

# **END HOMELESSNESS**

A Community Task Force

## **What We Heard**

Perspectives from the Community on  
a Long Term Strategy to  
End Homelessness in Winnipeg

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January 2014



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## I. Introduction

The goal of the Task Force is to end homelessness in Winnipeg in ten years. This means preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and giving people who are already homeless a hand up and a hand out of homelessness. We know that the success of reaching our goal will depend on the sustained commitment of Winnipeg's entire community.

The purpose of this report is to document what we have heard from the community – from the voices of people who are homeless, of Indigenous peoples, (particularly the Elders' Council), and of community organizations. As well, we have met with private sector and non-profit housing representatives who want to participate in the effort to end homelessness, whose voices are captured in this report, particularly regarding how to increase housing supply.

We are thankful for all the individuals who have taken the time to share their stories and their perspectives on the strategies needed to end homelessness. This report captures these voices and perspectives of the people from diverse communities in Winnipeg. It will inform the vision and implementation of the Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg.

The report of the Task Force and final plan to end homelessness is scheduled for completion by March 31st, 2014.

## II. Perspectives We Have Heard

The Task Force has met with numerous community organizations, advocacy groups, and Indigenous peoples' organizations over the past ten months<sup>1</sup> and held meetings with the Elder's Council,<sup>2</sup> beginning with a pipe ceremony held on March 27th, 2013. We have also held eight Focus Groups specifically with people with lived experiences, including two Youth Sessions.<sup>3</sup> As well, we have held Engagement Sessions on the following thematic areas: Housing Supply;<sup>4</sup> Emergency Shelters, Continuum of Housing, Health and Social Services;<sup>5</sup> Data Management, Research and Communications;<sup>6</sup> and Prevention of Homelessness.<sup>7</sup> People with lived experiences, Indigenous peoples, young people, newcomers, people with disabilities, community organizations, academics/researchers, private sector and non-profit housing representatives and other stakeholders attended these sessions, which were designed to receive community feedback on the work of the Sub-Groups in

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1 For a list of stakeholders who have met with the Task Force, please see Appendix "A."

2 For the biographies of the Elders' Council, please see Appendix "B."

3 These meetings were held on March 13th, May 23rd, June 27th, July 23rd, August 29th, December 3rd and December 9th and in total, 86 people with lived experience participated in these meetings. Fifteen (15) of these were youth. It is important to note that a number of people with lived experience also participated in the engagement sessions held on the four thematic areas described below.

4 This engagement session was held on September 17th and 25th where, respectively, 10 and 15 participants attended.

5 This engagement session was held on June 4th, 2013 where 60 participants attended.

6 This engagement session was held on June 11th, 2013, where 19 participants attended.

7 This engagement session was held on June 10th, where 40 participants attended.

these thematic areas. The work of the Sub-Groups has been instrumental towards the development of a Long Term Strategy by the Task Force. This report is meant to compliment the important work of the Sub-Groups.

It is important to document the voices and perspectives of the Winnipeg community. In order to capture the voices and perspectives of people, the transcripts of meetings, such as flip charts recorded at Engagement Sessions and verbatim transcripts of focus groups of people with lived experiences, are provided wherever possible.

The results of the engagement sessions held with community organizations, Indigenous peoples and people with lived experiences are highlighted in this report. In total, approximately 105 people attended the engagement sessions.

A total of 86 people participated in the eight focus groups held with people with lived experience of homelessness. The following is a demographic profile of the 86 people interviewed:

- 31 were females ranging in age from 21 to 56.
- 55 were males ranging in age from 18 to 64.
- 58 identified as Indigenous, 17 as Caucasian and one as French.
- 11 individuals identified as being from the newcomer/immigrant community.
- 24 people reported as having disabilities (22 with mental health issues and two with physical health problems – one with a terminal illness).
- 41 people are currently homeless and 45 are housed.

An Elders' Council met three times<sup>8</sup> and received update reports on the work of the Task Force and provided feedback. The Elders also attended some of the Task Force meetings.

Finally, on several occasions, we met with community organizations committed to ending homelessness who offered their words of wisdom based on their experiences, expertise and knowledge in the area. This includes meeting with the North End Women's Centre, Council of Child Caring Treatment Centres, Resource Assistance for Youth (RaY), the Right to Housing Coalition, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Rental Network.

This report provides the Task Force and its partners an opportunity to reflect on what is essential to include in the Long Term Strategy to make a difference in the lives of Winnipeggers, particularly those who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

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<sup>8</sup> The Elders' Council met on March 27th, 2013 (pipe ceremony), April 10th, 2013 and September 17th as well as individual meetings between Don Robinson and each Elder, approximately twice. The biographies of the Elders' Council members are set out in Appendix "B."

## III. Thematic Overview of What We Have Heard from Stakeholders

This section provides a review of what we have heard from all the stakeholders according to each of the four thematic areas that have been a focus of the work of the Task Force: Prevention of Homelessness; Emergency Shelters, Continuum of Housing, Health and Social Services; Data Management and Research; and Creating and Maintaining Affordable and Supportive Housing. In each of these sections, the perspectives of the community, people with lived experiences (PWLE) and the Elders' Council have been examined, identifying consistent messages and recommendations from each of these perspectives. In the last thematic area related to housing supply, the perspectives of the private sector and non-profit housing sector are also highlighted.

Please note that in the sections related to the Engagement Sessions, three asterisks (\*\*\*) indicate where the Elders' Council and people with lived experiences have identified these items as priority areas for action as well. Where identified specifically by either the Elders or people with lived experiences, this has been indicated. Also, it is noted where there is strong agreement expressed by people with lived experiences and/or the Elders. These perspectives have not been reiterated in the sections on the perspectives of these two groups, but are captured in the summaries at the end of each thematic area. In the Focus Group transcripts, "F" refers to a female participant and "M" refers to a male participant.

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### 1. Prevention of Homelessness

#### A. Community Perspectives from Engagement Sessions

Participants at the Engagement Session on Prevention of Homelessness were asked to identify actions that need to be taken in order to prevent individuals and families from slipping into homelessness. Small group discussions were held and the findings from these discussions are as follows:

##### Group #1

- It is about preventing people from entering homelessness;
- The housing supply needs to be supportive & affordable;
- Appropriate ways to work with clients are needed;\*\*\*
- All three levels of government need to be working together;
- Rather than trying to build system on existing dysfunctions, how can we rebuild the system?
- Need to look at inter-sectoral solutions;
- If we can't supply affordable housing in the inner-city then we will be displacing people;
- Need to develop housing where the greatest needs are;
- Need a champion for this cause...

**Group #2**

- “Aging out of care” youth are at particular risk of homelessness;
- Provide life skills, independent living units;\*\*\*
- Having other types of homes available to meet diverse needs;
- Large numbers coming from reserves – getting lost in the system;\*\*\*
- Integration of government systems;
- Policy change re: apprehension and housing loss;
- Increase affordable housing;
- Hold government accountable for housing promises;
- Supportive housing to assist in transitions;\*\*\* PWLE strongly agree
- Support/funding for transitioning individuals (off reserve, etc.); and
- Funding for adult education/not cutoffs: focused on career path; aptitude; adjust hiring requirements for, and provide training for unskilled employees.\*\*\*PWLE strongly agree

**Group #3:****Support**

- Additional Funding;
- Single parents – Child and Family Services (CFS) involvement due to loss of housing;
- Hold government responsible for promises with housing;\*\*\*
- Federal government support is lacking;
- Support – to assist in transition;
- Off-reserve population receive dollars for support for finding housing
- Innovative housing projects.

**Increase Supply**

- Need to devote options to meet people’s needs;
- Needs to be affordable - Employment Income Assistance (EIA) should be based on cost of living which increases annually;
- Centralized information referral and resource centres;\*\*\*
- Managers trained to refer;
- More supports to help people deal with their issues. Prevention workers (i.e. Red Road Lodge; Bell Hotel; Portland Hotel in Vancouver);\*\*\* Elders and PWLE strongly agree
- Increase density of housing in inner city/diverse needs the stores, services to support;
- Housing first models;\*\*\*
- Need a champion; and
- Deal with gentrification.

## Transitional Housing

- Newcomers;
- Aboriginal – Eagle Urban;
- Harm reduction models of housing;
- Identify the at risk groups – and plan for them;\*\*\*
- Some people want to be homeless;\*\*\* and
- Get rid of deserving and non-deserving attitudes.

## Group #4

- Increase EIA money for shelter;
- Protocol – not just homeless shelter;
- Service navigators (know your rights);
- More affordable housing (tax incentives);
- Registry (Winnipeg Rental Network?);
- Refundable Family tax benefit;
- Community supports, especially mental health;
- Education – know your rights;
- Financial resources for co-sign;
- Increasing amount of \$ available for EIA;
- Shelter allowance to 75% of median rate;
- How can all agencies work together to best support clients?;
- Service navigators to support clients in the system;
- Central intake system;
- More affordable housing;
- Definition of affordable housing is way too high;
- Increasing tax incentives – need for federal tax incentive;
- Refundable family tax benefit;
- Guaranteed annual income – (MINCOM Experiment);
- Education – people knowing their rights when they get evicted (\*\*PWLE strongly agree);
- Financial resources – people needing a co-signer with no resources/support when entering the market housing area (\*\*PWLE strongly agree); and
- Community supports.

## Group #5: Youth Aging Out of Care

- RaY Program (REST) Supported Apartment Living;
- Rent payment direct to landlord;
- Empower through employment;
- Better service integration for transitions, i.e., justice system;
- Centralized housing info/access;

- Better training/education for landlords/caretakers;
- Step up step down units (staff with high tolerance and training);
- Flexible housing EIA policies on providers, i.e., criteria rigid;
- Working more closely with First Nation leaders/communities; and
- Reserves – Winnipeg.

### **Top Five Priority Items**

After reporting back to the large group, the small groups of the Engagement Session met to select their top five action items. These results were reported back to the larger group and the facilitator tabulated the results. The number in brackets identifies the number of small groups that identified the item as a priority.

#### **1. More Rent-Geared-to-Income and Increased EIA Rates and Housing Allowance (3)**

- Adequate income and flexible funding policies for unique needs

#### **2. Increase Continuum of Types of Affordable Housing Options (2)**

- Harm reduction models with “no eviction” policies (2)
- Housing supply (Supply/demand/legislation to complement each other and take into account market needs)

#### **3. Centralized Services/Neighbourhood-based One Stop Shop (4)**

- Ongoing funding and services\*\*\* (Elders and PWLE strongly agree)
- Centralized referral services for supports for all services (addictions, etc.)
- Supports and funding from a trauma informed base
- Empowerment & client-centred to minimize system barriers
- Neighbourhood services – scattered headquarters – YIMBY versus NIMBY (“Yes, in my backyard” versus “Not in my backyard.”)
- One group suggested that a centralized intake/one-stop shopping idea does not necessarily have to happen in one building
  - In Thunder Bay, this resulted in increased demand
  - In Toronto, there is a model where there is a centralized headquarters but each neighbourhood has community access points for intake and accessing resources/support (centralized services with decentralized access/intake points)
- Centralized services/information/resources with supports of real life people

#### **4. Plans for and Fund Full Continuum and Variety of Supportive Housing Options**

- Detox -shelter - Bell - group home - seniors housing - institution - Rent geared to income - Co-ops - affordable market based supply
- Right points of housing at different points of transition

- Integrated housing services that are culturally appropriate - staff to understand the context and people they are dealing with\*\*\*
- Service Navigators\*\*\*
- Coordination/communication/collaboration between agencies – develop protocol among all to avoid

## 5. Meaningful employment and employment training (trade skills)

### B. Perspectives of People with Lived Experiences

#### UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG'S WI CHI WAKANAK CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on July 23rd, 2013 with people with lived experience from the University of Winnipeg's Wi Chi Wakanak Centre, participants made the following comments:

**M:** I am currently living with friends and have been homeless for many years. I work in the casual labour places and hope to become employed full-time in the future.

**F:** I also am staying with friends and am working in casual labour too. I can't get on social assistance because they said I am making too much money at the casual labour jobs. I like working but I can't earn enough for damage deposit and rent to get into housing.

