

HOUSING AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

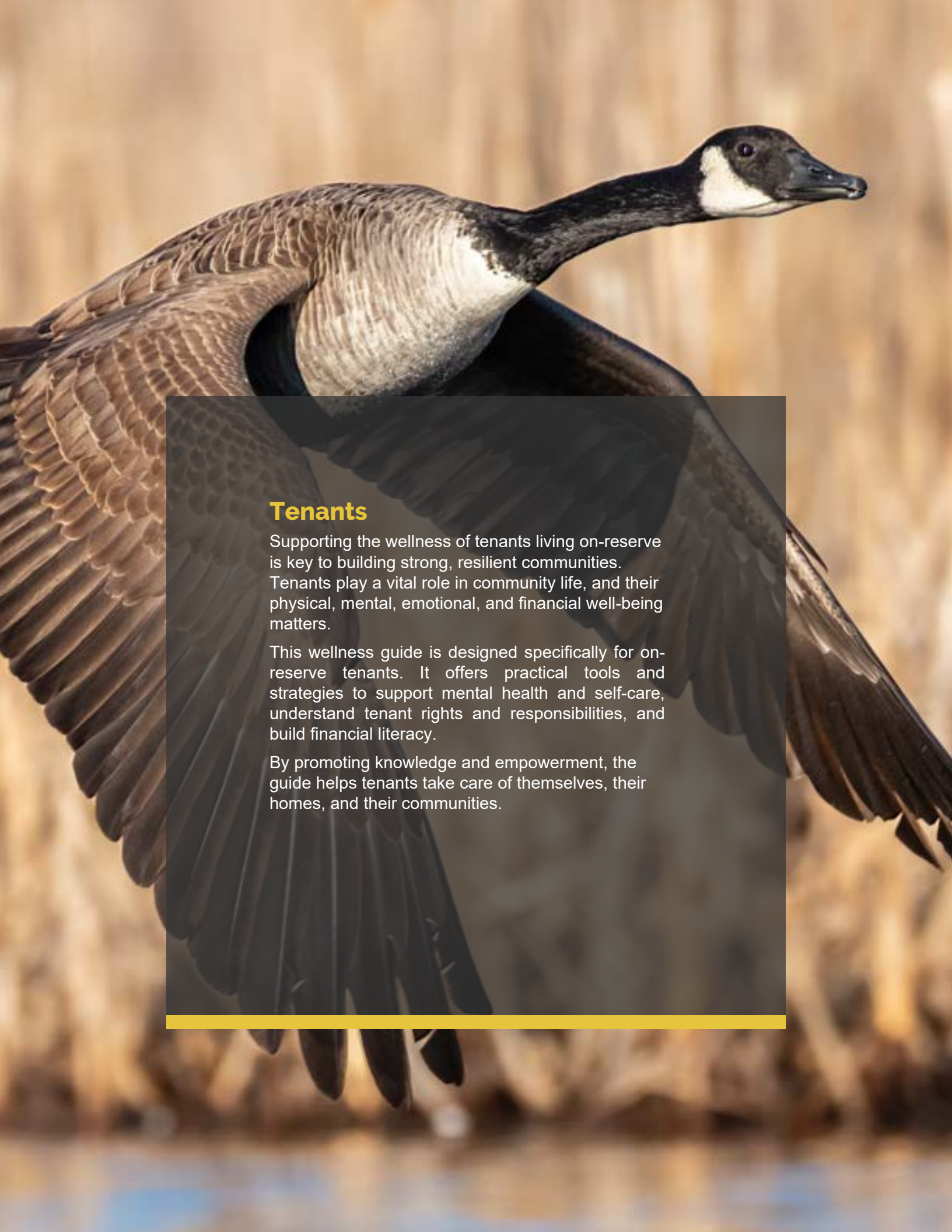
A Comprehensive Wellness Guide for Tenants and Occupants Living On-Reserve

TENANT BASICS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



First Nations Housing
Professionals Association

L'Association des professionnels de
l'habitation des Premières Nations



Tenants

Supporting the wellness of tenants living on-reserve is key to building strong, resilient communities. Tenants play a vital role in community life, and their physical, mental, emotional, and financial well-being matters.

