

HOUSING AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS



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.



Stress Management

Stress is a natural part of life, especially when facing housing issues, financial pressure, or changes in your living situation. Tenants can manage stress using both personal tools and traditional, culturally rooted practices.

Here are some helpful ways to manage stress:

Lean on community

Whether it's a neighbour, family member, or support worker, talking to someone you trust can help relieve emotional pressure.

Use cultural practices

Traditional teachings, smudging, ceremonies, and land-based activities offer powerful tools for restoring balance and easing anxiety.

Set boundaries

Protect your time and energy, especially during stressful situations. It's okay to say no and to step away when needed.

Take breaks and recharge

Go outside, listen to music, or spend time doing something that soothes your mind and body.

Disclaimer: This guide provides general information about mental health and wellness and is not a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment. If you are in distress or crisis, contact a healthcare provider, community support service, or crisis helpline. Community-specific resources may also be available in your First Nation.

Mental Health and Housing

Mental health and housing are deeply connected. A safe and healthy home provides comfort, security, and a foundation for well-being. When housing is unstable or in poor condition, it can create stress that may affect mental wellness. Likewise, mental wellness challenges can make it harder to care for a home.

Factors that May Affect Mental Health

Life event

Loss, trauma, illness, or big changes can impact wellness.

Lifestyle factors

Diet, sleep and exercise all influence our mental well-being.

Community Connection

Feeling disconnected from family, culture, or support networks can affect our well-being.

Housing conditions

Issues such as mould, needed repairs, or environmental concerns can cause stress or worry.

Discrimination or barriers

Systemic challenges, stigma and lack of culturally safe supports can impact mental health.

Historical and intergenerational factors

The lasting impacts of colonial policies continue to affect communities today.

Impact of Mental Wellness on Housing

Housing maintenance

Mental health challenges can make it difficult to keep up with home care and repairs.

Access to housing

Wellness challenges can sometimes make it harder to access housing.

Risk of instability

Struggles with mental health can increase the chance of losing housing or moving frequently.

Impact of Housing on Mental Wellness

Worry about housing

Concerns about future housing needs or changes in living arrangements can create stress.

Housing environment

The condition of your home can contribute to stress and affect overall well-being.

Supportive Home

A safe and healthy home can strengthen mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness.

Prevention and Harm Reduction

Build supports

Staying connected to community, culture, and relationships helps support wellness.

Access to services

Explore mental health and wellness supports available in your community.

Healthy living

Create balance through rest, activity, and healthy routines.

Reduce risks

Find ways to ease stressors like financial strain or housing concerns to reduce worry.

Cultural strength

Draw on traditional teachings and cultural knowledge to support healing and resilience.



Healthy Living Habits for Tenants

Taking care of yourself is essential for long-term wellness. These healthy living habits can help support balance in daily life:

Move your body

Stay active in ways that feel good, such as walking, dancing, playing sports, or doing outdoor chores. Movement supports physical and emotional well-being.

Uplift others

Helping others in the community, such as checking in on an Elder or volunteering, can strengthen your sense of purpose.

Eat nutritious foods

When possible, include traditional foods along with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins to help keep your body strong and energized.

Prioritize sleep

A regular routine and a calm space for rest can help you get the 7-9 hours of sleep your body needs.

Stay connected to culture

Participate in ceremonies, teachings, and language activities that strengthen identity and resilience.

Spend time outdoors

Being on the land, walking, gathering, or simply sitting can bring peace and clarity.

Limit alcohol and substances

If you choose to use alcohol or legal substances, do so in moderation to support your health and wellness.

Check on on your health

Pay attention to symptoms and schedule regular check-ups when needed.

Keep learning

Try new skills, hobbies, or goals to support personal growth and well-being.



Self-Care Practices

Self-care includes practices that support your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. For First Nations tenants living on-reserve, this can also mean connecting with culture, community, and the land, all of which are key parts of wellness guided by the Medicine Wheel.

Here are self-care practices to support balance and strength in your daily life:

Cultural identity and tradition

Take part in traditional practices, ceremonies, storytelling, or language learning. These activities strengthen your identity and bring pride, belonging, and healing.