**M:** I also am currently housed. I almost became homeless last year when I lost my job and didn't receive employment insurance benefits for weeks. Fortunately an advocate through At Home/ Chez Soi intervened with my landlord and prevented my eviction. It was through this intervention that I was able to maintain my residence and get through that crisis. I hope to find employment soon.

**M:** I have been housed through Nee Apin for three years now and have been able to gain custody of my son.

**M:** I am fortunate because I still have a home. I got hurt at work several years ago and almost lost my home.

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*When you come to Canada you want to have a house, but go to a place to get one, they ask, "Do you have a job? Do you have a person who can guarantee?" No, so you don't have a house.*

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The participants were asked what has helped them in finding a home. The following results were recorded:

*Facilitator's Note: The three individuals who were housed through Nee Apin stated that they were able to find housing through help from the workers. The workers provided support and advocacy to enable them to obtain identification and concrete assistance in finding housing. They talked about the rental subsidy that helped them find more housing options than the \$285 shelter allowance of EIA. The participants also stated that the workers continued to provide supports and advocacy after they became housed and this support was invaluable to their continued success.*

Two participants indicated that friends helping them were the reason they aren't homeless at the present time. These two individuals indicated that finding full-time employment would help. Another male also stated that he is currently receiving employment assistance benefits for the short-term but hopes to find work to maintain his present home.

**M:** I think homelessness will be a bigger problem ten years from now. There is a need to think past ten years. Lack of adequate housing on reserves leads to people coming to the city, adding to the homeless population. \$285 for shelter is a big obstacle.

When asked what some of the challenges and barriers to finding and maintaining a home are, the participants made the following comments:

No bank account – no identification.

*Note: Nee Apin has had success getting bank accounts opened through Assiniboine Credit Union as well as getting identification for people.*

**M:** I had difficulty getting identification and couldn't even get a status card because my parents weren't listed with my band. They lived there all their lives until their deaths. But Indian Affairs didn't have any information on them. I also was involved with CFS but couldn't get any information through Ontario CFS. Nee Apin did help to get EIA and housing.

**M:** I had outstanding payments from previous tenancies so I couldn't get a place until I paid all the arrears. This was a big obstacle.

When participants were asked what they thought was important to see in a Long-Term Homelessness Plan for Winnipeg, the participants made the following comments:

**F:** The plan should include services promoting housing stability. When a person is unstable for whatever reason, he or she needs a hand up, not to be treated harshly or evicted. When a person is struggling and not doing well, that's when services should be available to help. The plan should address resources for people in recovery from addictions to help them build sobriety. I know a person involved with At Home/Chez Soi who wasn't helped when he began to struggle and go downward.

**M:** There needs to be an eviction program to prevent them. I also think there should be a national housing strategy.

## MOUNT CARMEL CLINIC FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on August 27th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Mount Carmel Clinic, the participants made the following comments, when asked to identify what has been most challenging since they have been in the program:

**M:** Loneliness is my biggest challenge. So I end up drinking with my buddies and sometimes do things to get myself into trouble. Sometimes my drinking friends will come and sleep over, causing problems in my building. I get evicted.

**M:** I have been with ACT (Assertive Community Treatment) for four years. I have been sniffing for five years and I lost my last few places when I was sniffing with my friends.

**F:** I have been drinking for many years – I lost my kids to CFS and have been trying to quit drinking through culture ways.

**M:** I have problems with relationships and alcohol. I would like to have a good relationship and my own place.

**M:** Evictions are hard to fight – the landlord always keeps the damage deposit saying that you or your friends cause damage.

## SILOAM MISSION FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group held at the Siloam Mission on June 27th, 2013 with people with lived experience from the Emergency Shelter System the participants made the following comments.

- Participants supported the following strategies identified by the Task Force in the area of prevention of homelessness:  
Support vulnerable people with improved access to government benefits to increase their income;
- Streamline access to housing and support services (in mental health and addictions etc.);
- Initiate changes to discharge policies and practices for individuals coming from hospitals, child welfare, justice etc.

Participants were asked “What programs of service could help people who are homeless?” They responded with the following comments:

**M:** A job centre. Education. Some people can't read and write. Some kid is condescending to you with a form. Just basics. Easier access to services. Centralized services. I'm with Opportunities for Employment. They do resumes with you. Something better set up – to go to various companies – most companies don't advertise anymore. It's through placement. Agencies. Identification (ID) – some people don't have ID. IDs are expensive. There's no one to help you. It's \$200 to \$300 to get your ID. Try to open a bank account- they check your credit now. You can say no, but then they won't do it.

**M:** My IDs. I can't go anywhere without showing your ID, especially Manitoba Health.

Participants were asked, “What other things would help you?” They made the following comments:

**F:** In five years, the crime rates are going to go through the roof, if nothing changes.

**M:** There’s a lot of money that flows through a reservation, without being invested in the people. I’m not judging the non-native people here, but there’s a cry that we put so much money into native people. There’s a lot of money put into the bureaucracy of native people but not into the people. To say there’s no economy on the reserve is not correct. The money is not being invested in the people. You’re forced to come to Winnipeg. The native people are not wanted there. The thinking that native people are a burden needs to change. Like in Sapatoweyak. The nearest town nearby, in Mafeking, in the Swan River region, there is such discrimination. That attitude has to change.

#### PATAL VOCATIONAL CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on March 13th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Patal Vocational Centre, the participants made the following comments:

Three women described their experience with homelessness and the child welfare system:

- Little support from the workers or the social services networks for women;
- Lack of housing for families in transition and times of difficulty;
- Child welfare system provided limited options and mostly targeted toward giving up child custody rights.
- The women stated they had so many obstacles to overcome once confronted with the child welfare system.

When describing the causes leading to homelessness, participants made the following comments:

- Family and relationship issues were the primary causes leading to homelessness for nine participants;
- Financial hardships;
- Addictions;
- Involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Interestingly, family and relationship issues were listed as primary causes leading to homelessness. However, other factors were discussed and at times a combination of issues was noted as having contributed to the individual’s shelter situation.
- The following section illustrates participants’ recommendations to overcome these barriers.

#### **Supports and services that help when looking for housing:**

- All participants felt that independence was important, and can be achieved by obtaining life skills, job training, and employment were necessary skills;
- Places like Patal which offer training, certifications, and employment were seen as important;
- A service centre for Aboriginal people who are homeless was discussed, especially the need

- for a centre assisting and supporting individuals from northern communities;
- Support services should be customized to individual needs and centralized for people to access identification, education, training and employment pathways, and resources for addictions treatment;
- Support centres need skilled workers who are trauma informed and staff who are culturally sensitive; and
- Budget and money management skills were highlighted as a way to help maintain housing and positive lifestyle.

When asked what kinds of supports and services would help them maintain housing, some participants identified that it is very important to learn about and know about their rights under the Residential Tenancy Act. Other comments were as follows:

**M:** I realized that every time that we moved, and it was usually midnight moves because we did not understand our rights, and the landlord would tell us we had to get out (24 hour notice), so we'd move in the middle of the night with a shopping cart. I see all the time where people's rights are literally just cast aside because they don't know, or they're afraid to ask.

**M:** Lack of representation, and our rights with the residential tenancy branch. We're told by our landlords to get out, but in reality it takes 3 months to get rid of somebody.

**M:** Life skills courses, coming from (being) homeless, you have a lot of challenges, so how to do your laundry, and how to go shopping, (it would help if courses were) tailored to each person, everyone is different. Sobriety (programs) – because then you can manage your money better – emergency call lines should be there, to help in crisis, the John Howard Society, self-help groups, place to find those things... counselling to speak for your people where we need to go in ways that are culturally appropriate, representation for Aboriginal people because once we're off rez we have no one to turn to and we are unaware of our rights, coming from rez, I don't know where to go pay my bills, do banking, or how to handle money – (I don't know what to do when) landlords are not fixing things, and we have no way to deal with that, and we don't have references and credit history.

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*M: You cannot even get a driver's license if you've lived a life with some crime. When you come out of jail, you're dropped off, and there you are. Where can you go? There are no choices. \$10 for a SIN card. Months before you get any money from welfare. For myself, I would just commit a crime just to go back to jail...at least there's somewhere to go. And that's becoming more and more of an option.*

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**F:** Places like this and night school courses in particular are very important. Being homeless has many challenges, and you need life skills for shopping for yourself and do your laundry and cooking. It is individual basis for each person in specific situations.

**M:** Sobriety is most important. You can manage your money better, rather than thinking “It’s Friday. I can have a drink.”

*Facilitator’s Note: The participants described a multitude of challenges and obstacles facing individuals looking for shelter, housing, or people coming out of jail, and a lack of quality, affordable housing. They describe a status of invisibility and invalidation conferred upon them by societal stereotypes, discrimination and racism. The invisibility struggles begin trying to obtain identification so one can access other services. They would like to find answers but have many hoops to jump through to find solutions. The participants felt that having a one-stop place of service would provide some answers, direction, information, support, and advocacy. This centre would have to be operated with cultural safety and awareness of Indigenous issues and traditions.*

**M:** Representation for Aboriginal people. Once we’re off reserves, we have no representation here. We have no one to turn to. We are unaware of our rights. We do need representation. We can go to our welfare worker and try to explain things, but they have little or no interest whatsoever. We have no idea about mediation or how to use it; we don’t know we are entitled to it. We have to go to court. They need to change the laws. You come from living on the reserve, where you don’t have much, but things are given, so coming to the city, we need to learn how to pay the water bill, how to pay hydro. Sometimes if you’re going to be late on rent, calling the landlord and talking about it can go a long way just to work things out, rather than sneaking into your building to avoid the problem. People just don’t know or understand that. We need representation even when it comes to getting a place. Nowadays, you need references and credit checks to get a place. It’s getting harder, and there are going to be more and more homeless people out there because of bad credit. I don’t agree with that. Basically, you’re denying someone a place to live based on their credit history. That is totally wrong on all levels. People need a place to live. What will welfare do? They say “we’ll contact that person” but they never do. And then you lose out. I’ve seen that countless times.

**M:** Welfare say they help but don’t do anything, (we need an) urban organization to represent and help, (create a) handbook for how to do all this stuff. We are scared to ask, and worried about what people will think.

**M:** Some offices you go to have maps and numbers. I don’t know if it’s possible, but they should have a machine that can do your IDs, an office with one simple thing to do everything right there to get your IDs.

**M:** You need a one-stop shop to go for support and get these services for ID.

**M:** We need ID. Lots of us don’t have it, and you can’t get a job or go to transit for a subsidized bus pass or to welfare. We cannot do lots of things without it.

**M:** You cannot even get a driver's license if you've lived a life with some crime. When you come out of jail, you're dropped off, and there you are. Where can you go? There are no choices. \$10 for a Social Insurance Number (SIN) card. Months before you get any money from welfare. For myself, I would just commit a crime just to go back to jail...at least there's somewhere to go. And that's becoming more and more of an option.

**F:** Sometimes when you're on welfare, you have to do certain things, and if you don't, they cut you off and you become homeless. A big problem with the system. They want to help, but if you don't comply, they cut you off, and you become homeless.

**F:** Before starting school, I was on a job search every day. I couldn't find a job. It's tough...you need computer skills. That was a barrier for me, so my cousin suggested I come here to Patal because they have computer courses. I'll do this, and maybe down the road I can find a good job. I need skills.

**M:** We're worried what people will think, because people have a bad perception of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, in a large part because of the way the media portrays us. I look at some of these hurtful, racist comments. 300 year old hate that people put in there...it's just crazy! We are not all a bunch of drunks and we all don't have 50 kids and that type of stuff. [They think] our status card is like a credit card, and we get free trucks every couple of years.

### NDINAWEMAAGANAG ENDAAWAAD (NDINAWE) FOCUS GROUP

A Focus Group was held on December 3rd, 2013 with three young people with lived experience who were or are living in the Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Second Stage Housing Unit, which offers supportive independent living opportunities in a 12 suite building for youth between the ages of 16 and 17 years. During this Focus Group, the participants made the following comments:

**M:** I was selling drugs, was arrested, sentenced and ended up in the Turning the Tides program (a gang intervention initiative). I attended the program and was still selling drugs. The program workers helped me get a job and I quit selling drugs.

**M:** I was in the Ndinawe emergency youth shelter and moved here. I just turned 18 and have a 6-month extension in care so I can finish my grade 12.