This wellness guide is designed specifically for on-reserve tenants. It offers practical tools and strategies to support mental health and self-care, understand tenant rights and responsibilities, and build financial literacy.

By promoting knowledge and empowerment, the guide helps tenants take care of themselves, their homes, and their communities.

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Acknowledgment

The **First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA)** is delighted to introduce the Housing and Wellness Program, aimed at offering crucial information and guidance to First Nations individuals residing on-reserve or engaged in housing-related roles. This initiative delivers educational programs, tools, and resources tailored for First Nations housing staff, residents, and youth. Through the implementation of this program, our aim is to address housing, health, and safety concerns holistically.



Tenant Rights & Responsibilities

Tenant rights and responsibilities in First Nation communities may differ from those in other areas due to unique laws and regulations. It's important to review your community's housing laws and your rental agreement to understand what applies to you.

Each province and territory in Canada also have its own tenancy laws, but they all outline basic rights and responsibilities for both landlords and tenants. Knowing your region's rules helps ensure fair treatment and clear expectations.

Tenant Responsibilities

- Pay rent in full and on time.
- Perform basic home maintenance duties.
- Be responsible for any damage caused by occupants, guests or pets.
- Cover costs for any damage beyond normal wear and tear.
- Do not make modifications without approval from the housing authority in your community (e.g., changing door locks).
- Conduct yourself in a respectful and lawful manner.
- Report maintenance issues or repairs promptly to the housing director or department.
- Follow all terms of your rental agreement.
- Be a respectful neighbour.

Tenant Rights

- Be free from discrimination (e.g., race, gender, family status).
- Live in a safe, well-maintained home.
- Access to necessary services (e.g., heat, hot water).
- Access the right to an appeal.
- Enjoy your home peacefully.

Disclaimer: This guide provides general information intended to support tenants and occupants. Each First Nation may have its own housing policies, rental agreements, and other community documents. Please refer to these for the specific rules, responsibilities, and details that apply to your home.

Why Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities Matters

Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a tenant is important for several reasons:

Follow the law

Knowing your responsibilities helps you meet the terms of your tenancy or rental agreement, as well as any applicable policies and laws within your First Nation community.

Protect your rights

Being aware of your rights ensures they are respected and helps maintain positive relationships between tenants and landlords.

Build good relationships

Clear and respectful communication supports good relationships with your landlord and neighbours.

Prevent disputes

Open communication helps avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Ensure fair treatment

Understanding your rights helps ensure transparency and accountability for everyone involved.

Stay financially secure

Knowing the costs of maintaining your household and creating a budget can help you meet monthly obligations, avoid unexpected expenses, and reduce stress.



Note: For details specific to your community, please refer to your housing policy, rental agreement or other local documents.

Key Elements of a Rental Agreement

A rental agreement (sometimes also known as a tenancy agreement or lease) is a legal contract between a landlord and tenant. It outlines the terms of the rental and the responsibilities of both parties. Key elements include:

Names of parties

Full legal names of the landlord and tenant.

Property description

Address and details of the rental unit.

Rental term

Duration of the rental term (e.g., one year or month-to-month).

Rent & payment

Amount, due dates, payment methods, and any late fees.

Security deposit

Amount required and conditions for refund.

Utilities and services

Who pays for what (e.g., water, electricity, internet).

Use of property

Rules on subletting, guests, or prohibited activities.

Repairs and maintenance

Who is responsible for which upkeep or repairs.

Termination and renewal

Notice periods and renewal options.

Other terms

Additional clauses (e.g., pets, parking, property-specific policies).



These types of agreements protect both the tenant and landlord. Always read and understand the terms before signing to ensure a fair and clear rental arrangement.

Note: For details specific to your community, please refer to your housing policy, rental agreement or other local documents.