Personal identity

Connect with supportive LGBTQ+ spaces and express yourself in ways that feel authentic. Celebrating who you are can strengthen identity, build belonging, and support well-being.

Connect with community

Attend gatherings and cultural events happening in your community. Support neighbours or Elders when you can and accept help when you need it. Wellness is often strongest when shared.

Seek guidance from Elders

Elders and Knowledge Keepers offer teachings, stories, and support that can guide you through life's challenges. Their wisdom strengthens spiritual and emotional well-being.

Community resources

Explore services and programs in your community that promote well-being, such as wellness workshops, cooking sessions or mommy-and-child programs.

Spend time on the land

The land can be a powerful source of healing. Go for walks, gather medicines, or simply sit outside. Connecting with the natural world can calm the mind and renew the spirit.

Use traditional medicines and ceremony

Practices like smudging, drumming, or prayer (as guided by your Nation's customs) help cleanse and strengthen your spirit. If you use sacred medicines like sage, cedar, or sweetgrass, do so with respect and intention.

Set boundaries

Protect your time, energy, and space. It's okay to say no and to prioritize what you need for balance.

Create a peaceful home space

Keep your space comforting, uplifting and safe. A relaxing home can be a source of peace and strength.

Be mindful

Take time to breathe deeply, reflect, or be present in the moment. Even a few quiet minutes can ground you.

Practice gratitude

Take time to reflect on what you're thankful for. Gratitude helps shift focus from stress to strength.

Enjoy hobbies

Make time for what you love like music, crafting, or being outdoors. These activities feed your creativity and joy.

Ask for help

Reach out for support when you need it, whether from family, friends, community resources, or support groups. You don't have to carry everything alone.

Be kind to yourself

Speak gently to yourself and offer the same compassion you would give to a loved one. Healing takes time and patience.





Overcrowding and Mental Health

Overcrowding occurs when more people live in a home than the space is meant to hold, according to the National Occupancy Standard. It can be caused by many factors, such as limited housing options, cultural traditions of living together, geographic isolation, and infrastructure gaps. This challenge is especially common in some First Nation communities, where housing shortages and other barriers make suitable homes harder to find.

Overcrowding can be recognized as both a housing deficiency and a hazard.

- **Deficiency:** Overcrowding can be considered a housing deficiency because it indicates a shortage of suitable housing related to the population's needs. It reflects a failure to provide sufficient, appropriate housing for everyone.
- **Hazard:** Overcrowding can also pose significant hazards to health, safety, and well-being.

The impact of overcrowding can be significant and wide-ranging, affecting various aspects of individuals, families, and communities. Here are some of the key impacts:

- **Health risks:** Overcrowding can increase the risk of infectious diseases such as respiratory infections due to close contact and limited ventilation.
- **Mental health challenges:** Living in overcrowded conditions can contribute to stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Lack of privacy, noise, and conflicts arising from limited space can take a toll on individuals' well-being.
- **Impact on children:** Limited space, exposure to stressors, and disrupted sleep patterns can affect cognitive development and educational outcomes.
- **Family and community relationships:** Living in close quarters can sometimes strain relationships and worsen any tensions within households and communities.
- **Housing security:** Overcrowding is often a symptom of broader housing insecurity. Families living in overcrowded conditions may be at higher risk of eviction, homelessness, or displacement, perpetuating a cycle of housing instability and vulnerability.



Mental Health and Wellness

Supporting mental wellness is essential for tenants living in First Nation communities. By encouraging balance, connection, and a positive living environment, tenants can strengthen their mental well-being and overall quality of life.

Simple strategies like regular check-ins, stress management techniques, and access to mental health resources can help build resilience. Promoting open communication and sharing information about available supports can empower tenants to seek help when needed.

Remember: You are not alone. Resources and supports are available to guide you through difficult times.

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:

Phone: 1-855-242-3310

Website: <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

Suicide Crisis Helpline:

Phone: 9-8-8

Website: Get Help | 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline (988.ca)

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419

MMIWG Support Line: 844-413-6649



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