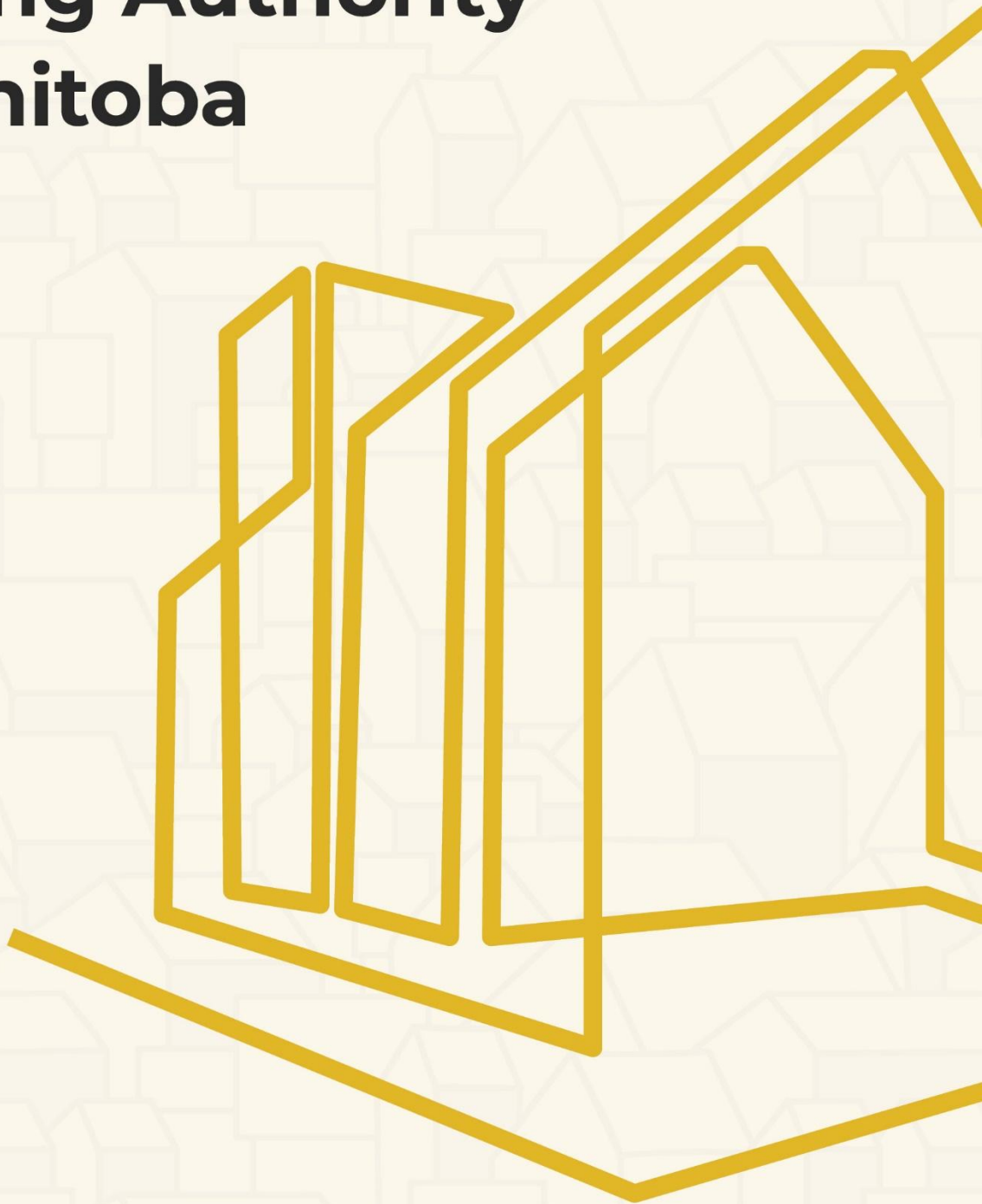


A Needs Assessment for an Indigenous Housing Authority in Manitoba

July 2024





Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge that this discussion paper was written on Treaty One Territory, in the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, and Dakota Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We acknowledge that the current housing and homelessness crisis in Canada disproportionately impacts Indigenous Peoples, as a direct result of colonial policies that have dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of their lands and homes. We are committed to challenging these policies and working collaboratively to ensure everyone has a safe, adequate, affordable, and culturally appropriate place to call home.

Thank you to all those who generously shared their knowledge, expertise, and first-hand experiences to inform this project. Thank you to Christina Maes Nino and the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association for helping guide the direction of the work. Thank you in advance to all those who will carry this work forward, exploring new and innovative ways to plan, design, build, and operate Indigenous-led housing solutions across Manitoba.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the United Way of Winnipeg for supporting the research and engagement through their administration of the Government of Canada's Community Services Recovery Fund.

Miigwech, maarsi, thank you.

Note to the Reader on Nomenclature

Throughout this discussion paper, there are many references to Indigenous peoples. Indigenous is the term most commonly accepted at this time when referring to the original peoples of this land, and the terms most widely accepted by the three Indigenous groups in Canada are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The term 'Aboriginal' is also used, but only when discussing initiatives from a particular period in time. The terms 'Indian' and 'Native' are also mentioned, but only when referring to specific federal legislation or programs. Throughout the discussion paper, we use the names that are published in documents consistent with the nomenclature attributed at the time of publication.



Executive Summary

Everyone deserves a safe, adequate, and affordable place to call home. The Canadian government recognizes the right to adequate housing as a basic human right, grounded in international human rights law (National Housing Strategy Act, 2019; Casey, 2021; Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, 2024). And yet, across Canada, on any given night, there are an estimated 250,000 people experiencing homelessness (Homelessness Hub, 2016) and one in ten households living in core housing need (Statistics Canada, 2021), meaning they live in inadequate, unsuitable, and/or unaffordable housing conditions.

Across Canada, and here in Manitoba, Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) people are drastically over-represented among individuals experiencing homelessness and living in core housing need due to the compounding impacts of colonialism, intergenerational trauma, and systemic racism (Casey, 2021; Province of Manitoba, 2023). Sixty-eight percent of individuals experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg (Brandon, 2022), 90% in Thompson (Bonnycastle & Deegan, 2022), and 81% in Brandon (Province of Manitoba, 2023) self-identify as Indigenous. Indigenous households in Manitoba are nearly twice as likely as non-Indigenous households to experience core housing need, at 19% and 10%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2021). Moreover, the housing needs of Indigenous people living off-reserve or away from their home community warrant specific attention.

And yet, across Canada, on any given night, there are an estimated

250,000

people experiencing homelessness.¹

Plus

one out of ten
households are living in core housing

meaning they live in
inadequate, unsuitable, and/or
unaffordable housing conditions.²

¹ Homelessness Hub, 2016
² Statistics Canada, 2021



This discussion paper explores one potential solution for addressing the urgent and unmet housing needs of Indigenous people living off reserve in Manitoba, through a province-wide **Indigenous Housing Authority**. Since the dissolution of the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA) in 2010, there have been ongoing discussions within the affordable housing sector on the topic of a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority. What could it look like? What role could it play? What functions could it provide? Who will take the lead on its creation? This discussion paper begins to summarize these conversations while reflecting on similar work and initiatives across Canada. Through our initial research and engagement, it appears as though there are essentially three different models under discussion, including:



An advocacy, training, and capacity-building arm (may or may not be attached to an existing non-profit organization)

Example:
Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA)

Example:
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) Indigenous Caucus



An umbrella organization that administers operational and capital funding to Indigenous non-profit housing providers (may or may not own capital assets and/or have a development arm)

Example:
Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA)

Example:
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS)



An Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation

Example:
M'akola Development Services

Example:
Lu'ma Development Management (LDM)

There is much we can learn from the examples listed above. A **model like MUNHA** excels at providing a one-window approach to housing information, resources, training, and funding opportunities. This model also builds capacity for greater advocacy to the government for funding support for urban Indigenous non-profit housing providers. In many ways, the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA) has been filling this role since the dissolution of MUNHA; however, creating an Indigenous arm of MNPHA could expand upon this role even further. This model could come to fruition relatively quickly by tapping into and building upon MNPHA's existing structure and expertise. This model would not enable the Indigenous Housing Authority to develop and construct new housing units internally but would have the capacity to powerfully advocate for increased funding commitments for new construction and resources to manage and repair existing units.

The **AHMA or OAHS model** excels at offering the Indigenous non-profit housing sector greater autonomy over their operating funding and increased opportunities for new development and acquisition of additional capital assets (through devolution or otherwise). This model would align with the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Indigenous principles of self-determination and self-government. An Indigenous Housing Authority with this type of structure may also be more capable of accessing funding through the upcoming *National Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*. However, it is important to note that the creation of this model



may require years of negotiations with the provincial government, and a commitment from Manitoba Housing to provide training, capacity building, and support before fully transferring over the responsibilities of management and/or ownership of social housing assets.

The **Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation model** excels at providing an atmosphere that encourages the number of Indigenous-led housing options to expand across the province. The demand for this model in Manitoba has grown in recent years, particularly as the number of affordable housing units diminishes and the need for more culturally appropriate, affordable housing increases. Many of the current capital funding programs through the *National Housing Strategy* are designed to flow directly to a non-profit (including Indigenous-specific opportunities). However, because we do not have an apolitical Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation in Manitoba, smaller Indigenous non-profits have been applying for these capital funds. While funding opportunities have increased, the capacity of most Indigenous non-profit organizations to acquire land and develop new housing in a timely and efficient manner remains limited. An Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation would have the mandate and ability to purchase, hold, develop, and construct new capital assets, with development expertise available in-house. If desired, these assets could be held within the corporation. Alternatively, they could be handed over to an existing Indigenous non-profit housing provider once built and ready for occupancy.

Regardless of the model preferred, this paper highlights that a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority could be the key to accessing Manitoba's portion of the \$4 billion federal commitment to the implementation of the *National Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*, rooted in principles of Indigenous self-determination and economic sustainability for future generations. Furthermore, this paper begins to explore the current housing policy and governance context as it relates to Indigenous off-reserve housing in Manitoba, providing a framework for future conversations on this topic with all levels of government and community partners.

As we aim to move this important work forward in a good way, the following recommendations have been prepared, grounded in the research conducted and the input received during one-on-one stakeholder interviews and a roundtable discussion with Indigenous non-profit housing providers in May 2024:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Form a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority Steering Committee or Leadership Team to carry forward this foundational work. It will be critical that this committee or team has a commitment from the existing Indigenous-led housing organizations in Manitoba.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Engage with the Province of Manitoba and Indigenous governments to clarify how an Indigenous Housing Authority could support or impede their objectives.



RECOMMENDATION 3:

Engage with allies in the Manitoba development community, clarifying the next steps required to establish an Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation. This could include engagement with and possibly mentorship from developers, builders, accountants, lawyers, real estate agents, tradespeople, planners, engineers, architects, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Engage with Indigenous communities to confirm housing needs. This could be achieved through a survey, group discussions, one-on-one meetings, traveling tours, etc. across the province.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Prepare Manitoba's Rural, Urban, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, reflecting on the framework provided by British Columbia's Rural, Urban, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy as a starting point, incorporating data on local housing needs. It is anticipated that this document may be an essential first step in accessing Manitoba's portion of the \$4 billion in federal funding that will be administered in the upcoming years by the National Indigenous Housing Centre.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The opportunity may be available to align the launch of a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority with the next provincial election. Regular, ongoing communication with provincial representatives will be essential to seeing this recommendation realized thoughtfully and effectively.



Definitions

Affordable Housing: Affordable housing includes government-subsidized rental housing, public, and non-profit housing. Some government programs have varying definitions of affordable housing for their funding programs, with different requirements and funding parameters. Measuring affordability is done in two ways: through an income-based measurement (such as 30% of a household's income before tax) or through a market-based measurement (such as measuring a unit's rental amount against the local market's average rental amount.)

Assisted Living Facility: Assisted living facilities provide housing, hospitality services, and regulated assisted living services for adults who can live independently and make decisions on their own behalf but require a supportive environment due to physical and functional health changes.

Core Housing Need: Households in core housing need live in unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable dwellings and cannot afford alternative housing in their community.

Devolution: Devolution describes the process of transferring a public responsibility, program, or asset to another entity. The devolution of housing is the transfer of housing owned by the government to be owned by non-profit organizations, and direct management of housing from the public sector to non-profit and private for-profit organizations.

Expiry of Operating Agreement (EOA): This refers to the expiry of the operating agreements that are in place for each housing project which has a term ending date after which the housing provider will have no mortgage payment and/or will receive no further subsidy.

Friendship Centres: Friendship Centres are non-profit organizations that provide services to Indigenous peoples living in urban areas.

Homeless Shelter: Homeless shelters provide temporary residences for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Inadequate Housing: A unit that is in poor condition and requires significant repairs.

Non-Profit Housing: Housing that is owned and/or managed by a non-profit organization. In Manitoba, these are corporations registered under the Corporations Act which are created for non-commercial purposes, where any profit made is used to further the goal or cause of the organization.

Operating Agreement: An operating agreement is a contract between a housing provider and the Province of Manitoba, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Indigenous Services Canada, or other government entity, which sets out the amount, duration, and conditions of the subsidy provided for a housing project.

Public Housing: Housing that is owned and managed by the provincial government.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Housing: This is where the rent charged is set at a proportion of household income (usually 25-30%) for households with limited or fixed incomes.



Social Housing: Housing that is subsidized under a social housing agreement and is operated by the public (provincial/territorial/municipal) and/or community-based non-profit (including cooperative) providers, for low- and middle-income households.

Sponsor Management: A sponsor management agreement is an agreement between Manitoba Housing and a non-profit housing organization to manage housing owned by Manitoba Housing.

Supportive Housing: Supportive housing is an option for people who can no longer manage in their own homes but are not ready to move into a Personal Care Home. In Supportive Housing, people live in their apartments within a group community setting. Meals are provided and people share a common kitchen and living area. Laundry and housekeeping services are available, as well as social and recreational activities. Some assistance with personal care is provided. 24-hour on-site support and supervision within a secure environment is available.

Transitional Housing: Transitional housing refers to a supportive – yet temporary – type of accommodation that is meant to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, supports (for addictions and mental health, for instance), life skills, and in some cases, education, and training.

Unaffordable Housing: A unit that costs more than a certain portion of a household's accumulated income. In Canada, households are considered to be living in unaffordable housing if the cost to rent or own is 30% or more of a household's combined income.

Unsuitable Housing: A unit that does not meet certain bed and private space requirements for all people living in the unit.

Urban Native Housing Program: Operating agreements that are representative of Indigenous non-profit housing providers with projects mostly comprised of scattered single-detached family housing units, located in six different urban centres (including Winnipeg). Urban Native housing units are 100% rent-geared-to-income and have ongoing operating subsidies that are currently administered by the Province of Manitoba.