**F:** I was in care and was advised by my worker about the second stage home and ended up here.

**M:** I stay with relatives and emergency places – sometimes I could go home to my reserve and stay there for a while.

When asked about what kinds of supports or services would help young people who are looking to overcome these obstacles, the participants made the following comments:

**M:** Right now, I live in Fort Rouge after I got kicked out of my mom's house. My girlfriend's grand-

mother has helped out a lot. EIA is not much help so I usually go to temporary services agencies for work. I would like to find a full time job.

When asked what is most important in preventing homelessness for youth, participants made the following comments:

**F:** Ndinawe has a good program for young people. Young people should follow the program and commit to it.

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***M:** I think that getting an extension after I turned 18 was the most helpful for me. I wouldn't have been able to stay in school if I didn't. My family is not able to help me right now.*

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**M:** I agree that it is best if they followed through with the programs they start here. I have been involved here since I was 16 and there are lots of programs if someone wants to commit. Some young people attend a community centre on Broadway that had a studio to help with people who enjoy music.

#### RESOURCE ASSISTANCE FOR YOUTH (RAY) FOCUS GROUP

A focus group was held on December 9th at RaY, a non-profit street-level agency working with street-entrenched and homeless youth up to the ages of 29 years. Participants made the following comments:

**M:** I just got out of federal prison. People who knew me told me about RaY.

**M:** I'm 24 and I have been homeless for 11 years. My dog keeps me alive.

**F:** I have been mostly on street since 10. I am now 29.

**M:** I have been in out of situations (sometimes housed, sometimes homeless) for five years.

**M:** I have been homeless for so many years.

**F:** I have been homeless for a few years since the divorce of my parents and become addicted to drugs.

**M:** I have been surviving on the street on and off since the age of 11; I joined a gang.

**M:** I was in CFS until I was 18 when ran off away from group home. I am homeless when I was 21 for a few months and now homeless again. I don't have a criminal record. I found RaY and they are a family that is helping me.

When asked what the obstacles are for young people in finding housing, the participants made the following comments:<sup>9</sup>

**Y:** No ID (mentioned by many youth).

**Y:** Not on welfare.

**Y:** Specific requirements, like rental history.

**Y:** Young people need parental consent.

**Y:** Can totally work but because you don't have a home it's hard to sleep at night; so it's hard to get up and go to work.

**Y:** I just turned 18 and need help but no places to help; can barely help me get on social assistance.

When asked what kind of supports or services would help young people looking for housing, the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** There should be a central place to get ID – a one-stop shop; you shouldn't have to call one company and then call another.

**Y:** Set up work programs; help us get jobs and into a job field that gives you a permanent job. Here all you can get is odd jobs. The odd jobs are good for money but we need real job skills and experience.

When asked what services have proven to be the most helpful to young people, the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** I thought about getting drunk to get thrown into the drunk tank.

**Y:** More programs for managing money; some of us don't know how to manage money; half of us here will get their cheque and then go drink.

**Y:** When I was in jail there was a program – talk about gambling, homelessness. Programs like that are good.

**Y:** Being homeless teaches you how to save money; every time I spend I think about how I'm spending now. Before I was homeless, I didn't think about those things.

When asked in an individual interview where the participant went when they needed emergency shelter, the participant made following the comment:<sup>10</sup>

**Y:** I was homeless when I was 17 too; I've been homeless a lot of times.

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<sup>9</sup> Please note that gender was not recorded for the youth of this session. "Y" is used to connote a youth participant.

<sup>10</sup> Please note that in one of the focus groups, a participant was interviewed on an individual basis due to a scheduling issue.

When asked in an individual interview what obstacles exist to getting a house, the participant made following the comments:

**Y:** Getting a job, especially if you have a criminal record. I applied to so many places but never had a call back.

When asked in an individual interview what services and resources would prevent homelessness, the participant made the following comments:

**Y:** You have to be aware there are a lot of different stories, and people coming from different place.

**Y:** I would say family but not everyone has that, and sometimes your family can be a negative influence.

**Y:** I made it to grade 11; had a kid when I was 20 – it was a big hit for me. I focused on being there for my family and didn't focus on school/a job. I was making money on the street and had to be around for my kid because my parents weren't around.

**Y:** Looking for an apartment that is in a safe neighbourhood for my four year old daughter.

### **C. Perspectives of the Elders' Council**

On September 17th a dialogue took place between the Task Force Members and the Elders' Council. In response to a review of the work of the Prevention of Homelessness Sub-Group, the Elders' Council made the following observations.

Although unable to attend the meeting, Mae Louise Campbell provided feedback on the sub-group report that Don Robinson, Facilitator, conveyed at this meeting. Ms. Campbell stated that in her work at Red River Community College, students struggle with finding safe and affordable housing creating homelessness situations. She supported the idea of rent banks and a housing registry, and services to help individuals find housing.

Bertha Fontaine responded on the issue of homelessness and how it impacts on the people in treatment and their counsellors. Both the counsellors and the clientele of the programs focus efforts on finding housing, which takes away from the addictions treatment issues. She also advised that Native Addictions of Manitoba at one time used to serve the inmate population but couldn't continue due to funding cut-backs. In their experience, they found that inmates need to have access to culturally relevant services once they are released in order to continue their journey into the community in a healthy way. She supported prevention initiatives for inmates leaving institutions to include culturally relevant services and housing.

Jo Jo supported the need for trauma informed services and the culturally relevant supports. Native Women's Transition Centre, where she works, helps women coming from prisons and women involved with the child welfare system. Jo Jo stated the importance of a holistic approach based on life skills, budgeting, literacy, finding housing and transitioning to the community.

Elders Bertha and Jo Jo identified the issues facing women involved with the child welfare system and the role systems play in creating obstacles. These issues involve child welfare, housing services, employment and income assistance. As an example, women in treatment need to have a three-bedroom home before the children are returned but they do not have the EIA rental budget for this because they do not have their children in their care.

## **D. Summary of Consistent Messages**

### **PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS**

There were many challenges to preventing homelessness identified by people in Winnipeg, and many proposed solutions for youth, women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, and those with disabilities (including mental health illnesses) and addictions.

One priority area in preventing homelessness identified was to increase the availability of "rent geared to income" options, to increase Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) rates and specifically the housing allowance levels. These increases are needed in order to provide an adequate income to secure housing, which would be most effective if supported by flexible funding policies for unique needs.

Another priority area for action identified by people was increased capacity on the full the full continuum of supportive housing options, which was strongly supported by people with lived experiences. This continuum spans detoxification centres, to shelters, to congregate Housing First-type models of housing, to group homes, to seniors housing, to rent-geared-to-income housing, to cooperatives, to affordable market-based supply. It includes harm reduction models with "no eviction" policies. It was noted that culturally appropriate integrated housing services are required, as is greater coordination between agencies (perhaps through the development of protocols).

Furthermore, service navigators to assist clients in finding the housing and support services required would be very beneficial. It was also suggested that there could be an establishment of centralized services, or a neighbourhood-based, "one stop shop" an idea supported by the Elders' Council and people with lived experiences, including youth. A Centre could provide services such as a centralized referral service that would provide information on the continuum of supports required.

The Elders' Council and people with lived experiences also emphasized that Indigenous

people coming in from the reserves too frequently get lost in the system.

People with lived experiences emphasized the need for education and training to provide the skills, knowledge and expertise needed to make a living and to live independently. Young people with lived experience emphasized this, noting that it was difficult to find full time employment and that this can be particularly the case for youth who have a criminal record or for young parents.

Training on rights under the Residential Tenancy Act was also identified as a need to avoid “midnight moving” in response to landlords issuing unlawful 24 eviction notices. There is also a need for anti-racism and anti-discrimination training of workers and landlords to address frequently cited experiences of discrimination faced by Indigenous people and newcomers, in particular.

The need for services that facilitate people receiving personal identification was highlighted by community organizations, Indigenous peoples, (including the Elders’ Council) and people with lived experience. Lack of documents is a serious barrier to housing stability, along with the need for a credit check and a rental history that can make securing a tenancy insurmountable for many people. This was also mentioned by young people “aging out of care”. Young people with lived experience identified the need for a one stop shop that included helping youth to secure identification.

Discharge policies and practices for individuals coming out of hospitals, the justice system and the child welfare systems were raised as important to preventing homelessness. Without a change to the current systems, individuals will continue to cycle back to emergency shelters, often for long periods of time, or, sometimes, re-offend for the purposes of securing a warm, safe, affordable place to go, or re-admit oneself to the hospital for the same reasons.

Youth aging out of care require a coordinated continuum of adequately resourced supports, to assist in giving them the life skills necessary to thrive in adulthood. These solutions are legislative, policy and programmatic in nature and include transitional planning, system navigators, a rent bank, money management programs, employment and income assistance workers trained to support youth in care and those aging out of care and specific supports for Aboriginal families and communities.

The particular needs of women, including supports to address involvement with the child welfare system, continuous supports in the face of eviction due to violence, family involvement and addictions, require targeted supports. This was supported by people with lived experiences and the Elders’ Council.

Education on tenant rights under the Residential Tenancy Act is needed, as highlighted by people with lived experiences, in order to prevent “midnight moves” in cases where

landlords unlawfully issue 24 hour eviction notices.

Many community organizations and people with lived experiences, including youth, as well as the Elders' Council, emphasized the need to assist people in obtaining identification.

Finally, meaningful employment and training (such as trade skills) is needed, as voiced strongly by people with lived experience, particularly youth. For children aging out of care, there is a need to provide life skills and supportive housing. Where individuals are transitioning out of systems, such as the child welfare system, First Nations communities (into the city) or the justice system, training, policy changes and supportive housing for these populations can be of value in preventing homelessness. Young people with lived experiences identified that extensions of care provided educational opportunities that are beneficial in preventing homelessness.

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## 2. Emergency Shelters, Continuum of Housing, Health and Social Services

### A. Community Perspectives from the Engagement Session

Participants at this Engagement Session were asked to identify actions that need to be taken in order to assist people to move from emergency shelters to permanent housing, to provide appropriate, affordable choices of housing across the continuum of housing, and to provide adequate health and social services to support housing of marginalized individuals seeking housing. The following comments were made:

When asked to identify the needs, the participants of the Engagement Session set out the following:

- More affordable housing;
- More funding for organizations;
- More screening for mental health issues;
- More “all in one” facilities (including mental health, addictions, medical, dental, optical care, clothing, computer access, case management/life skills and bus fare);
- Weekly or monthly meetings with homeless people to hear from them;
- Access to daytime facilities;
- Training of the police force (regarding homeless people, Indigenous peoples, and mental health issues);
- Work programs offered by the private sector (that allow for building up 2 hour per week to longer periods and for job shadowing);
- Increased EIA allowance (i.e. to \$600-700/month for shelter for a single person);
- Increased EIA for additional income when living in a shelter;
- Access to EIA when a person does not have an address;
- Support to receiving photo identification;

- Accessible banking services (to avoid costly instant bank services); and
- More recreational activities.

## **B. Perspectives of People with Lived Experiences**

### UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG'S WI CHI WAKANAK CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on July 23rd, 2013 with people with lived experience from University of Winnipeg's Wi Chi Wakanak Centre, the participants made the following comments:

**F:** I am currently housed and living with my common-law. It is through his support that I was able to overcome the serious addictions that I was struggling with.

**M:** I have been housed for three years through Nee Apin. The program helped with advocacy and with housing to get me out of [the shelter system]. I felt like I was trapped in the hostel because it gets paid to keep me there.

**M:** I agree about getting trapped – I had a similar experience. Although it helped me, I felt like I would be there for a long time. I have now been housed for three years too through Nee Apin.

Facilitators Note: One individual stated that she was able to seek treatment for addictions and now feels stable in her relationship and home. When she was struggling with severe addictions, she stated that she was always in crisis and homeless.

**M:** I had lost confidence in even trying to look for housing after getting rejections time and again. So the block I would say is self-confidence and low self-esteem. There are so many barriers in beginning to look for housing; for example, when I make an appointment to look at a place, when I get there, I am told it's already taken. It takes time to get to see the place and sometimes I didn't have the bus fare. Lack of bus fare is a big obstacle.

