that align with on-reserve program needs and an accompanying communications and marketing strategy to attract internal candidates into vacant / new positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the FNHPA's suggested salary scale standards (recommendation 10) to determine compensation ranges for different roles 	On-reserve housing programs have targeted recruitment strategies for the highest priority roles in their community.	  
13.	<p>Leverage the FNHPA's lesson on Housing Strategy, Policy and Accountability to build capacity around strategic planning, its elements, how to engage staff in the process, and linking strategy to operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide templates and training videos/documents to support First Nations in developing their own plans 	First Nations communities have housing strategies that account for future needs and the goals and metrics to support in realizing this desired future state.	 
14.	<p>Develop succession plans in preparation for the transition of aging populations and the need to meet both current and future human resource demands, including cross-training and job transition plans.</p>	Those who are close to retirement are able to share their knowledge with successors, continuing on the legacy of that employee while maintaining historical learnings within the organization.	 
15.	<p>Develop and enforce standards for appropriate information storage, management systems, and data collection that build efficiencies and free up capacity spent on manual processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for funding to procure technology such as digital asset management systems that assist in planning and forecasting 	Manual processes are replaced with automated ones, ensuring on-reserve programming is efficient, that records are organized, and that planning is informed by data driven results.	   

#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training assistance for new systems and processes 		
16.	Support First Nations in asset management planning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portfolio evaluations Annual housing inspections Replacement reserves Housing insurance 	First Nations on-reserve programs have thorough asset management plans that account for future-based needs.	
17.	Conduct a study to determine the impact of emergency related events on First Nations housing units and operations and emergency mitigation and management as well as supporting occupants in understanding the importance of emergency preparedness.	First Nations communities are thoughtful about the impacts of climate change on their housing stock, and have plans to mitigate these effects, both now and in the future.	

V. Building Community Wellness Through Wellness Supports

Health, in its many shapes and forms be it physical, mental, spiritual, or otherwise, present enormous challenges to housing resources, including degradation of housing stock, to non-payment of rent, to employee and community safety. The process of healing intergenerational trauma will help with many of the challenges identified in this report by advancing the innate skills and talents of their membership that then contribute to the collective good and well-being of the community.

#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
18.	Continue developing a set of templates and tools to support First Nations communities in developing their own wellness strategy that is anchored in a trauma-informed approach. Suggested templates include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to develop a wellness vision and goals How to monitor maintenance issues (mould, fire safety, indoor air quality) 	First Nations communities and housing programs feel supported by a wellness strategy that considers the needs of its members and establishes a plan to help people become	



#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How to establish and track wellness metricsHow to develop a trauma-informed approach to engaging with community members	thriving members of the community.	
19.	Assess the responsibilities and job description of tenant relations staff to determine the types of skills and training needed for the role <ul style="list-style-type: none">Suggest a revision of role title to 'Housing Wellness Coordinator' to capture the holistic-based accountabilities of this position more adequately (i.e., the wellness ecosystem)	Tenant relations workers feel seen and recognized for the work they do, and are compensated adequately for the responsibilities they are tasked with.	
20.	Leverage the Housing and Wellness Program to further a comprehensive, holistic strategy to support tenant relations / wellness staff <ul style="list-style-type: none">The program should provide tools and build capacity of Tenant Relations Coordinator/Service Navigator to safely intervene in housing issues (e.g., unpaid rent), and outline escalation processes and pathways	On-reserve housing programs have established and well-known processes for addressing issues and escalations.	
21.	Help to establish a culture of psychological safety in the workplace, where staff feel comfortable bringing their questions, concerns, and fears forward and to be heard without fear of judgement or retribution. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop course materials and bi-annual culture health check assessments to track psychological safety improvements	Staff feel empowered to come to work as their authentic self, and to be transparent about their needs in challenges in a way that will not threaten their psychological safety.	

VI. Awareness Building

The FNHPA's first step is to build awareness of their relatively new organization amongst First Nations communities across Canada. Through conversations, it became apparent that many respondents are unaware of the FNHPA or the services they provide, with only a few being members. Given the smaller sample size of First Nations communities, one can insinuate that there are many more communities who do not know of and would benefit from the services of the FNHPA.



#	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	FNHPA Focus Area
22.	<p>Accelerate the FNHPA communications and outreach strategy to drive membership and continue conversations initiated by this review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include key metrics to track success of outreach (e.g., number of new members)	<p>First Nations communities are aware of and utilize the supports and services provided by the FNHPA to strengthen their on-reserve housing programs.</p>	

7. Next Steps

Immediate next steps are for the FNHPA to accelerate the raising awareness of their profile and the work they do to support First Nations housing professionals in Canada. This will help First Nations communities to grow their list of partners to include the FNHPA, and for the FNHPA to grow its membership to continue to support these communities on a greater scale. It is almost important for the FNHPA to assess each of the recommendations above and outline their role and accountability in implementing each item.

Another next step is for the FNHPA to continuing conversations with First Nations communities that have been initiated through this report. As stated throughout this paper, findings and recommendations are preliminary and require further conversations with a larger sample size to collect data that can be used to inform more specific approaches to improving on-reserve housing programs. This begins with awareness building and will continue through proactive outreach of First Nations communities across Canada.

The change that needs to occur to improve First Nations on-reserve housing is no small task. It will require thoughtful planning, consistent outreach, open and transparent dialogue, and most importantly, demonstrated dedication on behalf of all stakeholders to support and facilitate these shifts. This includes coordination with the Government of Canada, provincial and municipal bodies, as well as First Nations organizations that exist locally and nationally. It is a concerted effort that does not fall to one body alone. The time for change is now, and together it can be achieved by disassembling the status quo and building up First Nations communities and their housing programs to realize their full potential.



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