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1



INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

Everyone deserves a safe, adequate, and affordable place to call home. The Canadian government recognizes the right to adequate housing as a basic human right, grounded in international human rights law (National Housing Strategy Act, 2019; Casey, 2021; Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, 2024). And yet, across Canada, on any given night, there are an estimated 250,000 people experiencing homelessness (Homelessness Hub, 2016) and one in ten households living in core housing need (Statistics Canada, 2021), meaning they live in inadequate, unsuitable, and/or unaffordable housing conditions.

Across Canada, and here in Manitoba, Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) people are drastically over-represented among individuals experiencing homelessness and living in core housing need due to the compounding impacts of colonialism, intergenerational trauma, and systemic racism (Casey, 2021; Province of Manitoba, 2023). Sixty-eight percent of individuals experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg (Brandon, 2022), 90% in Thompson (Bonnycastle & Deegan, 2022), and 81% in Brandon (Province of Manitoba, 2023) self-identify as Indigenous. Indigenous households in Manitoba are nearly twice as likely as non-Indigenous households to experience core housing need, at 19% and 10%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2021).

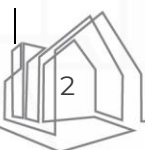
While the Indigenous population increases at a rate far greater than the Canadian average (Statistics Canada, 2021), the supply of housing developed to accommodate the social and cultural values of Indigenous peoples is woefully short of the demand (Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada, 2013). Efforts to address this disparity and meaningfully advance reconciliation require funding and technical support from all levels of government, working alongside Indigenous groups as they lead this important work. For, “dedicated funding, policies, and programming should be designed and delivered by Indigenous peoples to address the distinct causes and experiences of Indigenous housing need, based on self-identified priorities” (Bernas et al., 2023, 8).

The housing needs of Indigenous people living off-reserve or away from their home community warrant specific attention. In 2019, under Canada’s *National Housing Strategy*, the federal government committed over \$1.5 billion for housing for Indigenous people living in the North, on a First Nation, or for those who are part of a Métis Nation. Housing advocates quickly noted the gap in this plan, as it does not account for nearly 75% of Canada’s Indigenous people who live in rural and urban communities (Casey, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2021). In response, the 2023 Federal Budget proposed \$4 billion over seven years starting in 2024-25 for the implementation of an *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* and to establish a National Indigenous Housing Centre (CMHC, 2024).



Initiated and led by End Homelessness Winnipeg, this discussion paper begins to explore one potential solution for addressing off-reserve Indigenous housing needs in Manitoba, building upon the recent federal announcements, through the creation of a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority. In recent years, this has been discussed as a concept by non-profit organizations and government representatives, but what exactly is meant when an 'Indigenous Housing Authority' is raised in these conversations? Based on a review of the literature and engagement with Indigenous non-profit housing providers and other key stakeholders, it is evident there are varying perspectives on the role a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority could play in the Manitoba context. As such, End Homelessness Winnipeg identified a need to collect and analyze these different perspectives by way of a needs assessment. The needs assessment presents these different perspectives, considers the similarities and differences between each, and outlines the opportunities and challenges to inform a potential structure that could best address the existing gaps in adequately addressing the lack of Indigenous-informed housing in Manitoba.

The needs assessment highlights previous research and engagement on Indigenous Housing Authorities, including a review of the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA) - its past work and priorities, as well as the evolution of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) in British Columbia, and the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) in Ontario. The intent is not to suggest that MUNHA must be recreated, or that Manitoba must follow in the direction of other provinces, but rather, to highlight the rationale for the creation of Indigenous Housing Authorities, and lessons learned along the way. Subsequent sections explore the current housing policy and governance context as it relates to Indigenous off-reserve housing. In closing, the paper provides recommendations and next steps for continuing this important conversation through ongoing engagement with the Indigenous non-profit housing sector, community members, and government representatives.



2

WHAT IS AN INDIGENOUS HOUSING AUTHORITY?

2 What is an Indigenous Housing Authority?

Defining an 'Indigenous Housing Authority' is challenging, as there are many different models, each with its own unique structure, purpose, and function. As a result, when brought up in conversation, the term, 'Indigenous Housing Authority', can lead to confusion or misunderstanding. A goal of this needs assessment is to first build a shared understanding of the roles an Indigenous Housing Authority could have, and second, to begin to discuss which, if any, could be of benefit in the Manitoba context.

In the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association's (MUNHA) *Aboriginal Housing Plan* (2007), an Indigenous Housing Authority (which, in that particular publication, is referred to as an Aboriginal Housing Authority) is defined as a "legally registered entity that is controlled by a board of directors consisting of representatives of their constituents and housing professionals with a mandate to deliver housing services" (Distasio et al., 2007, 9-10). The *Aboriginal Housing Plan* further describes that Indigenous Housing Authorities across Canada typically fall into one of four principal models, (Gerow, R. et al., 2005): (1) the Single Community Model; (2) the Several Communities Model; (3) the Regional Model; or (4) the Provincial Model.



Within these, an Indigenous Housing Authority will generally perform some or all of the following functions:



Provide housing-related training and communications for staff, community members, and tradespersons. Training opportunities typically address topics such as home repair and maintenance, capital budgeting and finance, and energy efficiency and innovation, for



Advocate to all levels of government, including Indigenous governments, on the shared priorities of the housing provider(s) they represent. The Indigenous Housing Authority acts as one, strong, unified voice.



Prepare long-term strategic plans, outlining the measures required to ensure financial sustainability for the Indigenous Housing Authority; strategies for ongoing repair and maintenance of existing capital assets; and/or construction of new housing units.



Explore creative financing mechanisms to utilize more capital and resources to leverage additional financing.



Administer operating funding, where agreements are established between government or other funders.



Manage and/or operate housing on behalf of owners or the Indigenous Housing Authority itself.



Some have a manufacturing division that manufactures doors, windows, and associated supplies, which can be an effective way of providing apprenticeship and training opportunities for community members (Distasio et al., 2007).

How each of the functions outlined above is carried out varies considerably, depending on the particular model and the community(ies) the Indigenous Housing Authority represents. One common misconception is that all Indigenous Housing Authorities develop, own, and/or operate their housing. This is true for some, but not all. For instance, in British Columbia (BC), the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) (an example of the Provincial Model) does not own or operate housing. Instead, AHMA is an umbrella organization that administers operating agreements to 55 Indigenous non-profit housing and service providers across BC – a role previously held by BC Housing.

In recent years, AHMA has assisted BC Housing in the pre-development of new Indigenous non-profit housing units; however, once operational, new builds are owned and operated by a member non-profit organization (AHMA, personal communication, February 9, 2024). On the other hand, in Manitoba, some Indigenous Housing Authorities, such as the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council Housing Authority (DOTCHA), develop, own, and operate their own capital assets, including single and multi-family housing units across multiple communities. DOTCHA is an example of the Several Communities Model, providing affordable off-reserve housing options for their Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council community members.

A summary of the opportunities and challenges associated with each model is included in **Table 1** on the next page. It is important to note that most of the opportunities and challenges identified for the Single Community Model and the Several Communities Model relate more directly to Housing Authorities in small communities and on-reserve, rather than those in larger urban centres.

Table 1: Models of Indigenous Housing Authorities

Model	Opportunities	Challenges
Single Community Model	Connected with their membership and understand members' personal and family circumstances	High staff and housing coordinator turnover, increased difficulties in collecting housing payments
	Greater potential to educate on home ownership (but lack personnel to organize the educational programs)	Lack of housing expertise, leading to less ability of program involvement
		Vulnerable to political influence
Several Communities Model	Lack of economic development strategies	
	Serves several communities	Vulnerable to political influence
	Close enough to provide education programs for their client base	Usually not large enough to manufacture housing components
	Operates as a separate body with the ability to sign contracts and take on debt	Difficulties may arise with smaller cash flows
	Takes on bulk purchasing	
Regional Model	Favours Indigenous contractors and tradespeople	
	Many more employees and specialization	Less connection with community members
	Increased partnerships with financial institutions, development corporations, governments, etc.	A need for local offices
	Increased services, such as home ownership incentives, insurance plans, construction companies, manufacturing housing components	
	Regionally appropriate housing designs	
Increased financial flexibility		
Provincial Model	Increase in housing specialists	Less connected to members or housing clients
	Distanced from local political influence	Not as responsive to local issues
	Increased business approach to paying housing charges	Less economic benefits directed to localities
	Lessened arrears problems due to an increase in cash flow	
	Increased opportunities in Indigenous construction labor	

Note: This table has been adapted from the MUNHA Aboriginal Housing Plan (2007).



In Manitoba, many First Nations have established their own Housing Authorities, including the Opaskwayak Cree Nation Housing Authority (OCNHA), the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council Housing Authority (DOTCHA), and the Dakota Ojibway First Nations Housing Authority (DOFNHA). The OCNHA is an example of the Single Community Model, providing housing-related services to their community members living on-reserve. The DOTCHA and the DOFNHA are examples of the Several Communities Model, providing housing both off and on-reserve for Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council community members. It is important to note that the model that DOTCHA and DOFNHA have chosen to adopt mandates that they can only house members of their respective Nations in units owned by these Housing Authorities, but that housing can occur regardless of whether the individual or household is located directly on First Nation land or within an urban setting.

Across Canada, there are examples of the Single Community, Several Communities, and Regional Models, but, to the writer's knowledge, there are only three Provincial Models - the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) in British Columbia (BC), the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) in Ontario, and the Skigin-Elnoog Housing Corporation in New Brunswick (NB). For this discussion paper, we will only be reviewing the AHMA and OAHS models but recommend that the Skigin-Elnoog Housing Corporation model be explored in subsequent research



3

**A HISTORICAL
REVIEW**

3 A Historical Review

The following section provides a historical review of MUNHA's past role in urban Indigenous non-profit housing, highlighting recommendations and next steps from the *Aboriginal Housing Plan*. This section also describes the evolution of AHMA and the OAHS, summarizing how each came to be and the services they provide. The intent is to highlight what has been done in the past – both in Manitoba and across Canada – providing context for what a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority could look like here in Manitoba.

3.1 Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association

3.1.1 The Creation of the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association

The Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA) was formed in 1994 and was in operation until 2010. The organization functioned as an advocacy arm to thirteen Indigenous non-profit housing organizations that provided a total of 1,595 social housing units to Indigenous people living off-reserve, in Manitoba's urban centres. MUNHA was not considered an Indigenous Housing Authority at the time; however, the organization did perform several similar functions, such as advocating for urban Indigenous housing programs and delivery, engaging with communities to uncover specific housing needs, and conducting research and evaluation of housing programs. In 2007, it was noted that the organization employed an Executive Director and a Policy Analyst (Distasio et al., 2007).

3.1.2 The Aboriginal Housing Plan

In 2007, MUNHA released their first *Aboriginal Housing Plan*, outlining their **goals** as an organization:

- To lobby the federal and provincial governments to provide more units of housing for urban Aboriginal peoples.
- To assist the federal and provincial governments in appropriately allocating housing units based on known needs.
- To facilitate the resolution of systemic and ongoing problems with the delivery of Aboriginal housing programs.
- To facilitate the exchange of information between MUNHA's member organizations.
- To provide a forum for review of housing needs and avoid duplication of services (Distasio et al., 2007).

At the time of publication, the *Aboriginal Housing Plan* noted six key issues that needed to be addressed to move an Aboriginal housing agenda forward in Manitoba:

1. Seek a long-term resolution to the issues related to the end of operating agreements.
2. Develop a comprehensive and long-term strategy that ensures the sustainability of existing housing stock.
3. Develop innovative funding solutions to increase operating revenues.



4. Build more person-centered housing units.
5. Provide a broad range of training, education, and outreach services for the benefit of MUNHA staff and members, while also disseminating relevant information to the government and the public.
6. Seek ways to secure funding for the above initiatives (Distasio et al, 2007).

3.1.3 Community Engagement and Recommendations

In 2006, researchers and MUNHA staff conducted extensive engagement with community members and key stakeholders to inform both the *Aboriginal Housing Plan* and the next steps for the organization. The engagement included four open forums; 59 one-on-one interviews; an engagement session with the National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA); and an engagement session with MUNHA membership. One of the key topics explored throughout the engagement was the concept of creating an Aboriginal Housing Authority in Manitoba. Questions posed to participants included:

- *Do you think an Aboriginal Housing Authority (much like Manitoba Housing) could make a difference, and if so, how?*
- *What are some of the needs of Aboriginal peoples that the Housing Authority could address?*

At the time, MUNHA's membership and community members voiced strong support for the creation of an Aboriginal Housing Authority, noting it could provide much-needed assistance with the management and expansion of the housing stock and become the centre for the diffusion of housing information and educational opportunities. Additional commentary on the creation of an Aboriginal Housing Authority included:

“The idea of a centralized waitlist and application process should be explored (through an Aboriginal Housing Authority) ...which would help create a more accurate picture of the housing need. It might also be a way to prioritize and better match the unique needs of individuals based on their circumstances”.

“An Aboriginal Housing Authority might improve the lack of maintenance, and advocate for tenants' rights”.

“With an Aboriginal Housing Authority, tenants could voice their complaints without fear of getting bumped off the list”.

“Would be nice to have an Aboriginal Elder onsite (at an Aboriginal Housing Authority office) (Distasio et. al, 2007, 79-92).



Moreover, a recurring theme throughout the engagement sessions was that self-management of Aboriginal housing, which could occur at a larger scale under the governance of a Housing Authority, would be an impactful step toward self-determination, self-government, and ultimately, reconciliation.

3.1.4 Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA)

As described above, the insights and feedback received during the 2006 MUNHA engagement sessions suggest support for the establishment of an Indigenous Housing Authority in Manitoba. However, by 2010, MUNHA had dissolved, making it challenging for any single Indigenous non-profit housing provider or other non-profit organization to take ownership of the *Aboriginal Housing Plan* or the recommendations contained therein. We have not yet been able to confirm the precise reason(s) for MUNHA's dissolution, but initial discussions suggest it may have been due to inadequate operational funding, which led to minimal benefits for members thereby creating governance and participation challenges. Although time has passed and MUNHA no longer exists, the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations outlined in the *Aboriginal Housing Plan* remain relevant and warrant re-visiting in today's context.

Shortly after the dissolution of MUNHA, in 2011, the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA) was established in response to the changing funding and regulatory landscape of affordable housing in Manitoba (C. Maes-Nino, personal communication, February 7, 2024). MNPHA is not an Indigenous organization, but a founding member, Lawrence Poirier, previous Executive Director of Kinew Housing, was instrumental in ensuring that Indigenous housing providers became a part of MNPHA, as he knew they could benefit from the opportunities the organization affords (C. Maes-Nino, personal communication, February 7, 2024). Following Kinew Housing's lead, the majority of Indigenous non-profit housing providers across Manitoba are now part of MNPHA's membership.

