



FACT SHEET

INDIGENOUS WOMEN & HOMELESSNESS

Is there a link between Indigenous women, violence and homelessness?

- Indigenous female youth are over-represented in the urban youth homeless population. ⁱ
- Violence is the leading cause of women's homelessness in Canada. ⁱⁱ
- The status of homeless put children at risk of apprehension from child welfare authorities. To avoid child apprehension Indigenous women will often deal with physical or sexual abuse to keep their children safely in their care. ⁱⁱⁱ
- Relative homelessness and transiency is an inarguable causal factor of the exploitation of Indigenous women and girls. ^{iv}

"Indigenous Homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldview." ^v

Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada

Article 21 – Indigenous Peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing sanitation, health and social security. ^{vii}

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

What needs to be done to address the rates of homelessness among Indigenous women?

There needs to be more culturally appropriate trauma informed services for Indigenous women:

- Services and programs must be oriented with a gendered lens.
- Limited shelters geared specifically towards the unique needs of Indigenous women in Ontario exist and Indigenous transitional supports and programs are lacking.
- Indigenous women who have mental health or substance use challenges will find it very difficult to find an emergency shelter that will offer them space.
- There is a huge gap in services for Indigenous female youth, Indigenous families, homeless women who are not fleeing violence and Indigenous women with disabilities and those leaving institutions such as the justice and child welfare systems including transitional housing.

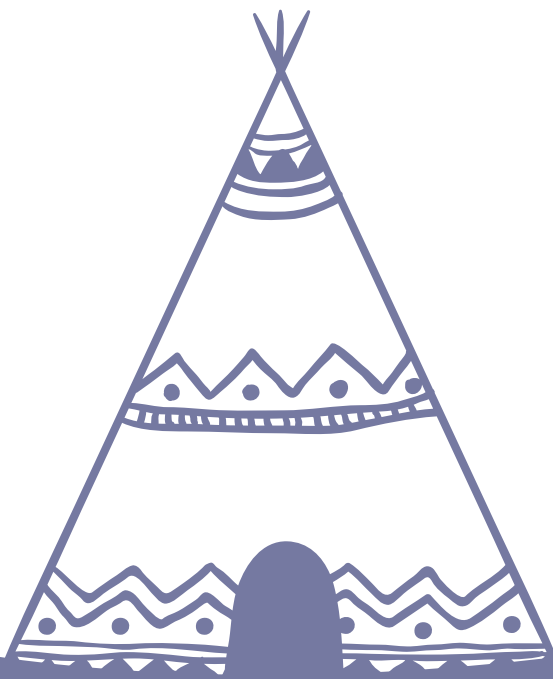
Additionally, increased policy and fiscal commitments by the government are imperative. This includes programs and services that are developed, delivered and administered by and for Indigenous peoples. This will also ensure that policies and legislation are culturally safe, address systemic barriers and recognize Indigenous rights. ^{vi}

What is ONWA doing?

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) supports the ongoing requirement of improving access to safe affordable housing while advocating for a Housing First approach that removes barriers for Indigenous women and their children experiencing homelessness into being rapidly re-housed. ONWA's focus is on providing housing policy, research, analysis and recommendations that are informed by a culturally relevant gender-based lens to support Indigenous women and their children in attaining culturally appropriate housing. Priority must be given to Indigenous women who are fleeing violence and sex trafficking and require swift access to housing. ^{viii}

Nihdawin "My House – A Place Where I live" Program

The Nihdawin Program assists the Indigenous population in Thunder Bay that are at risk of homelessness. The intent of this program is to work with and support Indigenous women 15 years of age or older during their interactions with the criminal justice system and who are at risk of homelessness.



References:

- ⁱ Ruttan, L., LaBoucande-Benson, P. & B. Munro. (2008). "A Story I Never Heard Before": Aboriginal young women, homelessness, and restorying connections. *Pimatisiwin* 6(3), 31-54
- ⁱⁱ YWCA. (Online). Violence Against Women & Women's Homelessness: Making the Connections. Accessed at: <http://www.ywcanwt.ca/documents/Microsoft%20Word%20%20Violence%20and%20Women's%20Homelessness%20-%20Making%20the%20Connections.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Menzies, P. (October, 2010). "Rethinking Homelessness. Theoretical and Methodological Challenges" Conference. Montreal: UQAM.
- ^{iv} Sisterwatch. (2011). *The Tragedy of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada*. Vancouver: Sisterwatch
- ^v Thistle, J. (2017.) *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.
- ^{vi} Métis Nation of Ontario, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and Ontario Native Women's Association. (2013). *Ontario Urban & Rural First Nations, Metis and Inuit Housing Policy Framework*. Available at: <http://www.onwa.ca/upload/documents/our-housing-framework.pdf>
- ^{vii} United Nations. (2008) *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Available at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
- ^{viii} Ontario Native Women's Association. (2018) *Indigenous Women, Intimate Partner Violence and Housing*. Learning Network Newsletter Issue 25. London, Ontario: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. ISBN # 978-1-988412-19-1

UPDATED: 2018-09-25

Head Office: 150 City Road · P.O. Box15-684 City Road · Fort William First Nation, ON P7J1J7 · Toll Free: 1-800-667-0816 · Phone: (807) 577-1492 · Fax: (807) 623-1104 · **E-mail:** onwa@onwa.ca