**M:** It is hard to find any place for \$285.00 so I know people use other money (food money) in order to find any place (other participants affirmed this comment).

**M:** Besides having limited mobility, having no phone is another obstacle. When you do find a place, you sometimes go back and forth to get a rent form from EIA, the landlord has to sign it, then take it back to EIA. When you have no phone, you have to leave contact numbers like Salvation Army or Main Street Project, landlords don't want to rent to someone from the street. (another individual commented on this aspect stating someone from the Main Street area is not welcome).

**M:** Shelters can be an obstacle and a trap. A person is drawn into the emergency system and stays in it.

**M:** In the shelters, you can't have anything because you have no place to keep things. You can't save up items or money, you end up feeling stuck.

**M:** The vacancy rate is low (no places available), plus I had no references.

**F:** I think addictions are a big obstacle for many people. As I stated, I had severe problems and was able to seek help and treatment. I know there is Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Urban Eagle helps with referral to resources. If people don't admit they have a problem, they will continue to struggle with homelessness.

When asked if access to services is a barrier, this same female responded: many people are able to find services, supports and emergency shelter fairly easy. I think that people who are disabled or challenged; mentally or physically, find it more difficult to access these services.

**M:** I think programs like Nee Apin need to continue. I am worried about what will happen if the program is cut. What will happen to us and the other Nee Apin clients?

**M:** EIA is already starting to reassign the case managers who had been assigned to Nee Apin specifically. Now the reassigned case managers are back to business as usual; meaning the At Home/Chez Soi constituents (program participants) are not given any consideration of being in Nee Apin. They may lose the disability benefits that were part of the At Home/Chez Soi agreement with EIA.

**M:** Spirituality needs to be considered for people to address issues related to the past. Spirituality is an answer for people who have lost connections to their land base, culture, and traditions.

**M:** Services should include getting people involved in social, spiritual, and cultural activities.

**M:** I would like to see out of the city lodges, homes, or shelters.

#### MOUNT CARMEL CLINIC FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on August 27th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Mount Carmel Clinic, the participants made the following comments:

**M:** I have medications that I am supposed to take. The ACT team makes sure that I take my medications every day.

**M:** The [ACT] team always helps you, never shuts the door on you even when you screw up.

**M:** The [ACT] team members advocate for me with EIA and housing.

**F:** I like the culture programs that the team take us to in the city. They have programs in the city that ACT workers take us to.

**M:** I was able to get furniture and basics when I moved into my own place. I had nothing at all so I was glad they helped.

Participants supported the following strategies in this area:

### 1. Emergency shelter and rapid re-housing:

- Develop an outreach strategy for individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness including hiring case managers/multi-disciplinary team to provide ongoing support.

### 2. Social services to maintain housing and wellness:

- Develop or expand Housing First programs;
- Ensure a case manager/multi-disciplinary team is available to any individual at-risk of homelessness; and
- Provide access to more training/employment skills and placement programs for housing first participants.

### 3. Enhance the capacity of the social service network:

- Build capacity/professional development for front-line workers.

#### SILOAM MISSION FOCUS GROUP

A Focus Group was held at the Siloam Mission on June 27th, 2013 with people with lived experience from the emergency shelter system.

Participants were asked “Can you please tell me a little about yourself and how long have you been homeless?” their responses were:

**M:** I’m from [a] Cree Nation up north. I came here two weeks ago. I like the system. I like getting up at quarter to seven. I like going to bed to rest around eight pm. Where I come from, kids don’t like going to bed. They like getting up at 11 or 12 o’clock. They like going to bed around 4 in the morning or 2 a.m. It’s crazy. When I become an elder I’m going build a shelter up there.

**F:** I’ve been here since October 3rd of 2011. I was in an abusive relationship and learned the hard way how to survive. I came back here this year. It’s been quite a hardship, especially for a female.

**F:** I’ve been homeless basically since March. I was staying with friends, before that, but that didn’t work out.

**M:** I’ve been staying at [a shelter] since April 26th. I’ve stayed here since then. Tomorrow I’m moving to Madison House. I made a plan when I came in, so my plan worked out so I’m happy.

**M:** I’ve been here since July 2010. Most recently, since the end of April. The hardest thing is to find a full-time job again, especially at my age.

**M:** I’ve been staying here a year and a half. I’ve had a separation and suffer from depression.

Participants were asked “What programs of service could help people who are homeless?” they responded:

**M:** I had to go through detox. They rushed me through. I’m looking for work now.

**M:** A few months ago, [the shelter] was taking applications for Bell Foundation, which initially was set up for the Bell Hotel. They have affordable housing. My application was accepted – they help you all the way along. I’m over fifty-five. I’ve been filling out forms. I’m finished the forms. I have an advocate, through Canadian Mental Health/Manitoba Mental Health. They’re very good at helping you find subsidized housing.

**M:** They don’t give you enough information about programs that are available.

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*M: You get free clothes, but you are forced to get something new every time and you are forced to throw away a lot. I see a lot of waste. There are no laundry facilities.*

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Participants were asked, “What other things would help you?”

**F:** Money. They need to take a look at the cost of living. Some people with different skills, retrain them and get them back to work. There’s no plan that helps with that. I’ve been in five provinces. This one is definitely the worst. In Alberta there’s help there. In Calgary and Edmonton it’s excellent. At every step there’s help.

**M:** It would be good to have place to put your stuff - a locker. If you go to a job, you have to take your stuff with you. You can’t leave it laying around because people will steal it from you. You get very angry.

**M:** You’re stuck with your stuff, when there’s stuff you have to go and do.

**M:** You need more secure places for your stuff. A cage, with a lock and key, that you can have access to everyday. So you don’t have to stay there.

On being female and homeless:

**F:** It’s hard to get ahead. I’ve been struggling to get onto Employment Insurance (EI). My advocate has done a lot. It’s not easy sitting and waiting. You try to keep yourself busy in a non-destructive way.

**F:** Does this make sense to you? You can’t be on welfare and go to school. You need to be available for work. They want you to work. They want you to better yourself. But you can’t get your grade 12. Education is a barrier.

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*M: More flexible hours. I could get an evening job, but they won't save a bed for you here. You have to be here at a certain time.*

*M: They are trying to change it. Right now you have to get a day job and get back here by 8:15 p.m. to get your number or you are out of luck – especially in the winter. If the [shelter] is full, you have to go to the bus shack. Some of the bus shelters are heated.*

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#### PATAL VOCATIONAL CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on March 13th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Patal Vocational Centre, the participants made the following comments, when asked to talk a bit about themselves and their experiences with being homeless:

**M:** I've been affected by homelessness many times in my life. I've lived in a small town, became homeless, and thinking the solution was to move to Winnipeg only to find more homelessness. When I think of homelessness I always think of being alone. I've lived on the streets, and the tracks not far from here. I've used Salvation Army and Siloam. I've resorted to stealing. Growing up with my mother and my brother, we lived in a hotel. That is where we stayed. During that time, I honestly thought this was normal; when I was young, living in a hotel was normal. I thought going to Salvation Army or Siloam was normal. You do lose your identity when you're homeless. You are just a shadow, even amongst other homeless people. But again, we look at a homeless person; that is someone's sister, mother, brother, aunt, uncle. Every time you move, you're losing a piece of your identity. And one day I looked at my desk, and I had this little plastic bag with two pictures in it.

When participants were asked what they believed the cause of homelessness was for them or if they would like to share the events that led up their homelessness, they made the following comments:

**M:** Family for me, too. Not abused, but did not get chance to talk. Raised by my granny since 16 for about 10 years. Doing stuff, I had problems in school. I got older and figured out on my own after 18 I did not want anyone telling me what to do. I'm kind of a little unbalanced between right and wrong. I do a lot of things, I have habits for drinking and smoking up, go to jail again. Follow the path that is not the right thing to do. Trying to be on the right side and talk to the right people, who can help me. I don't want to fall off the wagon, stay on track. I have problems with people telling me what to do, this and that. If people are pushing, but if they listen and I listen to them, I

could be fine. I can behave and go all the way with my goals. I got to do what I got to do.

**M:** My homelessness started in a way that is kind of hereditary. My mother did not have education or resources. She's not a bad person, but she lacked resources. My mom did not have education, and did not know where to ask for help. It is very hard to walk in to Salvation Army or Siloam and admit that. I was homeless because of my mom's lack of resources (I don't want to call it shortcomings). I grew up not knowing about resources; it gets passed from generation to generation. I myself have tried to break that.

Three of the women shared their experiences with the child welfare system and one man described his experiences as a youth in care. The women in particular describe a lack of family housing options, lack of advocacy, and a lack of support in the system.

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*M: When we look at a homeless person; that is someone's sister, mother, brother, aunt, uncle. We are all born good in the Creator's eyes. We all dream of being a fireman or a policeman or a nurse, but what happens is we tend to grow up too quickly with homelessness. We start surviving and we never really truly live. At the base of it all we are all good people, we just make choices that lead to addictions that lead to homelessness.*

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**F:** I had to give them my daughter before they would help me with resources. I actually gave them my daughter for a year. The order is coming up this year, and they told me I have to do certain things, but I don't know what to do because no one told me. The lawyer is supposed to help. I've been through 20 CFS workers in this past year, yet no CFS worker is available to help me get my daughter back. It's tough... I've been in hotel rooms, and once in a while they come check on me, CFS has told me that if I turn my child over they would give me the help I need. No one is telling me anything and I don't know when I will get my daughter back. They get you to sign things (you don't know what you are signing).

**F:** There is no place for families – and if you report the place you are staying they remove you – and the CFS worker was not giving me fair/accurate information about what my options were – we need people willing to help and hold our hands

**F:** Where are the shelters for families? Unless there is abuse, what can you do? CFS stepped in when the hotel was in bad shape with mold. They give you very little time to find a place before they wanted to take my daughter away.

When participants were asked what resources were needed, the following comments were made:

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*F: There are lots of people here with mental issues. They can't even help themselves. Elderly people — 70-80 year old people shouldn't be here. A 78 year old man — he shouldn't have to be here.*

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**F:** It's the little things. CFS wanted my daughter to be in school, which is fine. They provided a bus pass for me, but not my daughter. I had to walk with her a long ways in -45 weather. Not everyone can do that. I am thankful I have a strong little girl who is always one foot in front of the other and never gives up. I'd like to share a story. When we were told to leave the shelter, CFS took us to a hotel, my daughter said, "Thanks for having a big mouth, Mommy." I didn't know how to take it at the time. At first I was like "why do you say that?" She said, "Now we don't have to sleep there, we can sleep here." It was like night and day to her. She was so much better. It's those little things that matter most, and we need to realize that. I was able to advocate strongly for myself but what about those who are not able to speak up or be heard?

**F:** You need someone to call. 24 hour support. A help line. You need to feel you can pick up the phone or go down somewhere you can talk to someone right away.

**M:** Counselling. Speak with your people. Speaking publicly for and with others.

**F:** Yes, we're not all the same. We need individualized help.

**F:** And getting the communities on board. People in the community look down on you if there's a centre in their neighbourhood. Get the community involved. Some sort of volunteer programs.

### **Lived Experience Story**

This individual was an Indigenous man, aged 57, who had been homeless since May 2013 after his employment insurance benefits terminated. He has been living at the Siloam Mission and has been unsuccessful in his search for employment.

**Interviewer:** What has been your experience with the emergency shelter system?

I am glad to have a bed, food, and place to sleep. I do find it difficult that if I have appointments somewhere during the day, I have to choose to miss meals so I go hungry if I don't have any money to buy something. I prefer Siloam Mission to Salvation Army or Main Street Project because it is cleaner. I am struggling with trying to find employment and maintain my job search.

**Interviewer:** What do you see is currently not working in the emergency shelter system?

For women, I see the major obstacles for homeless women are rape, physical abuse, mental health issues, addictions, affordable housing, no family or social supports, giving up on life, and living downtown. It is more dangerous for women in the Main Street area.

For men, I think the major challenges for homeless men are violence, mental health issues, addictions, affordable housing, no family or social supports, giving up on life, living downtown and work.

**Interviewer:** What needs to be changed with the emergency shelter system to meet the needs of people who are homeless?

**M:** Sitting here listening to everyone was good. Watching the homeless people outside, if social services gave more rent money, people would not have as hard a time.