MNPHA's mission is to support its members to build a thriving, sustainable, non-profit housing sector in Manitoba, by providing:

- Professional development, networking, and knowledge exchanges.
- Information and updates.
- Programs, resources, and services.
- Partnership building (MNPHA, 2024).

In MUNHA's absence, MNPHA has been a valuable resource for non-profit housing providers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. For Indigenous-focused initiatives, MNPHA hosts an annual Indigenous Housing Forum, which provides an opportunity to learn more about housing-related resources and information, share ideas, and network with other Indigenous organizations across the province.

3.1.5 Considerations and Next Steps

Despite an outcome that led to MUNHA's dissolution, through their engagement sessions, MUNHA heard and compiled valuable information that can inform how an Indigenous Housing Authority could best meet the needs of Manitoba's Indigenous non-profit housing sector. One of the overarching goals of this needs assessment is to learn from and build upon the extensive work conducted by MUNHA.



3.2 Aboriginal Housing Management Association

The Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) was established in 1996 with a mission to lead and advance housing rights for all Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia (BC) (AHMA, 2024). AHMA is recognized as the first grassroots “For Indigenous, By Indigenous”¹ provincial housing authority in Canada. Together, the organization’s 55 member organizations manage 95% of all off-reserve Indigenous housing units in BC, and AHMA administers housing funds for almost 10,000 Indigenous individuals and families living in urban, rural, and northern parts of the province (AHMA, 2024).

3.2.1 The Creation of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association

In 1993, the federal government (through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) announced that it would stop building new ‘Urban Native’ housing units and devolve all responsibility for social housing to the provinces. In response, a collective of Indigenous housing providers in BC came together to form the Urban Native Housing Societies of BC, which eventually evolved into a not-for-profit society known as the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA).

Between 2004 and 2006, following a series of negotiations, AHMA and the Province of BC signed an interim self-management agreement, the first of its kind in Canada. Through this agreement, BC Housing transferred the management of 754 BC Housing units to AHMA, the beginning of a 10-year devolution period. This transfer marked the first step towards AHMA’s goal of complete Indigenous self-management of urban Indigenous social housing. By 2012, all provincial Indigenous housing programs, including 2,666 off-reserve Indigenous social housing units, had been transferred to AHMA and its members through the signing of the first-ever *Aboriginal Social Housing Management Agreement* (ASHMA) (AHMA, 2024). An AHMA representative (N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024) noted that their members have always had a “good track record” when it comes to the management of housing, which played to AHMA’s advantage when negotiating the initial agreements with BC Housing. During the negotiations, most of their members’ assets were well-maintained and in good condition, with “only one organization that had fallen into arrears.”

Not only did AHMA and its members receive housing units and the responsibility for the administration of social housing funds, but BC Housing committed to helping build AHMA’s capacity to manage the funds and develop new social housing units in the future. The literature attests (Olanubi, O. & Maes-Nino, C., forthcoming, 2024; Rickert, E. & Keeler., 2009; Walker, 2008) that this type of knowledge transfer and capacity building alongside a transfer of assets and responsibilities is key to ensuring a successful devolution process. Across Canada, examples of successful devolution exist; however, all too often, devolved organizations do not have adequate funding or staffing to replicate the functions previously performed by the government (Rickert, E. & Keeler, E., 2009). Responsibilities of this magnitude cannot be effectively transferred without adequate funding, planning, and training – all of which are viewed as the responsibility of the government (Walker, R., 2008).

¹ Throughout this paper, the phrase “For Indigenous, By Indigenous” is used to describe any initiative that is Indigenous designed, owned and operated, with a focus on people and services for Indigenous households. This definition is derived from the proposal put forth by the Indigenous Caucus of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association to the Government of Canada for the creation of a *For Indigenous, By Indigenous Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*.



In BC, the devolution of the responsibility for Indigenous social housing to AHMA is viewed as a success. As Ruth Williams, president of the Kamloops Native Housing Society stated, “As housing providers, we want housing solutions for Aboriginal people, and we believe that when we have a team of Aboriginal providers and managers such as AHMA, we can feel connected as a group while incorporating our traditional values in the delivery of affordable housing” (BC Government, 2013). Devolution can be an effective and productive process, but an AHMA representative (N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024) reminds readers that those early negotiations between the Urban Native Housing Societies of BC and BC Housing took a long time, with the entire devolution process taking nearly 20 years of collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and problem-solving. Reaching consensus and an agreed-upon way forward does not occur overnight. The level of effort, determination, and dedication that went into the Indigenous housing devolution process in BC cannot be overstated and is an important consideration if a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority were to pursue a similar transfer of social housing assets and duties in the future.

3.2.2 Role and Progress

AHMA staff do not have direct relationships with tenants, but they work closely with Indigenous housing providers across BC (their members). Today, AHMA’s membership consists of 55 Indigenous housing organizations and service providers who oversee 5,500 units that collectively house an estimated 8,700 Indigenous individuals living in urban, rural, and northern regions of BC. AHMA members provide units across the housing continuum, including homeless shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, assisted living facilities, and affordable housing. Many members offer wraparound support services, including homelessness prevention, parenting skills, mental health programs, and substance use support. Currently, AHMA members make up over one-third of Indigenous housing providers across Canada. As Canada’s first grassroots provincial Indigenous housing authority, AHMA is recognized as a leading expert on urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing across the country.

One of AHMA’s key roles is to administer operational funding to its members. AHMA is also in the process of administering capital funding for approximately 2,097 new units in development (N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024). As an Indigenous organization, AHMA brings a cultural component to its relationship with its members, which is exemplified through its creation of *Indigenizing Housing: A Guide to Providing Culturally Appropriate Housing for Aboriginal Communities in British Columbia*. Grounded in input from AHMA’s membership, this guide provides ideas for consideration when planning, designing, and operating housing to meet the unique needs of Indigenous residents (Fineblit, 2015).

In summary, **AHMA’s key roles** include:

- Administering operating funding to its 55 members (housing organizations and service providers).
- Administering capital funding for new builds.
- Conducting audits for member organizations.
- Negotiating operating budgets for member organizations, ensuring each has the funding they require to fulfill their mandate.



- Acting as a collective voice on behalf of members, recognizing that the needs of members in northern BC are very different from those of their Vancouver-based members.
- Conducting and disseminating housing-related research.
- Working closely with BC Housing on the pre-development tasks for new off-reserve Indigenous non-profit housing units.
- Advocating (primarily at the federal level) for increased investment in off-reserve Indigenous housing across BC and Canada.

3.2.3 Governance Structure

Over the years, AHMA has gone through multiple iterations of its governance structure. Initially, their Board consisted of only AHMA members. During the devolution negotiations, BC Housing flagged that the Board could not be 100% membership, as Board members would be accessing the operating funds that AHMA would be administering. As a result, the Board composition shifted to four independent arms-length members and seven AHMA members. Today, AHMA's Board is fully independent from AHMA's membership, which entirely avoids any perceived conflict of interest. Under this new governance structure, there is a Governance Committee, which includes three AHMA members, elected by their fellow members. The role of the Governance Committee is to elect Board members, evaluate Board members' performance, and bring forth any issues, concerns, questions, etc. from the membership. At the time of writing, this governance structure has been in place for five years and is viewed as an effective structure by staff, the Board, and the membership. There is no perceived conflict of interest, and AHMA's membership remains involved, informed, and heard by the Board through the Governance Committee (N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024).

3.2.4 Staffing Structure

The first employee at AHMA was their Chief Financial Officer (CFO), who remains with AHMA to this day. Shortly thereafter, AHMA brought on a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Once the agreements with BC Housing were signed, several portfolio managers were hired to manage the operating agreements, and a finance team was created to conduct financial reviews for their members. According to an AHMA representative (N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024), there was a steep learning curve toward efficiently managing the sheer volume of operating agreements. However, over time, processes and procedures became well-established. Today, AHMA has full autonomy over the agreements, with BC Housing taking a backseat. Their staffing structure has also expanded to include communications, training and evaluation, asset management, and policy analysts.

3.2.5 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Based on first-hand experience, AHMA offers the following insights on the devolution process as it relates to the transfer of Indigenous social housing units and programs from the province to an Indigenous Housing Authority:

- Successful devolution is a lengthy, ongoing process, unfolding over decades. Both the Indigenous Housing Authority and the province must commit to staying the course despite inevitable setbacks.
- An Indigenous Housing Authority must insist on adequate provincial support for training and capacity building over time.
- An Indigenous Housing Authority should take on responsibility in a staged, gradual manner.
- An Indigenous Housing Authority should embrace a status-blind, apolitical, pan-Indigenous model and serve all Indigenous people.
- An Indigenous Housing Authority will best serve its constituency by adopting a flexible governance model that allows for adaptation to local conditions and needs.
- An Indigenous Housing Authority should adopt a strong responsive governance structure that includes a separate regulatory branch.
- An Indigenous Housing Authority requires an internal champion and a champion within the provincial government - individuals who truly believe that this type of systemic change is possible.
- An Indigenous Housing Authority should seek long-term, sustainable funding sources apart from government programs (Rickert, E. & Keeler, E., 2009; N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024).

3.2.6 British Columbia Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy

The *British Columbia (BC) Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*, commissioned by AHMA and published in 2022, addresses housing needs for off-reserve Indigenous people in BC over a 10-year horizon. The strategy is the result of extensive engagement among AHMA members, tenants, stakeholders, government agencies, and Indigenous organizations. The report uses information gathered to identify gaps in existing programs, services, and housing needs. Based on the information obtained, it sets forth an actionable strategy with a clear vision statement, objectives, principles, strategic actions, implementation costs, roles and responsibilities, and reporting requirements (AHMA, 2022).

The report anticipates a need for **\$7.3 billion** over **10 years** from federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and the Indigenous housing sector, to meet the housing needs of urban, rural, and northern Indigenous communities in BC. Investments could include money, land contributions, preferential financing rates, tax exemptions, and development-cost-charge waivers. The strategy concludes with a business case for investing in Indigenous housing. Currently, \$42.4 million in government investments are made annually in Indigenous housing units managed by AHMA members. A social return on investment



analysis found that from that investment, over \$314 million in social and economic value was produced. In other words, for every \$1 invested in Indigenous housing in BC, there is a \$7.40 social return on investment (AHMA, 2022).

AHMA hopes that the *BC Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Strategy* “will be considered a model for other provinces” (AHMA, 2022) and could be considered as such in the Manitoba context. Provincially, Indigenous people account for 5.9% of BC’s population and 18% of Manitoba’s population (Statistics Canada, 2021), shedding light on the need for a MB Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Strategy, building upon AHMA’s existing framework. This type of strategy could identify local Indigenous housing needs, objectives, and associated costs, providing a strong foundation for future negotiations with all levels of government.

3.2.7 Other Relevant Indigenous Initiatives in BC

BC also has legislation and a one-of-a-kind Indigenous housing-specific funding program aimed at improving the standard of living for all Indigenous people in the province. A few notable initiatives include:

3.2.7.1 BC Transformation Change Accord

In 2005, the Province of BC and leaders of Indigenous organizations signed the *BC Transformative Change Accord*, a document that established both the Province and Indigenous leaders’ commitment to closing the gap between the standard of living enjoyed by the majority of Canadians and the current low standard of living experienced by Indigenous people. At the time, and to this day, the provision and access to safe, affordable, and adequate housing remains an essential part of closing this gap.

3.2.7.2 Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund

First announced in 2019, the *Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund* (IHF), was the Province of BC’s commitment to invest \$550 million over 10 years to support the construction and ongoing operation of 1,750 new units of Indigenous social housing both on and off-reserve. In Budget 2023, the Province committed an additional \$1.3 billion to the IHF for another 1,750 units, bringing the total to \$1.85 billion for the construction of 3,500 new Indigenous housing units by 2029. This program aims to support Indigenous families, seniors, individuals, and persons with disabilities.

The development and construction of projects under this funding program are led by BC Housing, in partnership with AHMA, non-profit housing providers, Indigenous housing societies, and First Nations (on-reserve). An AHMA representative (N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024) shared that 80% of the construction costs for all new Indigenous non-profit housing units in BC are covered by the Province (primarily through the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund), with Indigenous housing providers bringing 20% of the capital cost in the form of tax waivers, municipal fee waivers, land equity, etc.

3.2.7.3 British Columbia Bill 41

In December 2019, BC became the first province in Canada to pass legislation to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). BC’s Bill 41 affirms and recognizes the inherent rights and freedoms of Indigenous Peoples and the minimum standards that are expected to ensure those rights are protected. Through this Bill, the Province has committed to:



- Consulting with Indigenous groups when making decisions that may affect their Indigenous rights.
- Pursuing and achieving reconciliation.
- Adopting, implementing, and ensuring consistency of British Columbia’s law with UNDRIP, specifically concerning the Indigenous right to self-determination.
- Addressing and closing the gap on the significant disadvantages of, and inequalities facing, Indigenous people concerning housing when compared to other Canadian citizens.

3.2.8 Considerations and Next Steps

If Indigenous housing providers in Manitoba would like to see an Indigenous Housing Authority model like AHMA’s realized, it is recommended that the future Steering Committee or Leadership Team continue these conversations with AHMA representatives. Their first-hand knowledge, expertise, and insights offer a wealth of information that could be drawn upon. Manitoba “does not need to reinvent the wheel”, as AHMA is open to knowledge sharing and providing support along the way (N. Laarif, personal communication, February 9, 2024).

Following AHMA’s lead, an important next step could be to initiate the creation of a MB Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, clearly identifying the urgent and unmet housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous people across the province. AHMA has encouraged other provinces to build upon their strategy’s existing framework, providing Manitoba with a solid starting point.

Similar to how municipalities were required to prepare a *Plan to End Homelessness* before the federal government could distribute Reaching Home funds, it appears as though creating a provincial *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* could be the key to unlocking each province’s portion of the \$4 billion in federal funding proposed for the *National Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*.

3.3 Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

3.3.1 The Creation of the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

The Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) is an apolitical corporation with a mandate “to provide safe and affordable housing to urban and rural First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people living off-reserve in Ontario” (OAHS, 2024). Their vision is to lead the design, development, and delivery of a sustainable and culturally appropriate continuum of housing.

The OAHS's work is guided by ten values:

- Indigenous – includes ‘identity’, ‘world view’, ‘sense of belonging’, ‘connection to land’, ‘ways of knowing’, and ‘culture’ – in everyday good living and traditional practices
- Respect
- Environmental stewardship
- Social economy and returns
- Life cycle fit (housing requirement based on age and stage)
- Inclusivity – includes issues of geography, gender, etc.
- Commitment to excellence
- Promotion of health and well-being
- Self-determination in housing
- Community empowerment through skills enhancement and transfer (OAHS, 2024)

The OAHS's work is guided by four strategic goals:

1. Establish policy based on community needs for long-term development and delivery of urban and rural housing and related services.
2. Achieve economic self-sufficiency.
3. Address gaps and ensure culturally appropriate, responsible integration of services within the housing continuum.
4. Ensure excellence in the provision of housing to the Indigenous community (OAHS, 2024).