Eviction Procedures

Eviction can happen if a tenant breaks the agreement or if a landlord believes the tenant is in non-compliance with the terms set out in the agreement. The notice period and process can vary based on the agreement and the community's laws.

Some common reasons for eviction, depending on the agreement or situation, may include (but are not limited to):

- Moving to another unit
- Not paying rent
- Disturbing other tenants
- Illegal activity
- Causing severe damage to the unit
- Creating health or safety concerns

On-reserve eviction procedures may differ from off-reserve due to specific laws, federal policies, and regional regulations. Still, they often follow a general process:

1. Notice of termination: The landlord gives written notice explaining the reason and the date the tenant must leave. Notice periods vary.

2. Mediation or dispute resolution: Some communities may offer mediation to resolve the issue without going to court.

3. Landlord and tenant board or tribunal: If needed, either party can take the formal appeal opportunity to a board or tribunal for a decision.

4. Adjudication and decision: A formal hearing is held, and a decision is made. The board may issue an order to vacate.

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Home Maintenance Responsibilities

As a tenant, you're expected to keep the rental unit in good condition. Here are common tasks you may be responsible for:

Routine cleaning and care

Keep your space clean and well maintained (e.g., sweeping, dusting, wiping surfaces).

Minor repairs

Handle small fixes like replacing light bulbs, unclogging drains, or stopping minor leaks.

Yard work

Maintain outdoor areas if applicable (e.g., mowing, weeding, watering).

Appliance care

Clean and maintain appliances (e.g., stove, fridge, dryer and vents).

Pest prevention

Take steps to prevent pests to protect your home from damage.

Filter replacement

Change filters (HVAC, furnace, or other) regularly to improve airflow and efficiency. You can find webinars and resources with step-by-step maintenance guidance to help you.

Safety checks

Regularly test and maintain smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers. Replace batteries as needed.

Report issues

Let your landlord (First Nation housing department) know about needed repairs right away.

Communicating with Your Landlord



Effective communication with your landlord helps to build a positive and respectful relationship. Here are some simple tips:

Be clear

Clearly explain your issue or request, including vital details.

Use preferred contact method

Ask if they prefer email, text, or phone, and use that method.

Stay polite

Be respectful, even when raising concerns or complaints.

Keep records

Document concerns and how they are resolved.

Act responsibly

Report problems or concerns as soon as they come up.

Follow up

If you don't hear back, send a polite reminder. Landlords may have other commitments, but health and safety issues should be handled in a timely way.

Note: For details specific to your community, please refer to your housing policy, rental agreement or other local documents.

Resolving Disagreements with Your Landlord

If you and your landlord disagree, stay calm and follow these steps to resolve the issue:

Review your rental agreement: Check your agreement for terms that apply to the issue or how to resolve it.

Document everything: Keep records of all communications (emails, texts, call notes). This can be helpful if the issue escalates.

Talk it out: Try to resolve the issue through respectful, open discussion. Be clear about your concerns and be willing to compromise.

Use mediation or arbitration: If talking doesn't work, consider getting help from a neutral third party to reach a solution.

Get legal help: For complex issues, seek legal advice.

Stay respectful: Use a calm and respectful tone throughout the process, even if the situation becomes stressful.

Moving Tips

Moving can be stressful, but staying organized helps make it easier. Here are some simple tips:

Plan Early

Create a moving checklist and timeline to stay on track.

Declutter

Get rid of items you no longer need before packing.

Gather Supplies

Collect boxes, tape, bubble wrap, and packing materials.

Pack Smart

Label boxes clearly, pack by room, and protect fragile items.

Notify Services

Arrange utility transfers and update your address with banks, insurance, and government agencies.

Make an Inventory

Track your items to avoid anything getting lost.

Pack Essentials Separately

Have a box ready with toiletries, clothes, and key items for the first day.

Clean your old unit

Leave it clean to help secure your security deposit.

Inspect the new unit

Check for damage before moving in and report it to your landlord.

Keep documents handy

Have rental information, important documents, and contacts easy to access.



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