

1. Since 2015, End Homelessness Winnipeg serves as a backbone organization coordinating implementation of the [10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg](#). Ensuring a sufficient supply of housing for people experiencing homelessness is a key pillar of this plan. Since April 1, 2019, End Homelessness Winnipeg also serves as the Community Entity for Reaching Home: Canada's homelessness strategy, administering federal homelessness funding locally. End Homelessness Winnipeg is an Indigenous organization, with core values that include Truth and Reconciliation as a path to ending Indigenous homelessness.
2. Winnipeg has the largest per capita Indigenous population of any major city in Canada, with more than 12% of residents identifying as Indigenous. More than half of Manitoba's Indigenous population is urban, with more than one third living in the province's capital. One in four Indigenous adults and more than one in three Indigenous children in Winnipeg live in poverty. Indigenous people in Winnipeg experience rates of poverty twice that of the general population and rates of homelessness between five and six times that of the general population. The [2018 Winnipeg Street Census](#) point-in-time count found that more than two-thirds of those experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg are Indigenous. The same report found that Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg make up 80% of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness or living in encampments, while comprising less than half of the emergency shelter population.
3. Indigenous homelessness in Winnipeg is deeply connected to Canada's 150-year history of colonization and genocide, which suppressed Indigenous peoples' traditional governance, social, cultural, and economic institutions; occupied Indigenous lands for resource extraction; and separated children from their families with the goal of assimilation. Reserve and scrip systems, forced migrations, residential schools, the '60s Scoop, Child and Family Services (CFS) policies, as well as chronic underfunding of public services and infrastructure in Indigenous communities, have resulted in intergenerational trauma, family separations, health care inequities and systemic poverty, leading directly to Indigenous peoples' experiences of homelessness in Winnipeg today. People experiencing homelessness who participated in the [2018 Winnipeg Street Health Survey](#) cited the cost of rents, lack of suitable housing and lack of income as the top barriers to finding and maintaining housing. However, an alarming percentage – 21.4% - reported feeling disrespected by landlords because of their race or ethnic background.
4. A majority of First Nations people residing in Manitoba live on reserves. Out of 17,289 homes on reserves in Manitoba, 4,176 need major renovations and 1,213 need to be entirely replaced. Overcrowding, mould, and inadequate plumbing or water service are frequently cited concerns. Such social and material inequities drive migration from reserves or rural and remote Métis and Inuit communities to urban centres. However, this migration can itself become a pathway to homelessness, given rising costs of housing in cities and jurisdictional gaps between federal and provincial service systems. According to the recent Parliamentary Budget Office Report on [Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing](#), approximately 9,000 Indigenous households in Winnipeg are in core housing need: the highest number of any metropolitan area in Canada. Only 15% of Indigenous households in Manitoba live in subsidized housing.

5. A [Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment](#) completed by the Institute of Urban Studies last year highlights critical gaps along the housing continuum that exacerbate homelessness in our province's capital. Notably, the assessment points to a shortage of affordable 3+ bedroom units for larger families. This gap reinforces an ongoing cycle of family separations and breakdown that disproportionately affects Indigenous families with experiences or at risk of homelessness, as highlighted in the 2020 [North End Housing Lab Report](#). Housing precarity and child apprehensions form a vicious cycle for many Indigenous families in Manitoba. CFS authorities use "unsuitable" housing (according to National Occupancy Standards defining the "suitable" number of bedrooms for family size) as a rationale for child apprehension. Yet families cannot secure housing that is "suitable" due to the lack of geared-to-income housing with 3+ bedrooms. Without "suitable" housing, families are at risk of child apprehension, or cannot reunite with their children. Indigenous children represent more than 90% of those in care in Manitoba. According to the 2018 Winnipeg Street Census, more than half of individuals experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg have been in CFS care.
6. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for private, safe, low-income, and low-barrier housing options has accelerated in urgency. Both Indigenous people and those experiencing homelessness face higher rates of COVID-19 cases and are more vulnerable to severe outcomes due to COVID-19. Yet, to follow public health orders to "stay home" and physically distance, one needs a home, and that home must not be overcrowded. Based on rates of homelessness and core housing need in Winnipeg and Manitoba, we know this is an impossibility for thousands of individuals and families. Reaching Home COVID-19 emergency funding has supported vital and life-saving services over the past year. Renewed investments in flexible emergency and baseline funds for Reaching Home must be made to address risks created by the ongoing pandemic and new variants.
7. Housing by and for Indigenous people is thus an urgent need in Winnipeg and across Manitoba. New investments from all levels of government are long overdue. However, even federal programs designed to facilitate the creation of low-income housing supply have posed barriers for Indigenous communities and organizations. Out of five projects recently approved by the City of Winnipeg for \$12.5 million administered under the Major Cities Stream of the federal Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), only one is Indigenous led, representing just 21 units or 22% of local funding. Due to the City's own zoning barriers, large, well-funded organizations with surplus, appropriately zoned properties were prioritized; and due to RHI operating fund requirements, organizations with significant resource pools were also advantaged. For Urban Indigenous organizations that have been historically and systemically under-resourced, securing properly zoned property and long-term operating funds under the timelines in place for the Rapid Housing Initiative have proven to be significant barriers. While greater investments in Rapid Housing are urgently required to address the crisis of absolute and unsheltered homelessness in Winnipeg, these investments must include funding for operations and must prioritize Indigenous housing models and initiatives.

8. Indigenous communities in Winnipeg are concentrated in older neighbourhoods, where rental housing is more affordable because it has aging infrastructure. Costs and permitting to redevelop housing in these areas are increasingly prohibitive, leaving both affordability and adequacy of housing as major barriers for Indigenous families in Winnipeg. The new Parliamentary Budget Office Report on Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing indicates that in 2019-2020, zero units of low-income Indigenous Housing were created in Manitoba, and only 11 units were repaired. End Homelessness Winnipeg's [Housing Models and Development Framework](#) has conservatively estimated that 1,340 new units of low-income housing are required by 2025.
9. [Kíkininaw Óma, the Strategy to Support Unsheltered Winnipeggers](#), released in June 2020, supports the call of the [Recovery for All](#) campaign for the federal government to construct 300,000 new affordable and supportive housing units for low-income Canadians. Based on more recent evidence from the Winnipeg Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment, implementation of the Major Cities Stream of the RHI, and the new Parliamentary Budget Office Report on Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing, End Homelessness Winnipeg further calls for these investments to include a commitment to at least 1,340 new units in Winnipeg as part of an Indigenous-led Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy.
10. It is unacceptable, in the era of Truth and Reconciliation and the Calls for Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, that Indigenous organizations should continue to face systemic barriers to housing opportunities due to government policies. To meet the federal government's goals of supporting Indigenous people and people experiencing homelessness, collaborative trilateral engagement of other governments, and engagement with Indigenous communities and governance, are required. This engagement requires leadership from the federal level, through bold investments in Reaching Home COVID-19 emergency response funding; Rapid Housing; and an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, designed by and for Indigenous people and delivered proportionally to the levels of need in metropolitan, rural and remote areas.
11. Investing in much-needed housing infrastructure at this time will be a critical component of Canada's COVID-19 recovery: stimulating the economy while addressing urgent socioeconomic needs and advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. For all these reasons, End Homelessness Winnipeg urgently calls for bold investments in low-income and supportive housing, with a special focus on Indigenous-led approaches, as part of the 2021 federal budget.