The OAHS stemmed from an initial discussion in 1992 among grassroots organizations that serve First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people living off-reserve in Ontario, to determine the need for affordable, adequate, and suitable housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals. From this initial discussion, a Steering Committee was formed to carry the conversation forward. A few years later, on September 1, 1994, the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services Corporation was incorporated, with two representatives from each organization forming the Board of Directors, plus one additional Board member who was chosen to be the Chair. Today, the OAHS Board includes representation from three of the largest off-reserve Indigenous organizations in Ontario – the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). The OAHS attests that their collaboration across organizations is key to understanding the diverse needs of urban Indigenous people across Ontario (OAHS, 2024).

3.3.2 Role and Progress

From 2006 to 2009, the Province of Ontario devolved the operating agreements and property management of all Urban Native housing units and Rural Native housing units (1,600 units in total) to the OAHS. OAHS leadership (J. Marchand, personal communication, May 8, 2024) shared that it was this asset transfer that allowed the OAHS to truly 'take off'. In the first few years following the asset transfer, the Province of Ontario maintained close control over the properties and operating agreements (i.e. how to use the funding). However, once trust had been established, the OAHS negotiated for full control and ownership of the properties, including any associated operating agreements, and an agreement was ultimately reached.

Today, with over 30 years of experience and over 3,300 homes equivalent to \$800 million in capital assets, plus an additional 1,700 units in various stages of development, the OAHS is the largest Indigenous non-profit housing provider in Ontario. The OAHS noted (J. Marchand, personal communication, May 8, 2024) that over the years, frequent and meaningful engagement with community members, member organizations, and key stakeholders (including government) has been key to ensuring their work aligns with current housing needs. To expand on this, OAHS member organizations have clearly expressed the need for Indigenous ownership and control of housing, and that allocation of funding specific to the off-reserve Indigenous community and appropriate targeting of those units should always involve input from the member organizations (OAHS, 2024). The OAHS is committed to owning and facilitating access to housing across the housing continuum, including home ownership, market, low-end of market (affordable), rent-geared-to-income, supportive, and transitional housing.

In the OAHS Indigenous Housing Authority model, the OAHS owns the assets (except those offered through their home ownership program), and in many cases, local Friendship Centres are the operators, providing wraparound supports to tenants. When building new units, the OAHS takes the lead on the development and then issues a Request-For-Proposals (RFP) to secure a future operator (J. Marchand, personal communication, May 8, 2024).

3.3.3 Governance and Staffing Structure

The OAHS has corporate offices in Sault Ste. Marie, Dryden, Peterborough, and Hamilton, Ontario. As mentioned above, the OAHS Board of Directors is comprised of representatives appointed by their Director Member Organizations, including the Métis Nation of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, and the Ontario Native Women's Association.

As a Corporation, the OAHS operates within the guidelines of its legal contracts, current legislation, and within the policy established by the Board of Directors. An external Auditor is appointed by the Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting to perform a consolidated audit. The Board of Directors has implemented an Audit Committee to be the link between the external Auditor and the Board. The Committee is made up of a minimum of two individual Directors from different representative Director Member Organizations, as well as two qualified, independent members from the community. This audit is performed annually and presented to the Board of Directors for their acceptance. In addition, financial statements, budgets (as required), and financial projections are presented at each Board meeting. In addition, the Board of Directors is responsible for allocating new units geographically across the province and ensuring the existing stock is well-maintained (OAHS, 2024).

The OAHS currently has 145 staff including an Executive Director, Finance Team, Communications Team, Policy Analysts, Maintenance Team, and a Development Services Division (an Indigenous Non-Profit Development arm). The OAHS (J. Marchand, personal communication, May 8, 2024) shared that operating non-profit housing is much more impactful when you have an economy of scale. Owning properties enables an organization to borrow against its assets to build more homes to meet the needs of the community. Economic self-sufficiency is one of OAHS's main organizational goals, and as OAHS leadership so poignantly stated, "Culture is ultimately strengthened through economic self-sufficiency and independence".

3.3.4 Considerations and Next Steps

The creation of the OAHS illustrates that new Indigenous Housing Authorities can successfully stem from a small group of concerned individuals collectively trying to meet a recognized need. Representatives from key Indigenous organizations and the Province of Ontario were committed to solving a specific issue, which has led to what is now the largest Indigenous non-profit housing provider in Ontario. The OAHS shows us that an Indigenous Housing Authority can be a tangible solution to addressing an urban Indigenous housing shortage.

During our initial engagement for this project, the OAHS shared that asset ownership and control are key to an organization's economic sustainability. For their organization, this began with property management of provincially owned units, which eventually led to asset ownership and control of existing operating agreements. A lesson learned from the OAHS is that a diversity of units within an organization's housing portfolio will lead to greater economic sustainability and enable the organization to pivot with changing government priorities. The OAHS also shared that it is important to have allies in the housing sector. For the OAHS, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) and the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) have been critical allies over the years. Here in Manitoba, similar allies could include the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA) and the Winnipeg Housing and Renewal Corporation (WHRC). It is recommended that if a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority is pursued, the future Steering Committee or Leadership Team continue to connect with the OAHS. OAHS leadership (J. Marchand, personal communication, May 8, 2024) noted they would be happy to assist, offering their knowledge and expertise along the way.

A large graphic illustration on a gold background. It features several white-outlined houses of varying shapes and sizes, some overlapping. The houses are stylized with simple lines, representing a community or neighborhood. The number '4' is positioned in the upper right corner of the page.

4

**A MANITOBA
INDIGENOUS HOUSING
AUTHORITY IN TODAY'S
CONTEXT**

4 A Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority in Today's Context

Since the dissolution of MUNHA in 2010, there have been ongoing discussions within the affordable housing sector on the topic of a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority in Manitoba. What could it look like? What role could it play? What functions could it provide? Who will take the lead on its creation? Summarizing these conversations, it appears as though there may be three different models under discussion, including:



An advocacy, training, and capacity-building arm (may or may not be attached to an existing non-profit organization)

Example:
Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA)

Example:
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) Indigenous Caucus



An umbrella organization that administers operational and capital funding to Indigenous non-profit housing providers (may or may not own capital assets and/or have a development arm)

Example:
Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA)

Example:
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS)



An Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation

Example:
M'akola Development Services

Example:
Lu'ma Development Management (LDM)

A **model like MUNHA** excels at providing a one-window approach to housing information, resources, training, and funding opportunities. This model also builds capacity for greater advocacy to the government for funding support for urban Indigenous non-profit housing providers. In many ways, MNPHA has been filling this role since the dissolution of MUNHA; however, creating an Indigenous arm of MNPHA could expand upon this role even further. This model could come to fruition relatively quickly by tapping into and building upon MNPHA's existing structure and expertise. This model would not enable the Indigenous Housing Authority to develop and construct new housing units internally but would have the capacity to powerfully advocate for increased funding commitments for new construction and resources to manage and repair existing units.

The **AHMA or OAHS model** excels at offering the Indigenous non-profit housing sector greater autonomy over their operating funding and increased opportunities for new development and acquisition of additional capital assets (through devolution or otherwise). This model would align with the objectives of UNDRIP and Indigenous principles of self-determination and self-government. An Indigenous Housing Authority with this type of structure may also be more capable of accessing funding through the upcoming *National Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*. However, as with AHMA and the OAHS, this model may require years of negotiations with the provincial government, and a commitment from Manitoba Housing to provide training, capacity building, and support before fully transferring over the responsibilities of management and/or ownership of social housing assets.

For this discussion paper, a development corporation or development firm is defined as an organization that is responsible for the development of new or the redevelopment of existing urban areas. A development corporation is made up of a wide range of staff who help see development projects move from concept through to construction. This may include employees with expertise in land development, planning, engineering, architecture, finance, accounting, real estate, construction, and more. As such, the **Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation model** excels at providing an atmosphere that encourages the number of Indigenous-led housing options to expand across the province. This model could help increase the capacity of Indigenous organizations to secure land, partner with other organizations, and facilitate the development of new housing projects. The demand for this model in Manitoba has grown in recent years, particularly as the number of affordable housing units diminishes and the need for more culturally appropriate, affordable housing increases.

Many of the capital funding programs through the *National Housing Strategy* are designed to flow directly to a non-profit (including Indigenous-specific opportunities). Because we do not have an apolitical Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation here in Manitoba, many smaller Indigenous non-profits have been applying for these capital funds. While capital funding opportunities have increased through the *National Housing Strategy* in recent years, the capacity of Indigenous non-profit organizations to acquire land and develop new housing in a timely and efficient manner remains limited. An Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation would have the mandate and ability to purchase, hold, develop, and construct new capital assets, with development expertise available in-house. If desired, these assets could be held within the corporation. Alternatively, they could be handed over to an existing Indigenous non-profit housing provider once built and ready for occupancy (similar to the Indigenous development arm of the OAHS).

During the initial community engagement to inform this project, Indigenous non-profit housing providers voiced a need and desire for an Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation in Manitoba, similar to Lu'ma Development Management in BC. Housing providers would like to see a status and membership blind development corporation that could create housing for all Indigenous community members, without the gaps in funding and services that are all too often created through muddled jurisdictions. Lu'ma Development Management (a partnership between Lu'ma Native Housing Society and Terra Social Purpose Real Estate) has worked with Indigenous groups across Western Canada to build hundreds of on and off-reserve housing units, responding to the urgent and unmet needs of communities in a culturally informed and efficient way. Manitoba's Indigenous non-profit housing providers would like to review the Lu'ma Development

Management model and governance structure in greater detail to see if and how a similar model could be established in the Manitoba context.

Regardless of which model is selected, the sector has stressed that an Indigenous Housing Authority must be supplied with adequate resources to perform the functions it is mandated to carry out – sustainably, over the long term. This will require ongoing discussions and negotiations with all levels of government. Moreover, regardless of the model selected, we will all need to work together to create better pathways for Manitoba’s Indigenous non-profit housing providers to access their portion of the \$4 billion federal commitment for the implementation of the *National Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*.

.....

The following **Case Studies** expand on the examples provided above, as they have not been described in detail in previous sections:

Canadian Housing and Renewal Association’s (CHRA) Indigenous Caucus

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association’s (CHRA) Indigenous Caucus was established in 2013 to recognize the large number of Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations who were CHRA members and who wanted to work together for better housing for urban, rural, and northern First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. The Indigenous Housing Caucus develops and provides Indigenous policy advice on housing and homelessness-related topics. The group meets in person once a year at the Indigenous Housing Caucus Day, which takes place in conjunction with the National Congress on Housing and Homelessness.

Throughout the year, interests, feedback, advice, and recommendations are communicated to and actioned by CHRA’s Indigenous Caucus Working Group. The Working Group holds monthly virtual meetings to advise on and provide Indigenous perspectives on emerging national housing and homelessness issues. They also provide advocacy support and propose research projects that explore various facets of Indigenous housing and homelessness issues. The Working Group is composed of CHRA members from across the country with expertise in tenant support, building operations, cultural knowledge, and wrap-around services specific to Indigenous-led housing.

The Working Group has been instrumental in documenting and articulating the state of urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing in Canada while providing recommendations to the federal government on a path forward to improve this state. This work has included launching the ‘For Indigenous, By Indigenous’ advocacy campaign, and passing a resolution to support the development of an *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* in Canada, among many other important initiatives (CHRA Indigenous Caucus, 2024).

M'akola Development Services

Based in Victoria BC, M'akola Development Services is an Indigenous-based housing and community planning and development consulting firm with over 30 years of experience in planning, developing, and operating multi-family housing projects. Their mission is to provide “professional planning, research, and development support; build affordable homes and mixed-use projects; and build capacity and invest in Indigenous communities” (M'akola Development Services, 2024).

M'akola Development Services is a non-profit development arm of the M'akola Housing Society, which provides safe, affordable housing for families of Indigenous ancestry who are in core need of housing in urban centres on Vancouver Island. Over the years, the M'akola Housing Society expanded to not only own and manage housing but to provide the development services required to construct the housing projects led by their organization while also providing these same development services to other non-profit organizations with mandates that align with the M'akola Housing Society's goals.

M'akola Development Services is a non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with significant related experience, skills, passion, and understanding of the needs of both on and off-reserve Indigenous families.

Lu'ma Development Management

Based in North Vancouver, BC, Lu'ma Development Management is an Indigenous-led social-purpose real estate development company. After collaborating on projects together for over 30 years, Lu'ma Native Housing Society and Terra Social Purpose Real Estate formed Lu'ma Development Management in 2017. Lu'ma Development Management builds safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous communities (Lu'ma Development Management, 2024).

Lu'ma Native Housing Society was first incorporated in 1980 and has since evolved to provide a broad range of services that improve social determinants of health for Indigenous communities. Lu'ma develops, owns, and manages more than 1,250 affordable housing units. Lu'ma Development Management is an arms-length development corporation of the Lu'ma Group of Companies (see **Figure 1** below) that assists with the development of Lu'ma's properties, while also offering development services to other non-profit organizations across Canada.

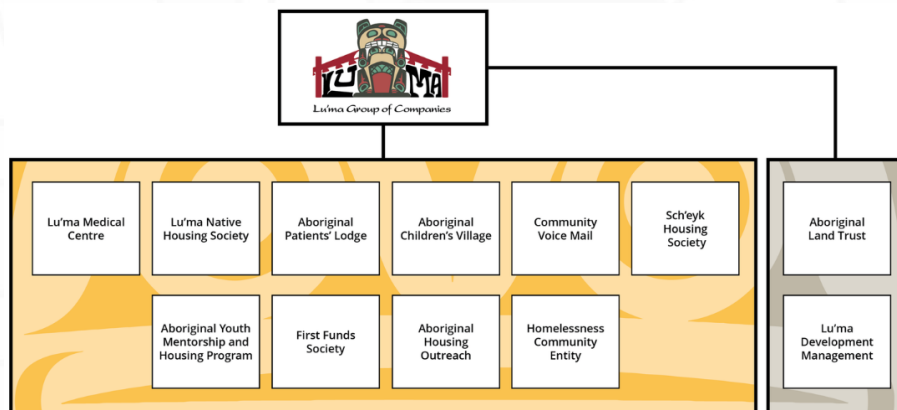


Figure 1: Lu'ma Group of Companies

5

A white line-art illustration of several houses of varying heights and shapes, arranged in a row. The houses are drawn with simple outlines, and the background is a solid yellow color.

**URBAN INDIGENOUS
NON-PROFIT HOUSING
IN MANITOBA**

5 Urban Indigenous Non-Profit Housing in Manitoba

While this paper discusses potential solutions for addressing the housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous people in Manitoba, it is important to note there are several urban and rural Indigenous non-profit housing providers across the province currently doing incredible work in this space. A goal of this needs assessment is to highlight their contributions to the non-profit housing sector, identify solutions to support their buildings and operations, and advance their unique goals and aspirations for the future.