## LIVED EXPERIENCE STORY

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For men, I think the major challenges for homeless men are violence, mental health issues, addictions, affordable housing, no family or social supports, giving up on life, living downtown and work.

**Interviewer:** What needs to be changed with the emergency shelter system to meet the needs of people who are homeless?

One of the major supports could be a housing support worker. Who could help them with finding a home. They would need a phone number for contact with possible landlords. The information that they may need is all the community supports that are available to them.

Once they find housing what kinds of supports and/or services would help people maintain their housing. They would need a case worker who could point out all the options that are available to them. The services needed could be upgrading, career planning, counseling, life skills and crisis intervention.

I am aware of the housing first model. This is an excellent model to deal with homelessness. When people are given a home without having to go through hoops. The ones who are ready and want to accept the responsibility and are willing to change will prosper. The ones who are not ready to accept the responsibility will have problems keeping their home. They will then need to address the issues that stop them from having a home. I believe that by giving a person a chance the majority will succeed.

#### WIICHIWAAKAANAK LEARNING CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

A Focus Group was held on May 28th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Wiichii-waakaanak Learning Centre.

*Facilitator's Note: The Lived Experience Circle (LEC) was formed in the Fall of 2010 as a request from the At Home/Chez Soi local Site Manager to establish a vehicle by which the local participants of the Winnipeg Site could voice their opinions and feedback in terms of the over-all workings of the project. Also, as a vehicle for enhanced peer involvement and engagement.*

The Mental Health Commission of Canada supports the in-depth knowledge and contributions of persons who have experience with mental health or homelessness. The At Home/Chez Soi Research Demonstration Project in Mental Health & Homelessness Winnipeg Site has established a local Lived Experience Circle Committee comprised of interested members/Participants in the project who have “lived experience” with homelessness and/or mental health issues. In other city sites involved in the study, various panels have been developed comprised of consumers. As the Winnipeg Site Study focuses on a large number of people who are of Aboriginal descent with lived experience, the project has established an Aboriginal Lens Committee that provides guidance and advice on the overall research project.

In addition, LEC operates with guidance from the Aboriginal Lens Committee and has been identified as a valuable resource that provides insight and contributions to the overall experiences of Participants in the project and of the project itself. The LEC is inclusive of all participants in the research project, is multi-racial and does not discriminate by sex, gender or nationality.

When participants were asked what they thought were the At Home/Chez Soi project's greatest strengths, they made the following comments:

“It gave us an avenue to learn about the true historical facts and historical aspects of the Aboriginal people of Canada. We learned things that some of us had no idea to the negative things that were done to the Aboriginal people of this country.”

“We learned about Sweats, Teachings, Healing and Sharing.”

“Participants learned about the barriers and policies of the various government systems such as Justice, Child & Family Services, Education, etc.”

“To be a part of the ‘Focusing the Frame’ project and to tell our stories in pictures. It is good to know that today it is a traveling exhibition and that various people throughout the country will learn from our experiences.”

“It allowed our mental and physical health to improve.”

“Outings within our respective Service Provider and the activities generated by the LEC allowed for a greater socialization in a positive manner.”

“Allowed me to regain some of the friendships lost between family and friends!”

When participants were asked what the greatest successes of the LEC were, they made the following comments:

“It gave us an opportunity to be able to organize and to come together in a non-threatening environment to support one another. By being in touch with the right people as a whole. To not be afraid to tell your stories to the researchers knowing that they were sensitive to your issues and to your situation.”

“It improved my life!”

“Made it easier to access various services and overcoming barriers, built confidence!”

“Allowed you to take a chance in life!”

“It gave us hope, sleep better, helped to accept changes!”

When participants were asked what the greatest challenges of the LEC were, they made the following comments:

“In two words, ‘Housing and Services. The greatest challenge was to access Housing. Although there were many good people working on this, this was still a big challenge, especially with the vacancy rate in Winnipeg being so low.’”

“The other big challenge was the accessing of much-needed services and the complexity of making sense of the services and all the barriers involved in accessing them.”

When participants were asked what changes they would recommend going forward, they made the following comments:

Provisions have to be made for a Crisis Residence (24/7) staffed with nurses, social workers, psychologists, trauma assistants, etc.

Equal treatment to that given to the Immigrant population in that everything is provided to them when they arrive and here we are, Treaty People, who do not get anything.

That the LEC be established as a non-profit organization with the ability to apply for grants, etc.

Now that all the Research is done, all homeless individuals should be housed.

When participants were asked what future plans they would recommend going forward, they made the following comments:

That the LEC continue relationship building and peer support be enhanced upon.

Based on your experiences, what changes would you make to this type of program going forward?

Make it so that to all those in need of housing, should get housing, not only a small fraction. There is so much need out there and nothing is being addressed. Sure there was this study, but that only dealt with a few people for a short while, after the research is over, the problems will still exist.

#### NDINAWEMAAGANAG ENDAAWAAD FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group held on December 3rd at Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad, youth participants made the following comments when asked about obstacles for young people in finding housing, as well as what kinds of supports or services would help young people who are looking to overcome these obstacles:

**M:** I am mostly working on finishing my schooling and want to find a job after that. The workers here are helping me and living in this place is what is helping me a lot.

**F:** Workers are needed to help provide support to people who are looking for housing. Homes and service like Ndinawe can help young people who live here. You can come here if you lived here. There are programs out there that help people, but it's hard when you're pregnant.

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*Y: You sleep under the bridge or on the riverbank,  
everybody sleeps down by the river; in summer, it's easy to  
find places.*

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#### RESOURCE ASSISTANCE FOR YOUTH FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group at RaY on December 9th, the participants made the following comments about where youth go when they need emergency shelter:

**Y:** You can go to Siloam and the Sally Ann.

**Y:** You can go to the shelter (Osborne House).

**Y:** You walk around all night.

**Y:** You can find a place between doors of a business, in an apartment (storage lockers).

When asked what kind of supports or services would help young people looking for housing, the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** Someone to motivate you; you get so discouraged so fast.

When asked what services have proven to be the most helpful to young people the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** There are not a lot of services available.

When asked what kinds of supports and services would help young people looking for housing the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** Treatment programs and supports to help people be better tenants.

When asked how the homelessness situation in Winnipeg compared to others, the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** Vancouver has outreach; people who walk around; get you and your dog and take you to a shelter.

**Y:** Toronto has outreach, too and someone will go with you to get welfare.

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*Y: You sleep in people's cars. I put a note in someone's windshield so he would know I was there. He was nice to me. Took me in for week. Gave me money.*

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When asked in an individual interview where the participant went when they needed emergency shelter, the participant made following the comments:

**Y:** I was alone on the street; my family heavily involved in gangs; if I go join them I run the risk of going to jail, so I'd rather live outside; I'd rather live outside than in jail.

When asked in an individual interview what services and resources would be helpful, the participant made the following comments:

**Y:** I lucked out because I had a friend; RaY is a good place for information; helps us find a job; they will take you out to get a job, if you're committed; they helped me find a job and a house.

When asked in an individual interview what services or resources would help young people, the participant made the following comments:

**Y:** Help looking for jobs.

**Y:** Help looking for housing.

**Y:** Help with addictions support; you can have many programs but if a kid doesn't know where to go, they don't help.

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*Y: Places that open up earlier. People wake up at 6 a.m. and have no place to go or things to do; when you are homeless, you don't know where to go.*

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**Y:** I always want to get on my feet (where does that drive come from?). I grew up outside the city with very strict parents/foster parents who taught me a lot. When I was 14 years old, I ran away from my foster family. I don't know my real parents - they have never been interested in me, I never really looked into it.

### **C. Perspectives of the Elders' Council**

On September 17th a dialogue took place between the Task Force Members and the Elders' Council. In response to a review of the work of the Emergency Shelters, Continuum of Housing, Health and Social Services Sub-Group, the Elders' Council made the following observations.

Elder Bertha Fontaine commented on the challenges with EIA and the barriers faced by individuals seeking addictions treatment. As an example, she stated that individuals entering treatment do not have an approved rental allowance until the treatment is complete. So individuals cannot obtain housing because they have no income source. If EIA could review this policy and make changes, this would be a positive move.

Elders Bertha and Jo Jo Sutherland also spoke about individuals who leave treatment in an unplanned manner. These individuals do not have immediate access to EIA benefits and have to wait for 2-3 weeks to obtain benefits and in the interim, they become homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Bertha spoke of individuals who are sent from rural areas who leave the program prematurely. The community or service agency, which sent them, will not pay for their return home. So these individuals become homeless and are left to their own survival strategies.

There was discussion about the continuum of housing for people. Bertha observed that many individuals leaving treatment can succeed with independent living and that some need a supported living environment.

There was agreement on the need for culturally relevant services and Indigenous service models.

## **D. Summary of Consistent Messages**

### **EMERGENCY SHELTER:**

In order to move from emergency shelter to permanent housing, many people, including those with lived experiences and the Elders' Council, have identified the need for more affordable and supportive housing; increased EIA allowance and access to EIA when a person does not have a fixed address; more funding for support organizations and more "all in one" facilities (including mental health, addictions, medical, dental and optical care, clothing, computer access, case management/life skills and bus fare). People with disabilities, mental or physical, require additional support to find emergency shelter and long-term housing.

Other needs raised by people with lived experiences, including those currently living in shelters included access to daytime facilities and lockers to keep valuables in while away for the day when living in shelters; intake policies that are less difficult to meet; training of the police force (regarding homeless people, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, mental health issues); work programs offered by the private sector (that allow for building up from 2 hours/week to longer and for job shadowing); support to receiving photo identification and accessible banking services (to avoid costly instant bank services); planning for permanent housing instead of prolonged stays within shelters. People with lived experiences, including youth, noted that it was difficult to leave shelters for permanent housing because of low vacancy rates, low EIA rates and the need to have a damage deposit, credit checks and valid identification. People with lived experiences and the Elder's Council frequently mentioned discrimination facing Indigenous peoples and newcomers as barriers.

### **CONTINUUM OF HOUSING:**

In the area of providing appropriate, affordable choices of housing across the continuum of housing, people voiced the need for increased government coordination, involvement and priority-setting, which was supported by people with lived experiences and the Elders' Council in particular. There was also an identified need for increased resources to those who are most marginalized, including immediate access to shelter and food and to treatment services (the current 3-6 week waiting list creates an insurmountable barrier to many) and programs and services for people with disabilities and addictions (including screening for mental health issues). It was recommended that there be the creation of a First Nations liaison person in the city who can work with bands. The needs of Indigenous people who move in and out of the city to their home communities, was raised by people with lived experiences, Indigenous peoples and the Elders' Council.

Community organizations and people with lived experiences, including youth, identified

the need for increased transitional housing support through the private market and non-profit organizations (i.e., not just Manitoba housing); improved Manitoba Housing stock; emergency housing that is not a shelter (for example, or those who experience apartment fires) and advocates in housing. Youth identified the need for support in finding housing and employment, such as outreach workers. People with lived experiences identified a need for coordinated services 24 hours a day as well as incremental housing, where people move from living in a bedroom with three people to an individual bedroom upon taking on more responsibility.

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#### HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES:

The recommendations of participants about what is needed in this system include the following: coordinated resources and services at all points of care; consistency of funding and a system that builds on individual strengths and believes in people, avoiding psychologically damaging attitudes. People with lived experiences, including youth, and the Elders' Council called for the provision of culturally relevant services (including spiritually based services) and cultural sensitivity training all throughout the health and education systems and adequate addictions and healing programs to assist people to moving out of homelessness to stable housing/living. There was also a call for equitable distribution of funding and services; continued support for Housing First; provision of services in the first language of the population groups; accessible English language; and creating programs aimed at overcoming social exclusion through workshops and drop ins. Young people mentioned the need for programs aimed at helping youth get out of gangs, or avoid gangs from the onset as well as gambling prevention programs.

People with lived experiences highlighted that for homeless women, the barriers faced frequently include safety, violence (i.e., rape and physical abuse), addiction services, involvement with the child welfare system and a lack of family housing options.

As noted by community agencies, people with lived experiences and the Elders' Council, there is a need for support to find housing and more supportive housing itself. In general, there is a need for greater access to housing, identification, income and health care and social services. These services need to consider points of transition, such as, coming off of EIA at 65, aging out of care, and being discharged from jails.