The following chart provides the name of each Indigenous housing provider, the community in which they are located, and the number of units they own and/or operate. The majority of these housing providers are MNPHA members, but not all. We recognize there are likely additional Indigenous non-profit housing providers we are not aware of, and for that, we apologize. We will continue to update this list as new information becomes available.

Table 2: Urban and Rural Indigenous Non-Profit Housing Providers in Manitoba

Organization	Community	Number of Units
Brandon Friendship Centre	Brandon	78 units, UNHP + sponsor managed
Sagemace Housing	Camperville	155 units, sponsor managed
Anicinabe Housing Corporation	Dauphin	80 units, UNHP
Flin Flon Aboriginal Friendship Centre	Flin Flon	20 units (with a plan to develop more)
Portage Aboriginal Housing Inc.	Portage la Prairie	68 units, UNHP + sponsor managed
Tyro Housing Inc.	Selkirk	28 units, UNHP
Elbert Chartrand Friendship Centre Housing	Swan River	384 units*
Wabowden Housing	Wabowden	62 units
Keewatin Housing Association	Thompson	78 units
Dakota-Ojibway Tribal Council Housing Authority (DOTC)	Winnipeg	125 units
Dial-a-Life Housing	Winnipeg	60 units
Kanata Housing Corporation	Winnipeg	85 units, UNHP
Kekinan Centre Inc.	Winnipeg	60 units
Kinew Housing Inc.	Winnipeg	430 units
Payuk Inter-Tribal Co-Op Ltd.	Winnipeg	42 units
Indigenous Women's Healing Centre	Winnipeg	58 units
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre	Winnipeg	22 units
Wahbung Abinoonjiiag	Winnipeg	2 units + 26 units under construction
Sunshine House & 2Spirit Manitoba	Winnipeg	32 units in development
TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS		1885 units

***Note:** We have been informed that Elbert Chartrand Friendship Centre Housing currently operates less than 384 units - the exact number of units will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Of the 1,885 Indigenous non-profit housing units listed above, 1,028 units are tied to operating funding agreements under the Urban Native Housing Program (UNHP), and 764 units are sponsor-managed (C. Maes-Nino, personal communication, February 8, 2024).

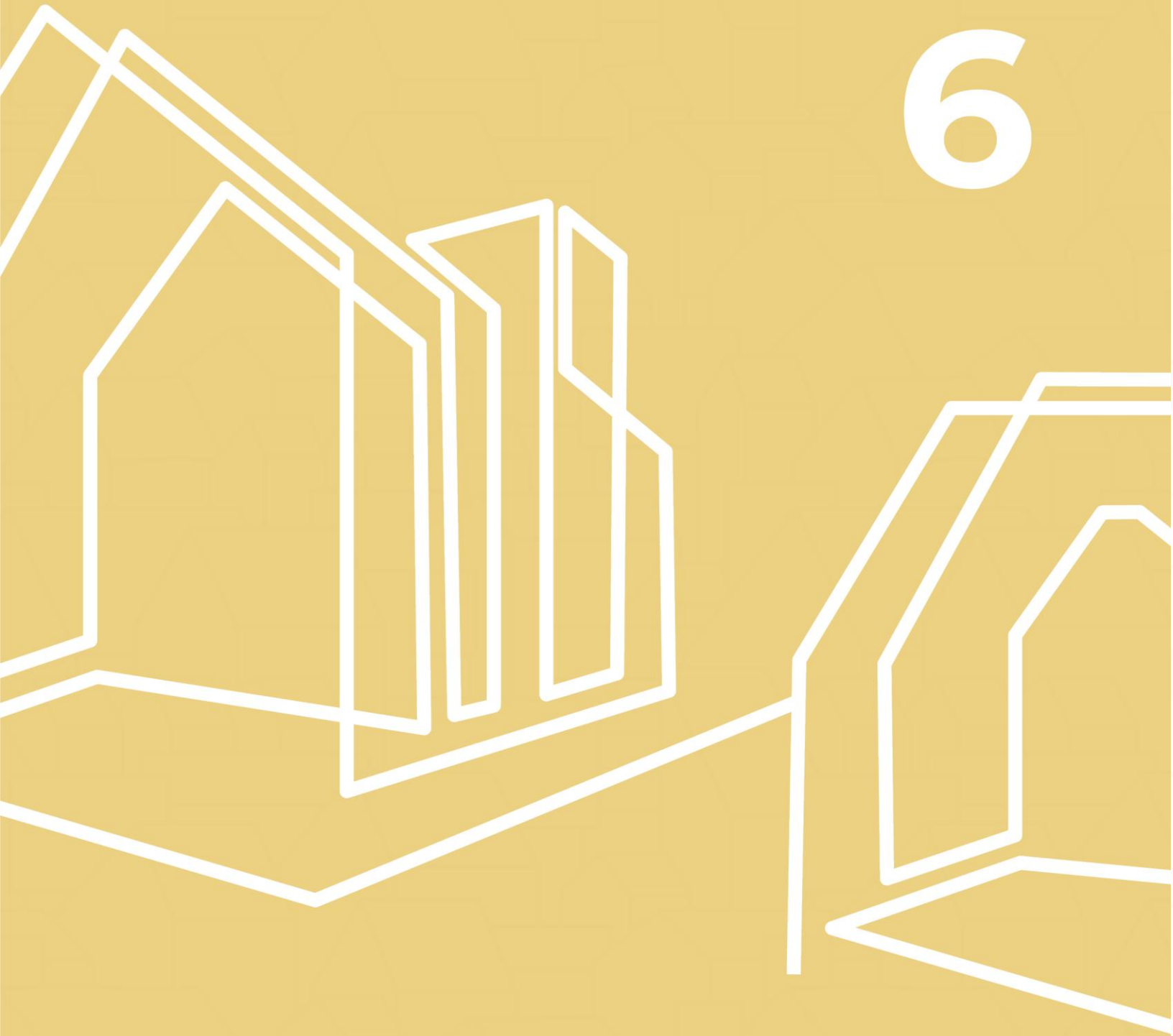
In Manitoba, the Province of Manitoba administers the UNHP, a social housing program in urban areas intended to fulfill the housing needs of Indigenous households. The program enables Indigenous non-profit housing providers to offer subsidized rental housing in the private market. Each housing provider directly accepts housing applications and manages their housing portfolio. Most Indigenous housing providers signed their operating agreements in the 1980s and 90s, and many are starting to come to an end, with the final agreements anticipated to expire by 2040 (Bernas et al., 2023). The UNHP program and the ending of existing operating agreements are discussed further in **Section 6.7**.

The Sponsor Managed Social Housing Program was established in Manitoba to provide adequate publicly owned rental housing accommodation for individuals and families of low income within their financial capacity (Government of Manitoba, 2024). Under this program, all housing units continue to be owned by Manitoba Housing but are 'sponsor-managed' by various non-profit housing organizations, meaning that a sponsor organization is contracted to provide all services and resources related to building management. Anecdotally, it is understood that taking on sponsor-managed units can be challenging for housing providers. Challenges can include: "funding gaps and inflexible processes for maintenance and capital improvements; issues with building security; difficulty finding, training, and retaining staff in non-profit housing, and; difficulty for tenants and those who support tenants in knowing how to access the housing and how to support the tenants within it" (Olanubi, O. & Maes-Nino, C., forthcoming, 2024). It has also been shared that the limited funding available through these agreements can only support a traditional property management approach. Additional resources are required for housing providers to be holistic in supporting tenants through a harm-reduction lens.

In addition to the Indigenous non-profit housing providers with Urban Native and sponsor-managed units, several other Indigenous non-profit organizations are beginning to offer housing solutions to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. The chart above identifies a few, although, it is important to note that there are likely many others proceeding with similar work but who may still be conceptualizing a project or are unknown to the writer. These particular units are not tracked by any level of government unless the organization has entered into an operating or funding agreement with Manitoba Housing, which is not guaranteed. This makes identifying these units extremely challenging. Furthermore, these organizations often struggle to build capacity due to a lack of assistance in discovering local resources and assistance available to non-profit housing providers, as they may or may not be connected to the broader non-profit housing network.

Given the disproportionate number of Indigenous households (19%) compared to non-Indigenous households (13%) living in core housing need in Manitoba (Statistics Canada, 2021), there is an urgency to identify sustainable, long-term solutions to address: the ending of UNHP operating agreements; resourcing Indigenous providers with sponsor-managed units; and assisting new Indigenous housing providers as they take the lead on development projects to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. The creation of a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority could be a solution to some of these challenges; however, if done incorrectly, it could be yet another layer of bureaucracy and additional work for Indigenous organizations interested in accessing funding but at capacity with the existing services they provide. That being said, this complication could potentially be avoided by internalizing development capacity within the Indigenous Housing Authority, including the employment of project managers, planners, architects, engineers, builders, property managers, etc.

6



A JURISDICTIONAL REVIEW

6 A Jurisdictional Review

The following section examines current government legislation, structures, roles, and policies, exploring how pathways could be made, or implications could arise in the creation of a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority in Manitoba.

6.1 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

In Canada, on June 21, 2021, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDRIP) received Royal Assent and came into force. The legislation advances the implementation of the Declaration as a key step in renewing the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples.

UNDRIP provides a framework for reconciliation, health, and peace, as well as harmonious and cooperative relations based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination, and good faith. The Declaration provides a legislative framework to ensure sustained and continued efforts to uphold the human rights of Indigenous peoples now and into the future.

Support for Indigenous-led organizations, like an Indigenous Housing Authority, is exemplified by **Article 21**, as it states, “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” (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007). This support is further grounded by **Article 23**, “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, **housing**, and other economic and social programs affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programs through their institutions” (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007).

On June 21, 2023, Canada released the *UNDRIP Action Plan (Action Plan)*, consistent with an obligation outlined in the *Act*. The *Action Plan* includes 181 measures, providing a roadmap to achieve the objectives of the Declaration, aiming to advance transformative change over the next five years to 2028. Although these measures are directed at the federal government, there is mention of collaboration with provincial, municipal, and Indigenous governments to advance the objectives, many of which speak to “self-government arrangements, agreements, and constructive arrangements” (Government of Canada, 2024).

6.1.1 Considerations and Next Steps

A federal funding commitment toward the creation and future operations of a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority would illustrate tangible advancement of the UNDRIP objectives here in Manitoba. This type of commitment would reinforce **Article 23** by enabling Indigenous people to be actively involved in developing future housing programs and administering them through their institutions.

6.2 Reclaiming Power and Place

Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) calls for transformative legal and social changes to resolve the crisis that has devastated Indigenous communities across Canada. As documented in *Reclaiming Power and Place*, testimony from family members and survivors of violence bravely discuss a surrounding context marked by multigenerational and intergenerational trauma and marginalization in the form of poverty, **insecure housing or homelessness**, and barriers to education, employment, health care, and cultural support. *Reclaiming Power and Place* includes several Calls for Justice related to housing, but for this discussion paper, only a few have been highlighted below. The fact that many of the Calls for Justice are interconnected with calls for safe, affordable housing illuminates our failure as a nation to ensure this basic human right for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, and the cascading impact this has had on their lives and the lives of their families, friends, and loved ones.

Call for Justice 1.1 “We call upon all governments to ensure that equitable access to basic rights such as employment, **housing**, education, safety, and health care is recognized as a fundamental means of protecting Indigenous and human rights, resourced and supported as rights-based programs founded on substantive equality. **All programs must be no-barrier and must apply regardless of Status or location**”.

Call for Justice 4.6 “We call upon all governments to **immediately commence the construction of new housing and the provision of repairs for existing housing** to meet the housing needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This construction and provision of repairs must ensure that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people have access to housing that is safe, appropriate to geographic and cultural needs, and **available wherever they reside, whether in urban, rural, remote, or Indigenous communities**”.

Call for Justice 4.7 “We call upon all governments to support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of **Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second stage housing**, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are homeless, near homeless, dealing with food insecurity, or in poverty, and who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation. All governments must ensure that shelters, transitional housing, second-stage housing, and services are appropriate to cultural needs and available wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside”.

6.2.1 Considerations and Next Steps

This powerful report deserves the full and undivided attention of all levels of government and should, without fail, ignite immediate action and response to the Calls for Justice. A province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority could be a vehicle to help respond to the Calls for Justice across Manitoba, in collaboration with all levels of government and the Indigenous non-profit housing sector. It is anticipated that a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority would be grounded in a Vision, Mission, and Mandate in alignment with the Calls for Justice, prioritizing housing solutions and supports specifically for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA individuals. Furthermore, a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority would be able to address specific local priorities and unmet needs by partnering with existing community organizations currently doing complementary work in this field.

6.3 Government of Canada, National Housing Strategy Act

In 2019, the Government of Canada legislated the right to housing through the *National Housing Strategy Act*. *The Act* recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of a person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities. *The Act* complements the *National Housing Strategy*, released in 2017, by enforcing a legal obligation of the federal government to execute the *Strategy*.

The *National Housing Strategy* (NHS) is a 10-year, \$82+ billion plan to create new housing supply, modernize existing housing, provide resources to community housing providers, and support innovation and research. The NHS respects government-to-government relationships with Indigenous peoples, commits funds, and is supporting work currently underway for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation partners founded in principles of self-determination, reconciliation, respect, and cooperation. In Federal Budgets 2017 and 2018, the federal government proposed to allocate funding for the co-development of distinctions-based housing strategies for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as follows:

- \$600 million over three years for a *First Nations Housing Strategy* and the repair and construction of housing units on First Nations reserves;
- \$400 million over 10 years to support the *Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy* and the repair/construction of housing units in Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region; and
- \$500 million over 10 years to support a *Métis Nation Housing Strategy*.

Following these funding announcements, Indigenous leaders and housing advocates alike promptly noted that these three strategies would create service gaps. For, none would be able to adequately address the housing needs of Indigenous peoples living in urban, rural, and northern areas – the areas of the country in which the majority (75%) of Indigenous peoples live (Statistics Canada, 2021). To fill this gap, advocates recommended the creation of a national housing strategy for Indigenous peoples living off reserve. This resulted in the development of a *For Indigenous, By Indigenous (FIBI) National Housing Strategy* proposal, calling on the Government of Canada to “acknowledge and support the 45-year history of successful provision of urban native and rural native housing, and to financially support the proposed program elements and investments to continue to meet Indigenous housing needs in urban, rural, and northern parts of Canada” (Indigenous Caucus Working Group, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2018, 4).

6.3.1 Considerations and Next Steps

In response to advocates, in 2022, the Federal Budget committed **\$300 million** to the co-development of a *National Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*. This was followed by the Federal Budget 2023 proposing to allocate **\$4 billion** over seven years starting in 2024-25 for the implementation of the *Strategy* (CMHC, 2024). The federal government notes that the *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* will complement, rather than overlap, with the three existing distinction-based housing strategies: the *First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy* (\$600 million), the *Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy* (\$400 million), and the *Métis Nation Housing Sub Accord* (\$500 million). As of July 2024, it is our understanding that CMHC is currently working with Indigenous partners to co-develop the *Strategy*, which will ultimately be implemented by the National Indigenous Housing Centre, once established.