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## 3. Data Management and Research

### A. Community Perspectives from Engagement Session

Participants at this Engagement Session were asked to brainstorm about the key information that needs to be tracked to determine whether we are making progress in ending homelessness. The

following comments were made:

- Who is homeless and how did they become homeless? Track annually.
- How men and women are facing homelessness differently. Women are not typically on the streets; they are more likely to be hidden homelessness. Gender differences.
- Ethnic background.
- Number of people receiving food from Winnipeg Harvest and soup kitchens. Some people receiving food are homeless and some of the others are in danger of becoming homeless;
- How long people are staying homeless for and how long they are staying housed for – movement in and out. Also, examine why they are moving in and out.
- What is the definition of homelessness – are we looking at couch surfers, situational homeless, etc.? This may change over time.
- Understand where people stay when they are homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless – the spatial network, as people may transition in and out of homelessness.
- Age differences.
- Looking for bumps: 18-20 aging out of care or seniors.
- Cost of housing and how this correlates with potential earnings to be able to afford housing – tracking over 10 years, the rent costs have gone up dramatically. What types of responses are required to address this?
- What kind of services are needed: women facing addictions who are pregnant – gaps in services where people who are homeless are on waiting lists and where they are falling short. Gaps and availability.
- People need to know the ratio of services to people who need them. How many addiction services are in Winnipeg currently and how many are needed based on the population?
- How many people are diagnosed with mental illness, brain injuries due to solvent use, diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disabilities?
- Availability of housing, number of shelter beds, permanent units.
- Identify the gap between what is paid for shelter on EIA and actual cost of shelter in the market.
- Residential school survivors or youth aging out of care – are they able to support themselves, employability?
- Entry points in Winnipeg– how did they get there to becoming homeless?
- Lived employability and education levels.
- People transitioning to housing – how many people are being housed? People succeeding – housing first numbers – exit points, factors, what works best.
- Definition of homelessness, generational issues around homelessness (different challenges for this population).
- Number of people who are immigrants.
- In terms of measurements – number of people presenting at shelters and number of “turn aways” at shelters.
- If there is a definition of homelessness, there are different types, which require looking at

different numbers for each time. Couch surfers are harder to get but there are indicators that can be measured. Different types of numbers to track the overall population. Link the measurement to the definition of homelessness...having a breakdown of different types of homelessness and therefore having a broad definition.

- People leaving homelessness it is important to follow people over time to ensure they have proper supports, there has to be an ongoing measurement after people leave. If you have someone in housing first approach and have supports, when do you stop measuring it? They must be measured on an ongoing basis – housing, employment, needing supports. Over time, you don't want to reach a time when there are no supports. Thus, over time track whether everything is good with the person.
- What are your targets? Definition of homelessness one of the issue – youth who gets in a fight with parents - he is homeless. In Calgary, there was a seven-day target number for being homeless. As you deal with chronic issues and are able to provide resources for acute homelessness then this become achievable. [Note: The seven-day target is that every person will be permanently housed within seven days of arrival at a shelter.]
- Measurement is the length of time individual is housed and their housing environment they are in. Housing tenure can be tracked – shelter, jail, hospital, addictions facility placement. Also track the re-housing attempts and housing break-down. But must start from definitions: what is housed, what is homelessness, i.e. is a woman staying at a domestic violence shelter considered to be homeless?
- Further to monitoring shelters, regarding homeless, it is like support entrenched in government facilities, housing workers need to be available to support. They will put up with illegal things to keep housing, there needs to be someone in that system to help them negotiate. This doesn't happen when the EIA worker is a different person every single time. Government policy/supports in place with a worker. Tracking supports required, supports available and what is actually there on both sides. Tracking regulatory changes.
- Families who lose their children apprehended by CFS.
- From a government perspective – number of people who are homelessness who are going to emergency at hospital, detained by police, or use emergency services. Progress is made when these numbers decrease.
- System utilization and associated costing, factor in justice, child welfare and health costs. Follow the trajectory of the person when they are housed. For instance with housing first, if the person is housed then the costing goes down in other areas.
- Track the planning that could be dollars leveraged, increased spending – how well the initiative is valued, dollars contributed to expanding services to meet the needs.
- Entry piece – where is the system breakdown, such as a person who loses his or her job, has to go on EIA, etc. Track what system that person accessed before becoming homeless – which would help identify policy barriers.
- Core housing need – tracking how many people are at risk of losing their homes is key.

Participants at the engagement session were also asked to suggest how to get the information that Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) may not provide. In response, they made the following suggestions:

- HIFIS can give information for a certain population of people who are homeless – but it cannot give information from all areas.
- Ability of HIFIS to give data depends on whether people are putting information in HIFIS – our experience HIFIS is not set up to operate the way we work for our organization therefore you would not get the information you want from us.
- HIFIS collects data from groups who are providing certain services – HIFIS doesn't record people who are not staying at shelters these people will not be recorded. HIFIS is used over time to correlate with other data sources and then you confer the data. So HIFIS is not the only system needed.
- On the definition of homelessness - many people couch surfing may never use these systems, in which case, they are not recorded in HIFIS.
- HIFIS – even though not all information is here in HIFIS, it is still a valuable source of data if used properly.
- The new mobile version 3.8 can be used to record people beyond those who access the services.
- HIFIS has a dozen mandatory fields and can be customized to what is wanted, if all agencies agreed to what agencies want then it can be customized. In order for data to be shared, individual agencies must give their consent in order for the data from their agency to be shared.
- In our experience, HIFIS is not at all customizable to what our needs are. We have had a lot of trouble and we are not behind it at all. We are using it because it is free, it is set up for shelters like Salvation Army who have people staying there long-term. We serve 1100 meals a day and we don't have them all in the system. We are not going to start to get to the information from them. If the system worked for us then we would be more than willing to work with the system.
- Is it possible that the mobile version overcome these issues? One participant indicated that this version would overcome these difficulties. It is linked to shelters' servers, goes in as the same information at the shelter. The changes were community driven - therefore HIFIS should be customizable.
- What is it that we are measuring? That needs to drive the data and research. For example, if an agency is asked to gather data they are not using, and outcomes are not defined – such, as this person should be adequately housed and have a productive life, the system will not be effective. We need to measure the goal of the outcome we want. HIFIS has good demographics, numbers, do we know EIA, family doctor, emergency room, police car, addictions, and if so how long ago? What is a person's housing history? There is a lack of understanding about what is collected and what is needed. We need to talk to someone from HIFIS, service providers and government needs to know what the outcomes are and whether that can be customized.

- No consistency in tracking per agency, versus the situation in Saskatchewan where there is a possibility that everyone tracks with health number linked to HIFIS. Here, there is a macro-level view of what government systems are involved. Challenge is whether or not the people who come to shelters have a health number and how feasible that would be. It would be possible to get a whole lot of information if that can be done. Manitoba Centre for Health Policy could be an entity to hold data.
- Presentation in Ottawa on HIFIS – there are several flaws but if you are looking at trend and annual result and data is online. It will be important not to discount HIFIS for value wise, as they track data throughout Canada. City-wide count is important, point in time data collection, how many people are there, gender, age, break down. Other information is going to be part of your intake process. Once someone is housed then you are setting up monitoring. Need to measure the trends for that situation.

Participants of the engagement session provided their views on the pros and cons of a homelessness count, as follows:

### **Pros and Cons of a Homeless Count**

#### **Pros:**

- You don't propose a solution until you know the problem. This will help to give an accurate number of homeless.
- In Edmonton, it is a head count and not demographic. The advantage is that over 12 years, it tells a story – it's flawed but consistently flawed.
- It provides a good focus for discussion.
- The food banks had a situation 25 years ago and food banks developed a hunger count for the past two decades and have found it to be a very useful tool. It is a snapshot of a month, not a day and it's not perfect because individuals might be double counted through two different programs but it is still helpful. To be able to say that 64,000 people use food banks a month.
- There may be more stability of the homeless population but still helpful.
- Despite the limitations a homelessness count is positive.
- In terms of GIS spatial mapping, a count is helpful in terms of identifying changes on where people are staying, service locations, etc. to answer where people are.
- Depends what kind of homeless count – may be helpful if it is not just people sleeping rough but those accessing services as well.
- It is good to have a night and day count.
- Why do you want to count? If it's to prove you have made success – might need to count the number of people you have successfully worked with to make a difference.

#### **Cons:**

- Still have some people who are not counted – e.g., people sleeping rough.

- A count will not tell you why people are homeless.
- This will not include the women homeless population in a proportional way.
- A count does not tell you about the women who are couch surfing because they get assaulted in shelters.
- The counting can bias the actions.
- The question is, “Why are you counting?” “What is it being used for?”
- Homeless people have been studied over and over again. Since we already know that there is a serious problem with homelessness in our city, a clear rationale for the count (and for using valuable resources, in both time and money) is important.
- What is the purpose of the count? Who is to be included? Having a clear idea of the goal for the count will help clarify the methods for the count.
- Any count will have serious limitations (e.g. women, children, hidden homeless and people sleeping rough will not necessarily be counted). How will these be accounted for?
- Particularly if the count will include people sleeping rough, care must be taken to treat people with respect, and to ensure that the count is not invasive or demeaning to people. People living outside already have very little privacy, and it will be important to respect that they may not want to be seen/counted.
- One way to approach a count that addresses many of these concerns is to work with the service agencies to count people attending programs, meals or shelters. This will help gather a broader number of people, and is a good way to clarify that there is a large population of people who are homeless/facing housing challenges. The Plan could set out a method for all the service agencies to use, so that it can be consistent across the board, and that way it would be replicable year to year. This is one alternative to a street count.

Finally, participants were asked to identify elements of a count that would be necessary to make a count work, to which they responded as follows:

## Elements of a Count

Next, participants were asked what elements would need to be included in a homelessness count to make it work. The following points of discussion were made:

- If you can add to a count, some more sophistication to get more diagnostic information – improve its usefulness.
- Expand the count to collection points beyond homeless agencies.
- Disagree with the ethics around the people that have been counted. They are costly and you’re not getting much information. So, overcome this by involving social services agencies – less information (i.e. don’t ask why the person is being homeless); not interrupting people’s lives that much.
- Be respectful – not intrusive.
- Provide something to the people you are counting – even something as simple as a t-shirt

and fruit.

- The more data you collect the more accurate the picture, so you won't get this here but you will get a point in time count.
- Who does the counting? Make it consistent.
- Training and sensitivity training – the people who do the counting.

## **B. Perspectives of People with Lived Experiences**

### PATAL VOCATIONAL CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on March 13th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Patal Vocational Centre, the participants made the following comments:

**M:** We need education about homelessness. We have to educate employers, the government, government employees, and the media. And we need to educate ourselves about what our rights are. It's fixable, but it's going to take a long time. Knowledge is no good if you don't accept it and don't share it. Knowledge is no good if you keep it to yourself. Someone might have a problem, and then hear about it from someone else in this room, and that is the inspiration they need. There is no colour in homelessness. There is a stereotype that goes with being homeless; you don't have to look a certain way or have problems with drugs or alcohol. You can be a good person, and things can be going good one moment, and the next you are homeless. You might only be one cheque away from being homeless. You don't get a place based on how "good" you are. I'm good, but I have bad credit. I should not be denied a place to live for that. Don't judge a person by what you see in the media or see in the street, because that is not the case. We need education.

### WIICHIWAAKAANAK LEARNING CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on May 28th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Wiichii-waakaanak Learning Centre made the following observation about what did not work well:

The group felt that there could have been a better system for "tracking" of all participants. They also felt that there could have been a more fair way of determining randomization as opposed to the click on a computer.

When participants were asked what changes they would recommend going forward, they made the following comments:

That the Lived Experiences Circle Committee develop a Questionnaire or Survey that will result in giving an accurate picture and accounting of all homeless in the city, as there are homeless that no one sees or are aware of.