It is anticipated that the creation of an *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* will encourage intergovernmental cooperation and coordination to address the housing needs of Indigenous peoples living off reserve. The timing for the creation of a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority could be near ideal, as this new entity could provide the vehicle through which the objectives of Canada's *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* are executed in the local context, in collaboration with the provincial government and partner organizations.

6.4 National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc.

In May 2021, a report entitled “Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home” was submitted to the 43rd Parliament, 2nd Session at the House of Commons, stating:

“It has become significantly apparent that the current devolution of housing funding through provinces is preventing housing providers from getting the resources they require to do the work that is so fundamentally needed. While urban, rural, and northern housing jurisdiction is so often devolved to the provinces or municipalities, the funding and policies applied by most of these other governments are not supportive of the unique cultural and social work being carried out by Indigenous housing providers...As such, we require a dedicated national organization to hold the government accountable to these relationships and support them in providing services to all Indigenous peoples” (Casey, 2021, 55).

The May 2021 report further notes that “Indigenous housing providers are asking for an inclusive, Indigenous-led, dedicated approach through the development and funding of a ‘For Indigenous, By Indigenous’ National Housing Centre’ (Casey, 2021). It was envisioned that a centre of this nature could provide advocacy, funding, capacity building, best practices, and planning services for Indigenous housing providers across Canada.

In December 2022, built on years of research (including the aforementioned report) and community engagement, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) Indigenous Caucus, in partnership with AHMA, facilitated the establishment of the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc. (NICHI).

NICHI has been created to “uphold and advance housing as a human right for all Indigenous Peoples living in urban, rural and northern communities from coast-to-coast-to-coast”. NICHI is built on a principle of cooperation and coordination of expertise amongst members, partners, and stakeholders committed to ensuring that no Indigenous person living off-reserve or away from their home community will be left behind because of where they live. To deliver relevant and appropriate services, NICHI believes the best approach is For Indigenous, By Indigenous (NICHI, 2024).

NICHI's values are:

Respect – Respect for each other and upholding self-determination and Indigenous sovereignty. The signatories are autonomous Indigenous organizations that form a coalition to achieve the housing purposes of the coalition.

Support – Through the development of culturally appropriate housing and services, we support the retention and revitalization of our diverse cultures through our respective cultures and traditions, ways of knowing and being, and respect for the land.

Equity – To be respectful of each other and all life; and to ensure that housing is provided to all Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous peoples.

In Fall 2023, the federal government announced that NICHI would be the delivery partner for an initial **\$281.5 million** commitment to Canada's *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*. By partnering with NICHI to administer this funding, the federal government aims to fulfill its mandate to implement UNDRIP and ensure the uninterrupted rollout of Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous housing programs. It is envisioned that NICHI will have the ability to convene hundreds of Indigenous-led housing providers and fill a gap as a national Indigenous coordinating body.

With funding now in place, NICHI is in the process of prioritizing housing-related projects that demonstrate the most need. Applications for both Capital and Capacity & Organizational Development funding were due at the end of January 2024 and a total of 444 applications were submitted from across Canada. Within these, NICHI saw 245 Capital and 199 Capacity & Organizational Development funding stream applications, resulting in an **Expression of Need equivalent to \$2 billion**. It is anticipated that successful proponents will be announced sometime in 2024.

6.4.1 Considerations and Next Steps

In “Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home” (Casey, 2021, 59), AHMA shared that to be ready for the development and implementation of Canada’s *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*, they “decided to invest their funds to develop a *BC Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*”. As detailed earlier in this discussion paper, AHMA’s housing strategy aims to: (1) identify current housing challenges; (2) measure the social and economic impact of the work of Indigenous housing and service providers; (3) assess the housing needs of Indigenous peoples living off reserve in British Columbia; (4) develop a 10-year plan to respond to identified needs; and (5) create an implementation plan that clarifies roles and responsibilities of AHMA, member organizations, funders, and partners” (AHMA, 2022).

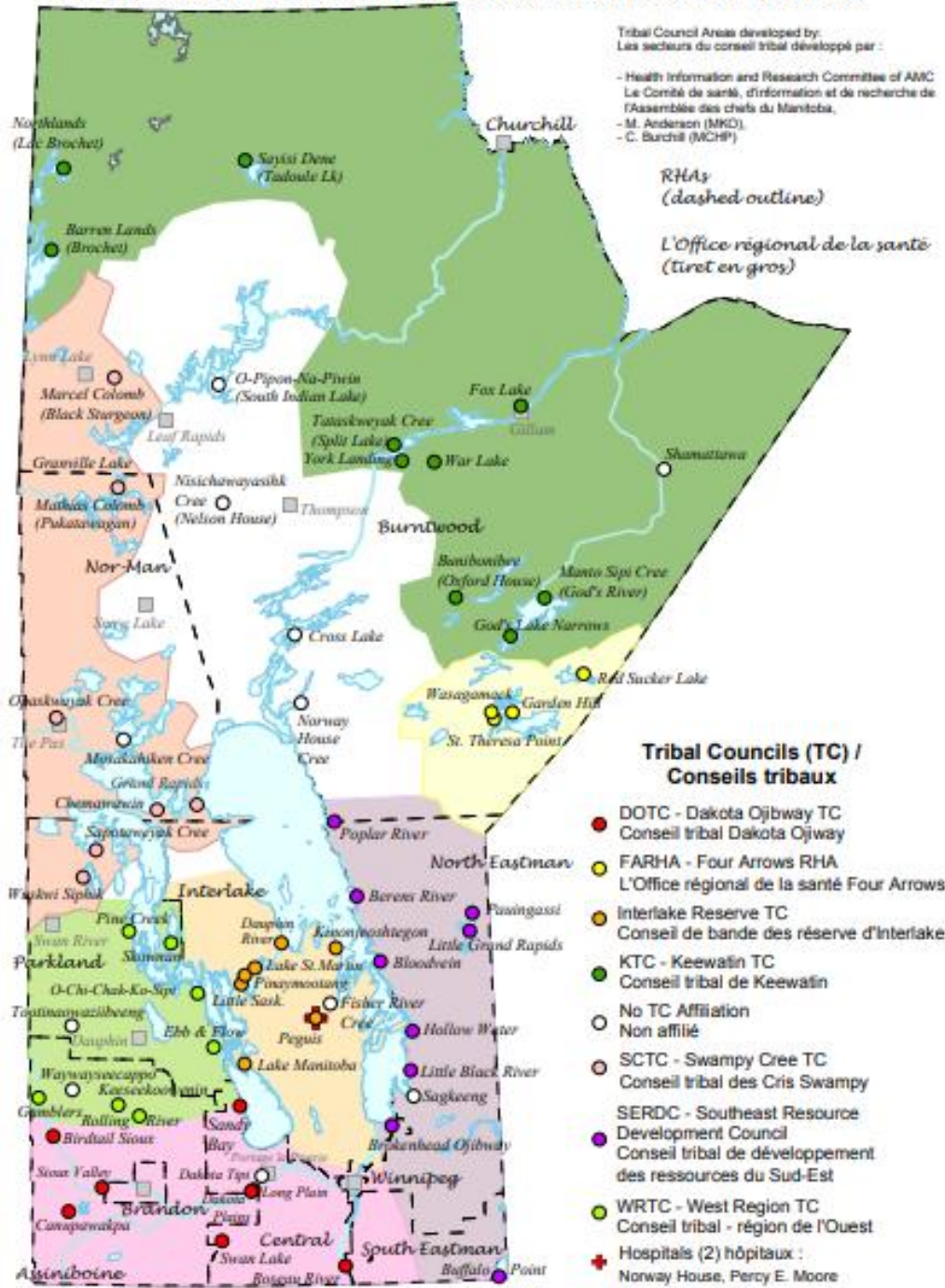
With its province-wide housing needs identified, AHMA is well-positioned to accept and administer funding from NICHl (or the future National Indigenous Housing Centre). A provincial Indigenous Housing Authority in Manitoba could follow suit, taking the lead on the development of a MB *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*, in preparation for the receipt of future housing funds through the federal government’s additional **\$4 billion** commitment to implementing Canada’s *Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* over the next seven years.

6.5 Manitoba First Nations

In Manitoba, there are approximately 164,289 registered First Nation persons, with nearly 43% currently living off reserve (Government of Canada, 2024 (2)). There are 63 First Nations and seven First Nations tribal councils, including:

- Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council
- Interlake Reserves Tribal Council
- Island Lake Tribal Council
- Keewatin Tribal Council
- Southeast Resource Development Council
- Swampy Cree Tribal Council
- West Region Tribal Council

**First Nations Communities and Tribal Councils in Manitoba /
Les communautés des Premières nations et les conseils tribaux au Manitoba**



For more information contact: Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch - Health Surveillance and Analysis, 963-4170 January 2006
Pour plus d'information contacter : Santé Canada, Direction générale de la santé des Premières nations et des Inuit - Direction de la santé, surveillance et l'analyse, 963-4170 janvier 2006



Figure 2: Manitoba First Nation Communities and Tribal Councils

Many of the individual First Nations and Tribal Councils, including Dakota Ojibway, Keewatin, Southeast Resource Development, and West Region, all have their own housing authorities, housing associations, and/or housing advisors to meet the needs of their constituents. Some develop and manage housing both on and off-reserve, while others focus solely on housing-related matters and infrastructure on reserve. For example, the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council Housing Authority Inc. (DOTCHA) caters specifically to families with low to moderate incomes living in urban communities, while the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council has a separate on-reserve housing program.

The Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN) is in the process of building 69 affordable units off-reserve at 380 Young Street, near the University of Winnipeg. This important Indigenous-led housing project will “support Indigenous youth in the pursuit of higher education” (Hoye, B., CBC News 2023). The Treaty One Nation (composed of the seven First Nations who are signatories of the first of the numbered Treaties) is in the process of redeveloping Naawi-Oodena (“centre of the heart and community”), Canada’s largest Indigenous urban economic zone, at the former Kapyong Barracks site in Winnipeg. The redevelopment of Naawi-Oodena, in partnership with the Canada Lands Company, is an unprecedented project in Winnipeg’s recent history. At full build-out, the site could accommodate between 2,300 and 3,000 new homes, including a mix of affordable and market-rate housing (Canada Lands Company, 2024).

First Nations in Manitoba are generally represented by three active political organizations:

- Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC)
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO)
- Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO)

Although housing is not specifically identified within the mission or mandate of any of the three political organizations, housing is directly connected to elements of their work. Each political organization aims to promote, preserve, and protect Aboriginal and Treaty rights, cultures, traditions, economies, and societies, and improve the quality of life for First Nations people. Much of the literature, including Article 21 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), notes that housing is a basic human right, and that access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing is an integral aspect of protecting Indigenous societies and improving their quality of life.

At the time of writing, the Southern Chiefs’ Organization (SCO) is taking the lead on a globally recognized housing and economic development project through their transformation of the Hudson’s Bay Company heritage building in downtown Winnipeg. This project, which has been named Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoon (“it is visible”), will include more than 350 affordable housing units for families and postsecondary students and culturally safe assisted living units for First Nation Elders (SCO, 2024). The building will also include childcare, a museum, a gallery, two restaurants, a health and healing centre, a rooftop garden, and the future Governance House for the Chiefs of the Southern First Nations. This innovative and exciting project will create both social and economic opportunities for the 34 Anishnaabe and Dakota communities in southern Manitoba represented by SCO.



6.5.1 Considerations and Next Steps

Based on a review of the literature available and discussions with key stakeholders, it does not appear as though a provincial Indigenous Housing Authority would impede First Nation off-reserve housing initiatives, but rather, would complement, through the provision of additional culturally appropriate support services, training, capacity building resources, and financing. Moreover, while the individual First Nations, Tribal Councils, and political organizations are mandated to serve their respective constituents, a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority would be pan-Indigenous, providing housing opportunities and resources for all Indigenous peoples across Manitoba.

6.6 Métis Nation Housing

Métis Nation Housing serves as a precedent entity for housing provision in the local context, rooted in self-determination and self-government, with a vision to “support Métis Citizens’ housing needs and priorities and help provide them with the ‘head start’ promised in 1870” (MMF, 2024).

The *Manitoba Act* of 1870 speaks to a ‘head start’ for Métis citizens, which promises “a portion of such ungranted lands, to the extent of one million four hundred thousand acres” (Manitoba Act, 1870). Unfortunately, this promise was broken and left unfulfilled for generations. Today, many Métis families, descendants of the would-be beneficiaries of the broken promise, are not homeowners (MMF, 2024). Métis Nation Housing aims to change this by ensuring that every Métis citizen has access to safe, affordable housing, offering opportunities for home ownership, where possible.

For the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), housing has been a foundation for self-government since 1967. At the onset, MMF’s housing services were limited to small programs delivered on behalf of other levels of government. Over time, services expanded to partnering with the Province of Manitoba to build affordable housing. In 2007, the MMF signed an agreement with the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) to build ten homes under the Affordable Housing Initiative Program. In 2013, the MMF signed another agreement with the MHRC for \$5,500,000 over five years to build additional affordable homes.

In July 2018 the **Canada - Métis Nation Housing Sub-Accord** was signed by the Métis National Council and its Governing Members, including the Métis Nation of Ontario, Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, and Métis Nation British Columbia. This agreement stemmed from a directive outlined in the *National Housing Strategy Act*, which earmarked \$500 million for Métis Nation Housing over 10 years, to 2028. This agreement allows the Métis National Council, through its Governing Members (including the MMF) to directly manage funds to address the housing needs of Métis citizens in an effective and culturally appropriate manner.

Locally, this agreement has allowed the MMF's Housing and Property Management Department to expand and operate at a scale and with the capacity required to adequately meet the needs of its citizens. The department no longer depends on piecemeal funding agreements and outsourcing the majority of its work to consultants. Over the past five years, the Housing and Property Management Department has grown from three to twenty staff, adding experience in research, advocacy, policy writing, planning, development, and construction. Today, with a robust team, the Housing and Property Management Department is leading innovative capital projects and programming across Manitoba, built on a renewed and strengthened nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with the Government of Canada (MMF, 2024).

- Province-wide housing research
- More affordable housing - new builds
- Seniors housing
- Repairs and maintenance
- Analysis of existing homes
- Using local resources to support local economies

The overarching goal of Métis Nation Housing is to ensure that every Métis Nation citizen has access to clean, safe, and culturally appropriate housing. The MMF is achieving this goal by building and maintaining affordable housing units, creating targeted housing initiatives such as the First Time Home Purchase Program and the Home Enhancement Loan Program, and implementing a Métis-specific strategy to address homelessness.

6.6.1 Considerations and Next Steps

If the concept of creating a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority is explored further, there would be great benefit in building a relationship with the MMF. There is much to learn from their recent success in federal negotiations and advocacy for autonomy. Based on the experiences shared by AHMA and the OAHS, both scale and impact in housing delivery can only be achieved once a provincial Indigenous Housing Authority has the autonomy, adequate funding, and trained staff to execute its plans for housing development, management, and programming, as the MMF has recently experienced. Without each of these elements in place, staff burnout and financial burden remain significant risks for any one organization, which are real barriers to non-profit housing development and management in the current Manitoba context.

6.7 Manitoba Housing

Before the 1990s, social housing in Canada, including urban and rural Indigenous housing, was primarily a federal responsibility. Social housing is defined as housing that is subsidized under a social housing agreement and operated by a public or non-profit housing provider (Pomeroy, 2017). In 1996, the federal government transferred much of its role and responsibilities as it related to social housing to the provinces and territories. In recent years, in provinces such as BC and Manitoba, the responsibility for social housing has been shifting even further to the non-profit sector.

In Manitoba, all social housing units and subsidies provided by the province are owned and managed by Manitoba Housing. Manitoba Housing is a Crown Corporation created by statute (The Housing and Renewal Corporation Act) in 1967, legally referred to as the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC). Manitoba Housing is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council with policy direction provided by the government.

Manitoba Housing's mandate is to:

- Enhance the affordability of and accessibility to, adequate housing for Manitobans, particularly those of low to moderate incomes or those with specialized needs.
- Maintain and improve the condition of existing housing stock.
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of housing stock in Manitoba.
- Stimulate the activities of the housing market to the benefit of Manitobans as a whole (Province of Manitoba, 2024).

Manitoba Housing's corporate structure is divided into branches based on functional areas, including:

- Social Housing Management
- Asset Management
- Northern Housing Operations
- Land Development
- Housing Delivery

Manitoba Housing owns the Province's housing portfolio and provides subsidies to approximately 35,000 housing units under various programs. Within the portfolio, Manitoba Housing owns approximately 18,000 units of which approximately 14,300 units are directly managed by Manitoba Housing. Approximately 3,700 units are managed by non-profit cooperative sponsor groups or property management agencies. Manitoba Housing also provides subsidies and support to approximately 17,000 units operated by co-operatives, Urban Native, and private non-profit groups, including over 4,300 personal care home beds (Province of Manitoba, 2024).

6.7.1 Urban Native Housing Program

As it pertains to Indigenous non-profit housing specifically, the Province of Manitoba administers the Urban Native Housing Program (UNHP), a social housing program created in 1978 as a federal commitment to meet the needs of Indigenous households living in urban centres (Province of Manitoba, 2024). The UNHP has approximately 10,000 housing units in its social housing portfolio across Canada, with 1,028 Urban Native units in Manitoba (C. Maes-Nino, personal communication, February 7, 2024).

The UNHP specifically aims to support Indigenous seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families with low to moderate incomes living in urban communities including Winnipeg, Brandon, Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, and Swan River. Operating agreements with Manitoba Housing enable Indigenous housing providers to offer subsidized rental housing in the private market. Each housing provider directly accepts housing applications and manages their housing portfolio (Province of Manitoba, 2024).



As is the case with many non-profit housing providers, most of the Indigenous housing providers signed their operating agreements in the '80s and '90s. These agreements are quickly coming to an end, with the final agreements anticipated to expire by 2040. To complicate matters further, many of these units were built in the early 1900s and require extensive ongoing maintenance and repairs – repairs that are challenging to make under existing operating agreements, let alone once an operating agreement has expired. Many non-profit groups do not have replacement reserves large enough to address the major capital repairs that come with century-old properties (Bernas et al., 2023).

The bulk of the UNHP operating agreements began to expire in 2021 and will continue to do so over the upcoming decades. Meanwhile, Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, housing advocates, and community members have been calling on the government to provide tangible, long-lasting solutions. For urban Indigenous housing providers, the situation is further strained by the fact that:

“Most Indigenous-led housing providers offer 100 percent RGI units. While some have received subsidies to maintain their social housing units after their agreements have expired, others have noted that these subsidies are temporary and not part of a formal agreement. Given the disproportionate homelessness and housing insecurity among Indigenous households, Manitoba must make the necessary investments to protect and maintain Indigenous-led social housing units” (Bernas et al., 2023, 41).

Since rent-geared-to-income rents are usually lower than a unit's operating cost, it will be impossible for Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing providers to continue to offer the same level of low-cost housing without ongoing subsidies (Bernas et al, 2023). This puts housing providers in a difficult, albeit impossible situation. If subsidies are not renewed, housing providers will be faced with challenging decisions related to rental increases, capital repairs, and property sales. As Cooper (2019) writes, “Without recognition of the ongoing colonialism that creates poverty among Indigenous people, the loss of social housing units, and especially the Urban Native housing units, repeats experiences of colonial dispossession for low-income Indigenous households” (1).

6.7.2 Manitoba Housing and the National Housing Strategy

In June 2019, Manitoba Housing signed a multi-year bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada under the *National Housing Strategy*. The province is scheduled to receive up to \$302.7 million in federal funding, cost matched by Manitoba, between 2019/20 and 2027/28. The objective of the agreement is to increase access to housing, reduce housing need, and achieve better housing outcomes for Manitobans. The agreement provides funding for three provincially administered funding streams, including:

- **Manitoba Priorities** (\$48.8 million) supports regional priorities related to increasing supply (construction and conversion), preservation of units (repair, renovation, or adaptation), and affordability supports (rent supplements, shelter allowances, and homeownership).

- **The Canada Community Housing Initiative** (\$176.5 million) is intended to replace expiring Social Housing Agreement funding. It aims to protect, regenerate, and expand social and community housing and avoid the loss of social housing units through the expiry of operating agreements.
- **The Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit** (\$77.3 million) provides a portable rent subsidy to youth leaving the care of Child and Family Services, people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness, and people with mental health and addiction issues (Province of Manitoba, 2024).

Under the bilateral agreement, Manitoba Housing is required to submit a publicly available Action Plan every three years. Informed by community engagement, the *Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) 2022/2023-2024/2025 Three-Year Action Plan (Action Plan)* prioritizes vulnerable populations and women and children fleeing domestic violence, supports homeownership and housing affordability and invests in improvements to existing social and affordable housing, including investments in community and **urban native housing**.

In the *Engage MB What We Heard Report* (a report summarizing the feedback received to inform the *Action Plan*), participants voiced the need for more affordable units of all sizes, including new builds that accommodate the unique needs of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, participants noted a lack of Indigenous-led housing solutions that include space for cultural supports, land-based education, access to Elders onsite, and use of a harm reduction approach. Indigenous participants noted that the two population groups in greatest need are seniors and youth aging out of the care of Child and Family Services (CFS). Direct quotes from Indigenous participants included:

“There is a huge gap in services and that is something that needs to be acknowledged because if we’re staying true in line with Truth and Reconciliation, then nobody should face persecution or eviction based on practicing their beliefs. We need a lot more Indigenous housing” (EngageMB, 2022,11).

“Work with us (Indigenous organizations), we’ll make it easier for you, you’ll get better results. That’s the bottom line” (EngageMB, 2022,11).

In response, the *Action Plan* states that:

“Manitoba Housing will continue to work with partners in the lead-up to its next three-year *Action Plan* to develop a reconciliation-focused approach to Indigenous housing. As part of its commitment to advance reconciliation, Manitoba Housing will also pursue off-reserve community-based housing delivery in partnership with Indigenous communities and service organizations. Manitoba Housing will work with Indigenous housing providers and pursue investments that enable the provision of culturally relevant programming and housing services” (MHRC, 2022, 10).

The *Action Plan* further affirms that Manitoba will ensure no net loss of Urban Native housing units between 2022/23 and 2024/25 by providing operating subsidies for units that have previously come off agreement plus subsidies for an additional 42 units of Urban Native housing that will expire in October 2024 (13-14). It is noted that the estimated cost of continuing to offer 785 Urban Native units is \$11 million during the *Action Plan* period. To break this down, this particular investment would equate to offering approximately \$4,670.00 per unit per year over the three-year period. For comparison, using 2021 estimates, the annual system cost for an adult experiencing homelessness is \$42,000; \$49,000 for a child (MNP 2021, 8). (Note, that there is a difference in the number of Urban Native units documented in the *Action Plan* (785) compared to the number shared with the project team to inform this paper (1,028). The project team will look into this further to confirm the exact number).

The *Action Plan* adds that “Manitoba Housing will continue to work closely with community housing providers to plan for the end of operating agreements by providing supports to address long-term organizational sustainability as well as assistance to identify steps required to achieve financial stability” (12). Regarding Indigenous housing specifically, the *Action Plan* commits to “supporting the capacity of Indigenous housing providers, working in alignment with the recent federal distinctions-based housing strategies, as well as an anticipated *Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy*” (12).

6.7.3 Considerations and Next Steps

Distasio et al. (2007) note that “in Manitoba, for an Indigenous Housing Authority to be initially established and function effectively, there must be political recognition for such an authority on the part of all levels of government, and with it the ability for the Housing Authority to operate without undue political interference” (14). If the creation of a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority is to be explored further, the future Steering Committee or Leadership Team will need to work closely with Manitoba Housing and the broader provincial government to reach a consensus on the appropriate next steps and associated timing.

Several opportunities could be discussed with Manitoba Housing. With the end of UNHP agreements in the coming years, the Steering Committee or Leadership Team could take the lead, in partnership with Indigenous non-profit housing providers, on the re-negotiation of these agreements or negotiation of an eventual transfer of the agreements. Either way, a key element of this discussion must be advocacy for sustainable, long-term operational funding for Indigenous non-profit housing providers across the province. Even if a particular building is no longer tied to a mortgage, the costs required for major capital repairs and providing wraparound support services (where necessary), are not typically possible with rent-geared-to-income units.




Furthermore, if an Indigenous Housing Authority is to be explored further, it is anticipated that this entity would require sustainable operating funding, another discussion that would need to occur with all levels of government, perhaps beginning with the Province of Manitoba. To address the growing need for safe, affordable, culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people in Manitoba, a significant amount of funding would need to be directed towards this priority. Finding the funds for such an initiative may require inter-governmental contributions and possibly a full re-imagining of Indigenous-led housing as a tangible solution to improving physical and mental health outcomes, enabling access to education and employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and advancing reconciliation

7

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

7 Conclusion, Recommendations & Next Steps

In conclusion, a province-wide Indigenous Housing Authority could fulfill a variety of different roles and functions in the Manitoba context. This discussion paper begins to build a shared understanding of a few of those roles, based on the existing practices used by other Indigenous Housing Authorities across Canada:

 <p>An advocacy, training, and capacity-building arm (may or may not be attached to an existing non-profit organization)</p> <p>Example: Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA)</p> <p>Example: Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) Indigenous Caucus</p>	 <p>An umbrella organization that administers operational and capital funding to Indigenous non-profit housing providers (may or may not own capital assets and/or have a development arm)</p> <p>Example: Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA)</p> <p>Example: Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS)</p>	 <p>An Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation</p> <p>Example: M'akola Development Services</p> <p>Example: Lu'ma Development Management (LDM)</p>
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Each example was created to respond to the urgent and unmet housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous peoples. Each example is a non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors with a Vision, Mission, and Mandate guided by the community members they serve. They all started small, first with only a Steering Committee (which eventually became a Board of Directors), an Executive Director, and one or two staff. Over time, each organization has grown and strengthened as it strives to achieve and exceed its community-directed objectives. It is understood that, due to the scope of the information collected for this paper, there are also other options available to Indigenous communities in Manitoba, and further research that directly engages with Indigenous communities will be required.

This paper establishes a foundation by which existing and future policies and strategies can be reviewed while providing direction for understanding critically the new policies and legislation that would be required for the creation of a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority. Lastly, the paper concludes with the meeting minutes and a summary of the initial engagement session held with non-profit Indigenous housing providers in Winnipeg, MB in May 2024 (**Appendix A**). The thoughtful feedback and insights shared during this roundtable discussion have been invaluable to the project and informed the recommendations and next steps described below.

Based on a preliminary review of the feedback received during the roundtable discussion, participants noted the following over-arching **priorities**:



A call for the **creation of an Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation** with the expertise and knowledge to plan, design, and develop culturally appropriate housing solutions in the Manitoba context.



A call for **secure sustainable operational funding** that will enable Indigenous housing providers to offer the wraparound services many of their tenants require while keeping rents geared to income.



A call to **collectively advocate to government for increased investment in Indigenous housing** (both capital and operations) as one unified voice – we are stronger together.

Grounded in the research conducted and the feedback received during the initial engagement session, the project team has prepared the following recommendations to help guide the next steps in this important work. We thank everyone who generously shared their knowledge and insights throughout the project. We all share the same end goal – to ensure Indigenous non-profit housing is sustainable and thriving across Manitoba, for many generations to come.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Form a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority Steering Committee or Leadership Team to carry forward this foundational work. It will be critical that this committee or team has a commitment from the existing Indigenous-led housing organizations in Manitoba.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Engage with the Province of Manitoba and Indigenous governments to clarify how an Indigenous Housing Authority could support or impede their objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Engage with allies in the Manitoba development community, clarifying the next steps required to establish an Indigenous non-profit housing development corporation. This could include engagement with and possibly mentorship from developers, builders, accountants, lawyers, real estate agents, tradespeople, planners, engineers, architects, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Engage with Indigenous communities to confirm housing needs. This could be achieved through a survey, group discussions, one-on-one meetings, traveling tours, etc. across the province.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Prepare Manitoba's Rural, Urban, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, reflecting on the framework provided by British Columbia's Rural, Urban, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy as a starting point, incorporating data on local housing needs. It is anticipated that this document may be an essential first step in accessing Manitoba's portion of the \$4 billion in federal funding that will be administered in the upcoming years by the National Indigenous Housing Centre.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The opportunity may be available to align the launch of a Manitoba Indigenous Housing Authority with the next provincial election. Regular, ongoing communication with provincial representatives will be essential to seeing this recommendation realized thoughtfully and effectively.

In addition to the recommendations outlined above, four main questions will need to be answered and clarified as this work moves forward:



Question 1

What external governance levers are required to formalize this entity provincially and federally?



Question 2

What internal governance structure needs to be adopted to ensure the Indigenous Housing Authority is pan-Indigenous and Manitoba-wide in scope?



Question 3

Where does the Indigenous Housing Authority receive its funding to operate sustainably and deliver services to Indigenous non-profit housing providers?



Question 4

What is the organization's scope for operations (what does the organization do?) and what are the supportable actions from Indigenous non-profit organizations (what does the organization finance)?