### **C. Perspectives of the Elders' Council**

On September 17th, 2013 a dialogue took place between the Task Force Members and the Elders' Council in response to a review of the work of the Data Management and Research Sub-Group, the Elders' Council made the following observations:

The Elders referred to their earlier meeting on April 10th, 2013 where they identified that the Task Force needed to have credible statistics of the number of homeless individuals. They stated that knowing the population would help identify the age group, gender, ethnic group, service need, and community of origin. The information could then inform the housing continuum, the cultural diversity question, and the service delivery structure. David Budd commented on his experience of being homeless; he just needed \$25.00 to help himself return to his community. He was able to solve this problem but wondered how many people were stuck in similar circumstances. A person could be helped, at the front end, to prevent a situation of homelessness. The Elders welcomed the opportunity to assist the Task Force in developing a culturally appropriate/sensitive approach to a homelessness count in Winnipeg. The Task Force will definitely look to the Elders for their feedback on the homelessness survey instrument and process.

### **D. Summary of Consistent Messages**

#### **DATA MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH**

Elements needed to make a homelessness count work were identified by many people. These included expanding the count beyond homeless agencies; involving social service agencies who have experience in being respectful and non-intrusive; providing something to the people who are being counted in exchange for their involvement; collecting sufficient data to create an accurate picture of the problem; being consistent in who carries out the count; providing training (including sensitivity training) to the people who do the counting. The idea of holding a Community Feast in conjunction with a count also held some promise for those concerned with doing the count in a respectful way and in a way that "gave back" to those participating in the count.

In terms of tracking homeless people, it was identified that many factors would be helpful to track, including who is homeless and how did they become homeless; gender and age differences; ethnic background; mental illness; employability and educational levels; newcomers; residential school survivors; number of shelter and soup kitchen users; and housing tenure.

People identified pros and cons of a homelessness count. Some of the pros identified by the people included: if done annually, it would assist in getting an accurate number of homeless people by creating a baseline that can be compared from year-to-year; it provides a useful snapshot of the problem that can inform service delivery; it can assist GIS spatial mapping by helping to identify changes on where people stay, service locations, etc.

The following cons were also identified: a count will not identify all people, such as those sleeping rough or couch surfing; it can bias the actions of service providers, people have been over-studied and if the goal of the count is unclear this problem is exacerbated without an adequate rationale for the count. It was noted that one way to approach a count may be to count people attending programs, receiving meals or using shelters, as opposed to completing a street count

A broad definition of homelessness was viewed as important. This included identifying the availability of housing, the number of shelter beds and the number of permanent units, along with the gap between what is paid for shelter on EIA and the actual market cost of shelter. A broad definition of homelessness is needed to guide the development of a series of indicators that are used to measure a variety of specific homeless categories. The Elders' Council supported the idea of a homelessness count, noting that it is necessary to have credible statistics of the number of homeless individuals. Community organizations indicated the need for educational efforts related to a count, and to ensure a comprehensive picture is taken, including attempting to count those people who are couch-surfing. It was also emphasized by people with lived experiences and the Elders' Council that the people carrying out the count had to be culturally proficient and demonstrate a sense of humanity in the approach taken to this research.

People underscored the importance of longitudinal studies. System utilization, such as the child welfare, health and justice systems (i.e., emergency department, police detention or use of other emergency services) and the associated costs can be compared between when an individual is housed versus when she or he is homeless. This can assist in creating services to meet the needs of those vulnerable to housing.

People indicated that further research is required to determine what data needs the HIFIS system can meet and how it can be adapted to increase its usefulness. This will be driven by first determining what needs to be measured. Furthermore, implementing a methodology to ensure consistency in tracking the data by each agency is required.

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## 4. Creating and Maintaining Affordable and Supportive Housing

### A. Community Perspectives from Engagement Sessions

When participants of the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association attended an Engagement Session on September 17th, 2013 they were asked their perspectives on how to increase housing supply for those individuals who currently do not own a home. They shared the following views and perspectives:

## The question: What would it take for your sector to play a role in dramatically increasing the number of housing units for those are homeless?

- People who are homeless need support to access or to maintain their housing; the most common social service model is based on 8:30-4:30 – need to have staff available and comfortable to work with clients ... supports are very important to ensuring people can maintain their housing
- If there were higher rent allowances, then ... allows landlords to offer their units to people on social assistance – even if just compensate with the differential then landlords would open up their units
- Need adequate funding for operating + for construction; income for rent is getting lower; some sort of public funding is necessary
- Possible use of rooming houses – Derek rooming houses. Difficult for a rooming house owner to get a mortgage even for rooming house owners who want to do that; big risk to the stock
- Money – insuring the Province and city provide housing. First crack at surplus land to use as equity to bring bear on more affordable housing
- Tax incentives across consumers /businesses – individuals/philanthropist to commit to a fund for housing and would receive tax credits (even preferential tax credit)
- Affordable housing development grants – not unlike downtown development grants
- Suburban sprawl tax
- Need some policy changes with Manitoba Housing- not more than 1 tenant in a bachelor or 2 people of the same sex in a bachelor suite; ... youth just into adulthood – still living with a family member kicked out b/c uncle is in a one bedroom...this is termed “an under-housing situation” – so the person is evicted; need to be more flexible but not go too far
- Regulatory framework – by-laws that will not allow people to develop basement suites. There is capacity here. Other cities have done it. Granny suites etc. apply to individuals – increasing
- A healthy community has a mix of housing; over intensifying neighbourhoods would be issue;
- If you think about the way Winnipeg was built, there was a lot of standardized housing built for moderate income families; Now, new housing developments build 1500 square feet and above; ... how do we build smaller units on a larger scale? ... at \$200,000/unit v. difficult for non –profit to build
- Create expectations that new multi-unit projects will be at least 10% affordable; need to incent the developer through things like Provincial Sales Tax (PST), General Sales Tax (GST), income tax...etc.... ...risk is that regulation will starve out development
- In the 70s Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) funded housing; non-profits didn't have to put anything down and got subsidized mortgages – didn't have to come up with any cash

- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM) supportive housing for new Canadians – was able to secure 60 more units b/c IRCOM guaranteed that they would come up with the supportive side – through private sector, grants, etc. ... lots of opportunities to leverage ... this is a concrete example of a partnership
- Challenge – find at least one suite in street in each of our neighbourhoods that will house an individual currently homeless
- Money for down payments; don't have the money for a down payment; non-profits can't mortgage against assets b/c the asset is under a Manitoba Housing operating agreement – if non-profits owned the units instead of the gov't, they would be able to get a mortgage and \$ for a down payment and then work with private sector to get projects done (2)
- There is some untapped capacity – better use of stock currently available housing units (3-4 bedroom homes sitting vacant) – issues within the Department + inefficiency
- Higher rent allowance
- Mortgages for rooming houses
- First crack at surplus land
- Tax incentives – credits for donations
- Policy changes re: sharing space
- Partnerships – private sector funds support Non-Profit Organization builds
- Regulatory – e.g. restrictions on bedroom suites
- Overcome neighbourhood construction (?)
- New multi-residential units – incent for some % of affordable; maybe make it a requirement (2)
- A housing first surplus land policy (city and provide); private sector incentives
- Inter-sectoral collaboration and fundraising
- Financing model – consumer funded i.e. large tax credits
- Designating tax revenue (existing/new) – affordable housing development grants (province and city); suburban sprawl tax
- Tax incentives to incent private sector (PST, GST, property, income)
- CMHC bond issue; subsidized projects; surplus assets
- Consolidate/leverage support resources to provide more effective and efficient services
- More low income not affordable builds
- Change by-laws to allow basement suites (2)
- Displacement of renovations or purchase of an existing apartment building
- Mix income builds
- Policy changes (e.g.) more than one tenant in a bachelor or 2 in a 1 bedroom (although have to be careful that create flexibility but don't go too far)
- More pocket housing
- More city-wide acceptance of secondary housing (different models of housing)
- Political leadership

- No surplus land for reinvesting after mortgage is paid
- Lack of property close to amenities
- Winnipeg rental market has stabilized now due to new multi-family units and renovations – now is the time to increase.
- In United States costs have compelled builders to build more affordable units (Tom Carter work)
- Province loosened rental control somewhat, but need more progress to incent investors
- Housing Development – need to develop / increase this capacity
- Financing suggestion – market gap financing, Provincial Government has done some work e.g. help (\$) Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation to expand the number of units
- Jubilee Fund – loan \$ to encourage greater housing but to whom? To private, Non Profit (but some do not have the scale or staff (200-300 units) (example of – 45 units - \$ from Province for seniors – Province owns for 40 years then turn it over to Non profit group)
- 1% vacancy in Winnipeg, Manitoba Housing has 4-5 % for its Units- inner city higher – 4 houses with 3-4 bedrooms (intentionally off the market due to inefficiency within the Department)
- People who are homeless need supports but Manitoba Housing staff not comfortable to go in certain neighbourhoods or work beyond 8:30-4:30; some exceptions (Sara Riel) – need skill set to support clientele they are serving. Note: landlords will take higher risk people if they know they have the supports
- Unoccupied capacity does exist
- Large private investment buying and renovating in Point Douglas, run out slum landlords
- Privacy act becomes a barrier when it need not be; e.g. talking to neighbours about what is really going on; challenge faced by social service providers (sometimes legitimate protection of individual privacy)
- Sara Riel develop competency based training – need to address mish-mash of backgrounds, experience/skills + very mobile pool of staff
- Bigger than inner-city- it's a myth that inner-city is the only place where they will want to live; need units that are affordable; NIMBY; challenge to Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council members – find units in their neighbourhood
- Money – but question is, how is it used?
- Rooming houses good source but often conflict in neighbourhoods
- Regulatory, financing challenges for rooming houses/complicated and banks don't understand
- Income for many has become so low that it is not adequate as a revenue source
- Cost of construction exceeds revenue – no profitable
- No engagement with people living in the inner-city (not homeless)
- Mix of housing types in a healthy community
- Mix of units with in developments
- May be adequate housing if supported – better utilization with supports to landlords and tenants

- Manitoba Housing units may be resource

When participants at the engagement session with the private sector held on September 25th, 2013 were asked a series of questions about how to assist in creating more housing supply for people who do not currently have a home, the following views and perspectives were shared:

**What would it take for the private sector to get involved in increasing the number of housing units available for people who are homeless?**

- Overhaul (cost of taking a chance) of Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) to recognize realities of working with difficult tenants
- Support for new landlords (i.e. secondary suites)
- Better enable conversions (e.g. through zoning, code and RTA changes) from non-residential to residential
- Coordinate all three levels of government to work toward common goal- each have a piece of it through their jurisdictional responsibilities (e.g. capital gains at federal level)
- Top five actions selected from list below (provided to participants in advance as some recommendations identified by the Rental Roundtable Report):
  - #13, 15, 20 – non –bank financing options, including bond issuance, Community Forward Fund Assistance Corporation (CFFAC), rental housing fund
  - #1, 2, 9 – tax incentives
  - #8, 10 – land grants, capital grants
  - #19 – partnership private sector and non –profit sector
- Landlords need capability to evict with cause
- Autonomy to manage property “probation period”
- Investment protection – give landlords market rent/income security
- Ownership (individual \$ + government \$) by % of development. Sale proceeds shared proportionally between individual and gov’t. Proceeds pooled to repeat the cycle.
- Find creative ways for private and non-profit sector to partner – through a pool of capital, non-profit sector buys condo units and provides supports to tenants and fills the affordability gap
- Rental housing is a temporary fix and home ownership should still be an option for the non-market demographic – United Kingdom example – “Shared Ownership” model – for people unable to take out a mortgage, they purchase a share in the home & increase their share in the home over time to either full ownership or once home is sold they receive a proportionate % of their investment to date. It motivates individuals to protect their investment.
- Move stable families out of Manitoba. Housing to create room for Housing First
- Develop a mechanism to support “one suite”
- Portable housing benefit
- Rent controls removed or develop realistic or even differentiated depending on types of housing units
- Congregate housing may be more cost effective

- Determine minimum areas for living and build to that (building code and zoning)
- Micro-development – convert condos and others to Single Room Occupancy (SRO)
- Change parking codes