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APPENDIX

MINUTES

Meeting on Indigenous Housing Cooperation

Co-hosted by MNPHA and EHW

Wednesday, May 8 2024, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm at Downtown Commons (320 Colony)

In attendance: Melissa Stone (Ma Mawi), Jeff Leighton (KeKiNan Centre), Georgina Brass (DOTCHA), Dakota and Victoria Fisher (Shawenim Abinoojii), Justin Marchand (OAHS), Fedja Redzepovic and Cathy Cook (Wahbung Abinoojiiag), Angel and Shayla (Kinew Housing), Lauren Lange (WSP), Christina Maes Nino (MNPHA), Jo Dworschak (MNPHA), Jason Whitford (EHW), Jackie Hunt (EHW), Stephane Bisson (EHW), Justin Quigley (EHW), Hannah Schneider (EHW)

Regrets: Levi Foy (Sunshine House), Rushana Newman (Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation), Marileen Bartlett (CAHRD), Judy Clark (Tuungasugit), Jenelle Smith and Brook Barbeau (Native Clan Organization)

Introductions

Presentation

- Lauren Lange (WSP) presents her research on Indigenous Housing Authorities in Canada.
- DOTCHA and Kinew Housing were members of the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA) before it dissolved in 2010.
- Georgina Brass (DOTCHA) notes that Lucille Bruce may have a blue binder of MUNHA data. Does MNPHA have all their old information? **ACTION:** Find a binder
- Georgina Brass notes that she will reach out to Maeengan Linklater, the last Executive Director of MUNHA, to see if he knows the location of the binder.
- Why was MUNHA not able to get funding, but then MNPHA was established so quickly after? What happened? **ACTION:** Further research is needed.
 - Kerri Irvin Ross (Minister of Housing in 2009-2010)
- Interest in EHW being an Indigenous housing development corporation.
- Need for a Lu'ma, a status and membership blind development corporation that can create housing for all First Nations/community members so there aren't any gaps. Discussions of gaps in funding / muddled jurisdiction over those with certain membership, status/non-status.
- Development corporations/partnerships similar to Lu'ma in Manitoba:
 - Treaty One Development Corporation
 - Southern Chiefs' Organization/True North partnership on The Bay redevelopment
- Interest in knowing more about Lu'ma's governance structure. **ACTION:** Share a summary of precedent governance structures with the group.
- Huge influx of youth aging out of care in the next few years, the homeless population is anticipated to increase.

Justin Marchand – Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS)

- OAHS is in its 30th year of operation. Founded in 1994, began with 2 years of community consultations. Established in response to housing gaps for urban/rural Indigenous peoples in Ontario. Annual operating budget of about \$80 million.
- The board is made up of leadership from Indigenous organizations (Metis Nation of Ontario, Ontario Native Women's Association, Association of Ontario Friendship Centres. 7 board members, each group appoints 2 board members, and an additional board member is chosen as Chair). Board governance is reflective of the community.
- In ONT, 88% of Indigenous people live off-reserve.
- Serves 11,000 people/day through housing. About 50% Indigenous.
- Own 3,330 housing units for a total of \$800 million in capital assets.
- 145 staff
- Apolitical organization
- Homeownership program
- Policy team of 4 people funded internally (ONT will not fund policy research and development. However, OAHS recognized the importance of this work and found a way to fund these positions internally).
- 2006-2009 – Ontario devolved the operating agreements/property management of urban native housing units and rural native housing units (1,600 units) to OAHS. Asset transfer allowed OAHS to “take off”.
 - Originally, ONT had a tight leash on properties/operating agreements (i.e. how to use funding).
 - Negotiated for full control/ownership of properties and any associated operating agreements.
 - Over time, OAHS has sold any units that are not supportive of their priorities and used the money from the sales to purchase other more appropriate units.
 - Found leverage in non-monetary asks when the provincial government did not have funding available (i.e. request for property management of units). This also helped to build trust between OAHS and the provincial government.
- Currently own 3300 units, plus 1700 units in various stages of development.
- Own and facilitate access to housing across the housing continuum:
 - Homeownership
 - Market
 - Low end of the market (i.e. affordable)
 - RGI
 - Supportive
 - Transitional
- Have merged with 7 Indigenous housing providers. Capacity to take control of assets. OAHS owns the assets, and, in many cases, the Friendship Centres operate them and provide wraparound supports, where required. For a new build, OAHS will issue an RFP to secure an operator.
- Development Services Division – A division of OAHS that is a development corporation.
- New acquisition fund. Can borrow against assets. Arrangement with BMO, which has provided an open line of credit to OAHS. Able to do this because of full control of units/freedom to use as assets. Economic self-sufficiency is one of the main

organizational goals. Operating the organization is much more impactful when you have an economy of scale.

- OAHS programs/services
 - Community owned, controlled, managed
 - 60-70% Indigenous employment
 - Internal maintenance program. Partnership with Indigenous Friendship Centres' (FCs) employment programs. FC sets them up with job readiness and OAHS tries to get them housed within one of their units. Work exclusively on OAHS units. Repair units at a fraction of the cost, 30-50% less than private contractors. After 2 years, they either join OAHS as a full-time contractor or are helped with finding work with another contractor.
 - Provide housing programs across the housing continuum. OAHS owns/manages a mix of RGI, affordable, low-end market, and market units. Homelessness isn't their main focus; however, rowing areas of supportive/transitional housing to meet increasing needs. OAHS is the property owner/manager, then another agency will be a service provider.
 - Multiyear programs that help folks upgrade their high school, childcare, vocational training,
 - Market units- predominantly acquired through acquisition funds through BMO.
 - Provide down payments/closing costs (helped 600 families).
 - Maintenance/repair fund.
 - Administered over 750 million in operating funding over the last 10 years.
 - **Ensure that the terms of your agreements are palatable, it's not just about the unit count.**
 - Having the Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA) and Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) as allies has been crucial.
 - Diversity of units means better economic sustainability and can pivot based on government priorities.
 - Daycares in buildings can be an asset and were incorporated in response to a pivot in government priorities.
- Strategic plan is being updated. Priorities include:
 - Development of units and growth of units under OAHS control.
 - Indigenous education for governments, policy. Funding flows don't represent the need.
 - Economic diversification and self-sufficiency.
 - Ensuring operational excellence and WISE practices.
- Economic self-sufficiency and independence are how you strengthen a culture.
- Key takeaways:
 - Advocate to the government that the priority needs to be urban Indigenous housing.
 - Need property management on "our terms".
 - Full ownership of assets.
 - Create the vehicle (Indigenous Housing Authority) and it will allow for the transfer of housing assets and operating agreements.
 - Precedent Indigenous Housing Authorities – ON, BC, NB
 - OAHS has an Indigenous Supportive Housing Program. Allow 15% for Admin costs. Ensure this program has a lot of funding so that it can be a success and not struggle to provide the necessary supports.

Questions from guests:

- Relationship with First Nations and Metis Nations?
 - Currently working on it. MNO is on the Board.
 - Haven't been provided capacity funding from ONT.
- How did you get everyone to work together and collaborate effectively?
 - The Founding Chair and ED did a road tour and asked communities/organizations what they wanted. They have a policy board, status blind.
 - The more people behind you, the more power you have with the government.
- 1600 units- did you build them or were they acquired? How?
 - The first 1600 were the rural native housing program units that were devolved.
 - Finding land has been the single largest barrier to development. The government hasn't funded this. Look for land opportunities with municipalities—from school boards, and underutilized parks, and some must be purchased at market rate. Extra vacant land.
- Is status blind / membership blind service essential?
 - It's what our consultations decided. Status can be a huge barrier with funding/jurisdiction.
- How did you move from property management to contract management?
 - Governance structure supported them when they went to the government to negotiate for ownership of units.
- How did you decide what kind of units to build and when?
 - Mandate based on consultations. Priorities were affordable units and building housing.

Group Discussion

What are the challenges for Indigenous-led non-profit housing operations and management that could be addressed through actions working together?

- MB housing didn't invite certain Indigenous groups when they were offloading their units.
 - Sponsor-managed agreements with friendship centers have been terrible too.
 - The offers coming to non-profits have been unreasonable. People can't move in under the criteria set by MB Housing.
- Astum Api Niikinaahk challenges
 - Only have operational funding for certain hours of the day to staff 24/7 housing. Only evenings, weekends, and overnights. Staff there from evening-morning, then residents must be self-sufficient during the day.
 - Ingrained colonial mindset, paternalistic approach.
 - The toxic drugs in the community right now are a huge issue – the safety of residents and staff. Organizations do not have the resources to manage this. There needs to be an interface with health care services – this integration is necessary.
- Shawenim Abinoojii doesn't have funding for overnight support, so they must volunteer time and use funding allocated to other things.
 - It's government exploitation. Given a 5-year funding contract, then what?
 - Reconciliation should be a commitment.

- It feels as though each organization that takes on housing is set up to struggle or fail – never given the adequate resources to thrive.
- Would like to know, is there population-based funding? Are we being funded appropriately?
- Need a strong group of individuals to advocate/lobby to fight this.
- These challenges can also be addressed through End Homelessness Winnipeg's case studies exercise for the website.
- What are our specific needs and challenges? Need to come together on this. Flexibility with our funding? Do we have development training with our staffing/staff retainment? Are we going to be culturally appropriate and representative? We need to collaborate and work together; we require a long-term commitment.
- Staff burnout is a huge issue. Melissa Stone has organized a once-a-month, all-staff event at Thunderbird House. Bringing in a Knowledge Keeper. Melissa to invite the group. Honorarium for Kookum to prepare food, Fire Keeper. Must come together and support each other.
- Folks feel alone and overwhelmed working in the Indigenous non-profit housing sector.
- Each organization has different operating agreements, legacy agreements, and sponsor-managed agreements. Makes it difficult to come together but all the more important. Over 70 different forms of agreements are still active. Some providers don't even have operating agreements, only capital agreements.
- **ACTION:** collectively coming together and deciding what agreements do and don't work.
- Developing/operating housing
 - Shawenim Abinoojii has found their staff are not experts in this- lots of social work staff have learned things through experience, but is there an opportunity to partner with experts to build those skills/job training? Need information on building maintenance and operations.
 - Shared training opportunities?
- Need more transitional housing for youth aging out of care – this will be an increasing need to address over the upcoming years. MB is the province with the highest percentage of children in care (with 90% Indigenous).

Opportunities to advocate together differently?

- Table with MB housing.
- Forum with housing providers who have done the work, and those who want to do it. Have MB housing present.
- How to change MB Housing? Do we need to go to Minister Smith to direct this change?
 - Do your decision makers reflect those that you are serving? Change who you're hiring.
- Different city departments need to collaborate better to make the development process effective/efficient. So many partners must come to the table to make it happen.
- Need to advocate to the government that any new resources that come online should be prioritized by Indigenous organizations.

- **ACTION:** Having allies inside the provincial and municipal governments may be helpful. Who are the allies at MB Housing? Who can we work with to discuss the transfer of assets?
- **ACTION:** Find out, how many people MB Housing serves. How many are Indigenous? We need to prioritize funding for Indigenous organizations to meet the needs of Indigenous people in a culturally appropriate and economically independent way.

Solutions?

- Must own properties. Must become financially independent/sustainable from funders. (Ownership means they can decide the terms for eviction. Example of CFS evicting families when losing custody of their children and being “over housed” and then being homeless and unable to regain custody).
- Should have food services for Elders / those who require health services. Not calculated in housing costs—but it should be considered.
 - OAHs gets funding from the government and puts out RFPs for service providers for their units.
- Where can we find allies to work on development together? Ex. WHRC. Get development corps to transfer titles to non-profit providers so that they can build up their assets.

What’s everyone’s interest in being involved in the next steps?

- Seems like folks are taking in all the information and require follow-up.
- Business case for doing this as a collective (grounded in the TRC, MMIWG Calls for Justice). Could become an entity to be recognized, can increase the intergenerational capacity of the Indigenous community, and lead to intergenerational change. Most efficient way of supporting organizations and would be culturally appropriate.
- Missing Indigenous governance / rural providers at the table.
- Next steps:
 - EHS to take a lead role in initiating conversations with the government.
 - Share information on the governance models and mission of the existing Indigenous Housing Authorities for comment and feedback.
 - Reach out to those who aren’t here.
 - Road tour, and survey, to confirm needs of Indigenous housing organizations – both urban and rural?
 - Getting back together with Justin Marchand and perhaps the Board of OAHs?

SUMMARY

Meeting on Indigenous Housing Cooperation

Co-hosted by MNPHA and EHW

Wednesday, May 8, 2024, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm at Downtown Commons (320 Colony)

On Wednesday, May 8th, Manitoba Indigenous housing providers gathered with staff from MNPHA and EHW to discuss the challenges their organizations experience, as well as the solutions that could be accomplished by working together. Research on Indigenous housing authorities across Canada was presented, and Justin Marchand from Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) spoke about OAHS' history, financing models, divisions, programs, and solutions to challenges they have encountered. Below is a summary of the main themes derived from the conversation.

Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) Presentation

Participants were especially interested in the following:

- OAHS' Board governance
- Property ownership
- Unit diversity
 - OAHS owns and manages a mix of RGI, affordable, low-end market, and market units.
 - 3,300 units (\$800 million in capital assets), 1700 units in development.
- Economic sustainability/asset transfers/borrowing
 - Their unit diversity and ownership over these units allow them to use the properties as assets to borrow against.
 - This allows OAHS to be economically independent and sustainable.
- Internal divisions/programs (145 staff)
 - Development Corporation
 - Internal unit maintenance/repair team. Partnership with a local Indigenous Friendship Centre's employment program. Employs and houses unhoused individuals and provides them with on-the-job training and certification.
 - Policy research and development
 - Government relations

Indigenous Housing Providers: Challenges

Participants discussed the following challenges impacting their organizations.

- Staff / operational challenges
 - Burnout
 - Retention
 - Inadequate wages
 - Isolation/lack of support

- Inadequate funding/lack of understanding from funders
- Toxic drug supply in MB – need support from the health care system and integration of health care services when providing supportive housing
- MB housing operating agreements/contracts
 - Over 70 different kinds of OAs between MB Housing and housing providers
 - Housing providers beholden to rigid criteria set by MB Housing—can't provide housing for many due to these criteria

Solutions for challenges

- Collective action to identify challenges and advocate solutions to government/funders
- Ownership of units transferred to Indigenous housing providers
- Culturally appropriate property management, on our terms
- Economic independence/sustainability, strengthening a culture
- Indigenous development corporation
- Adequate, long-term operational funding for organizations providing supportive housing – set up to succeed
- Identify allies to partner with (ex. WHRC)
- Commitment to reconciliation

Next steps

- Further research:
 - Why was MUNHA's funding cut?
 - Where is MUNHA's data now?
- Connect with:
 - Indigenous governments
 - Rural housing providers
 - Provincial government
- Next meeting:
 - Meet again with Justin Marchand and the Board of OAHS
 - Invite Indigenous government representatives and rural providers