## **What's needed to support sustainability – successfully housing tenants over long term?**

- Minimize the bureaucracy – “make it easy” e.g. turn-around-times; absence of relativity, consistency and predictability
- Re-balance between landlords/tenants with the RTA
- Provide greater flexibility in zoning/building codes to allow for creation of smaller units (incl. granny or basement suites; duplexes; etc.
- The ‘one-unit’ concept – partnership with the non-profit who would handle the paperwork, exempt from RTA, coordinate supports
- Lease in third party name versus individual – rent certainty
- Units come with furnishings/laundry tokens, etc.
- Make it easy for landlords – no additional reports/processes
- Create a body/ third party guarantor/co-op between landlord and tenants, blending resources, e.g.:
  - Performance
  - Unit utilization pool
  - Operating cost increase recovery
  - Pool of capital (\$\$, tenants, land?)
  - Single point of contact
  - Rents/damages
- This intermediary would work with tenants to resolve issues, including possibly social/health issues, and thereby provide support to landlords in dealing with tenants
- Basements – represent untapped existing resources
- #/square foot increases with sustainable, durable construction – reduces utility costs so benefits to renters
- Lower carrying costs by fast-tracking approvals
- Positive stories – recognize the marketing potential
- Many landlords are ‘subsidizing’
- Some families in Manitoba Housing pay more than market rent – suite could be freed up
- Remove school tax
- Manitoba Hydro could “subsidize” – allow sub-metering, auto shut-offs ...
- More accessible early intervention, e.g. more Mobile Crisis Units could provide necessary supports to individuals – a resource to landlords too
- Direct rent payments to landlords

**Wrap-up Plenary — Participant Responses to Sub-Group Members Questions**

- Landlords in the rental market need investment certainty
- Give landlords access to administrative supports
- Double lot potential – but depends on the area of the City – need to push back at NIMBY attitude, i.e. need to overcome outside of inner-city
- What is wrong with providing 250 sq. ft. units? – resistance tends to come from communities/ neighbours
- Faced with lots of different policies – bldg. code, zoning, inspectors, historical designations – no synergies
- City needs a long-term/100 year plan, cannot keep stumbling about
- Remove “Developer” stigma
- Need better relationship between private and public sectors -- cannot do it without the private sector, it has a role to play and is interested
- If can achieve 50 unit “success stories” – more likely to generate for momentum beyond 300 as an initial number/goal
- There is \$35,000 funding available for renovation/development of basement suites – is everyone in the private sector aware of this program?

**Ideas to ensure sustainability (supports to ensure housing is successful for both landlord and tenant)**

- Provide a portable shelter allowance or other such mechanisms to top up the difference between rent and social assistance shelter allowance
- Increase the shelter allowance for persons on social assistance
- Allow landlords to claim refundable GST credits for GST they pay on purchase of material and services in operating the building and the GST they pay if they purchase a building
- A rental housing fund to support, for example, rental allowance top-up, room repairs and support services.
- Private sector partnerships to support rental allowance top-up, room repairs and support services
- Ensure tenants have the proper social supports to ensure they can maintain their housing.

## LIST FROM PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT SESSION:

**Ideas to increase the supply of housing units for people who are homeless (new units through new construction or renovation).**

### Financial Incentives

1. Tap the new rental housing construction tax credit (which provides a tax credit equal to 8% of the capital costs of new rental housing projects where at least 10% of the units are affordable).
2. Incentives to ensure a % of units in rental development projects are affordable rental units.
3. A property or income tax relief program for the first 5 to 10 years of the project's life.
4. Reduce or waive development costs on purpose build, rental housing.
5. Assess development charges on a per project, rather than per door basis.
6. Develop an affordable, rental housing tax credit program.
7. Increase the capital cost allowance deduction on rental properties.
8. Provide capital grants on a per unit basis to stimulate the development of reasonable market rents to help reduce the gap between reasonable market rents and revenue required for an attractive rate of return.

### Financing Models

9. Expand Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for purpose built rental housing to areas beyond downtown Winnipeg.
10. Make land available at reduced costs
11. Ensure the Province continue investing in the publicly-supported stock and improve the quality of the affordable, private rental stock
12. Affordable housing development grants (similar to the downtown development grant).
13. Tap groups like the Community Forward Fund Assistance Corporation (CFFAC) is a Canadian nonprofit that makes loans to, or arranges financing for, nonprofits and charities.
14. Provide mortgages for rooming houses and make their regulatory environment more flexible. (build small units)
15. Bond issue.
16. Designate tax revenue (urban sprawl tax)

### Policies

17. Develop policies to support secondary suites / basement suites
18. Renew operating agreements with social, non-profit, and co-op housing providers to maintain the viability of the publicly-supported affordable housing stock

### Partnerships

19. Partnerships with the non-profit sector in the development of new housing.
20. A rental housing fund, to support new and rejuvenated existing apartment buildings. Funds could come from a range of funders (banks, credit unions, insurance companies, private family funds, philanthropic groups, etc.). To back up the lenders and developers, a tax relief scheme could be included.

## B. Perspectives of People with Lived Experiences

### UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG'S WI CHI WAKANAK CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on July 23rd, 2013 with people with lived experience from the University of Winnipeg's Wi Chi Wakanak Centre, the participants made the following comments:

**M:** Aboriginal landlords should be part of the Ten Year Plan.

**M:** There needs to attention to the shelter rate in EIA.

**M:** Housing should include programs in the building (advocacy services, rights awareness, awareness of available services and socializing).

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*My problem is that I live with my son — he is 19 yrs. old — when I went to apply for MB housing, I have to apply for myself and my son has to apply for himself... he's an adult (according to this law) but I cannot accept it. I want to live with my family. How do you define a family/home?*

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**M:** People want jobs and want to work. If housing projects are created, maybe people can work in some. I think the idea of fixing up old houses is great. I would like to get involved building houses like the Habitat project.

### MOUNT CARMEL CLINIC FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on August 27th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Mount Carmel Clinic, the participants made the following comments:

**M:** There are no decent places to rent. There is a lot of slum housing.

**M:** I feel racism and being judged on how I look. I walk somewhere to see a home (I usually have no bus fare) and by the time I get there, the landlord or caretaker looks at me and doesn't want to rent to me. I can feel it – “being judged”.

### SILOAM MISSION FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group held at the Siloam Mission on June 27th, 2013 with people with lived experience from the Emergency Shelter System the participants made the following comments:

Participants were asked “What programs of service could help people who are homeless?” they responded:

**M:** To get into housing? You need the money first.

**F:** The amount of money they give you is not even poverty level.

**F:** Manitoba Housing – you need to fill out an application, and you need to have references. Not everyone is going to give you a good reference.

**M:** I never rented. I owned my own house, so I didn't have references. So you can't. They won't pursue your application any further.

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*There is not enough decent housing — to minimize the problem (of shortage of housing for newcomers). This is not the problem of newcomers and immigrations, but also the First Nations and this is their land.*

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**M:** When people are looking for a place to live. People have no choice. There's not enough money to live on your own. Even subsidized housing.

Participants were asked, “What other things would help you?”

On the question of housing they responded that:

**F:** They need to have affordable housing. Just affordable, up-to-date places that aren't dumps.

**M:** Clean and affordable.

**M:** Without bedbugs.

**M:** If I'm on the 9th floor, it is 50 degrees in summer because there's no air conditioning. You don't have to smell everyone's cooking. My friend lost his disability. He is out past the tracks in some ratty little place. It's subsidized. What is he supposed to do? The system drops you out on the street. The women are out on the street but for the men it's the same. You have to sell or buy something. The system turns good and honest people to bad people. If you are a kid, poor you, you're going to be in a gang. There's no alternative. You don't stand a chance. There's something very wrong in Manitoba.

**M:** Affordable, clean, safe housing.

**M:** Manitoba housing – they have in-house security now. There's a problem with these large buildings. That's not working either.

**M:** They have the wrong people in the system.

**M:** Individuals, families, seniors, people with mental problems. Everyone needs housing.

**F:** You can't afford anything on \$285 per month. Not even subsidized. A rooming house - there are bedbugs, dangerous. Nobody wants to be there.

**M:** Habitat for Humanity is a good program. You put in your sweat equity. What about all those boarded up houses in the North end? Walk up and down the street. Some of those houses have been boarded up for years. Why can't you put in sweat equity and fix up those boarded old houses? There are lots of them. They're fixable. I've worked in construction.

**M:** There are empty parking lots sitting there for ten years.

**M:** I actually rebuilt houses – renovations and stuff.

**F:** Projects like Dufferin Walk are projects gone bad. The clientele is not going to keep the houses nice and neat.

**M:** Houses sit empty for years. My old house sat empty for a dozen years at least. Nothing was ever done. The idea was there but it fell apart. There are lots of ideas but to follow through with it to the end doesn't happen.

#### SILOAM MISSION FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group held at the Siloam Mission on June 27th, 2013 with people with lived experience the participants made the following comments:

This individual was an Indigenous man, aged 57, who had been homeless since May 2013 after his employment insurance benefits terminated. He has been living at the Siloam Mission and has been unsuccessfully in his search for employment.

What do homeless people need? A home! The powers that be must start building low cost housing for single men and women. Not concentrated in the downtown but around the city. We have special cases of solvent abusers and housing them is not the answer. The lost children of the child and family services need life skill training, cultural supports and a sense of community. The idea of being proactive not reactive, is a good idea. Only I see the community using the words and not using the idea. We can make a difference as long as we all stop doing things in the old way and start working with open minds.

#### PATAL VOCATIONAL CENTRE FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group on March 13th, 2013 with people with lived experience from Patal Vocational Centre, the participants made the following comments:

## Barriers when looking for housing:

- Being released from prison;
- Lack of affordable and adequate housing;
- Societal stereotypes, discrimination and racism;
- Trying to obtain identification to be able to access services and
- Having too many hoops to jump through to find help and support.

**F:** I moved out here from The Pas to get away from my family. I moved out here and tried to go to school. My son was one. I tried to stay with my cousins, but they said no. We tried to go to my cousin's sister, but she did not know me, so they said no. I had nowhere to go. It was not a good relationship. We, my son and I, my common law at the time went to Osborne, by the bridge there. I decided to go to Osborne women's shelter. That's how I found a place, through them. But that one year I moved five times until I got into this other housing. Now I've been in a place for five years, and it's native housing and I like it there. I'm there with my children.

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*As the facilitator of the process, I was honoured to sit with the men and women for the focus group and noon hour meal. They have a vision with hopes and dreams for the future with the knowledge that for some of them, they have a mountain to climb.*

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**M:** I lost my apartment after declaring bankruptcy. I cannot find an apartment. Not only that, they are all getting torn down to put up condos. It does not help the situation.

**F:** I lived with my grandparents since I was four. My mom had me at 15, my brother at 16, with a man that was 10 years older than her. He went away to live at a different reserve. We kids went with the grandparents and some live there to this day. But when they come here, they stay with me. I helped about eight people from my reserve. Lots of people come and stay with me at my house. I let them come stay with me for three or four days.

## NDINAWEMAAGANAG ENDAAWAAD FOCUS GROUP

During a Focus Group held on December 3rd at Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad, youth participants made the following comments when asked about obstacles for young people in finding housing:

**F:** I'm pregnant and need the help in trying to find somewhere to rent. I try looking in the renter's guide for a place but I can't find a decent place. I need to get a roommate so I can afford some place (not many places for rent out there). The rooming houses are not suitable for someone with a baby.

**M:** Money is a big barrier – you need a job for money in order to find a place.

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*Y: I've been in an apartment with no ceiling, cockroaches everywhere, black mold — we need good quality housing for young people.*

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When asked about any particular issues Aboriginal youth face in finding and maintaining affordable housing, participants made the following comments:

**M:** it is very hard to find a job. It is hard to get my foot in the door. I know that I have to dress differently because people judge you on how you dress (pointed to his casual attire). When I got a job at Salisbury House, I learned some good skills and got my food handling certificate, but now I have trouble finding a job elsewhere. I get money working at temp jobs but I can get enough money to get ahead (I can't save for a damage deposit, rent).

**F:** It's hard to get a job with no work experience. I have to volunteer somewhere to get experience for a resume.

When asked what kind of supports or services would help young people looking for housing, the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** More low income housing needs to be available; everything is over \$600 (bachelor is \$650). It can take so long to get Manitoba Housing; there's not enough housing. It's harder for single people. The easiest way is if you have kids, but you still need ID to get into Manitoba Housing.

**Y:** The Government treats us like trash; we're people still. It should stop helping other countries and focus on the people who need help here.

When asked what kinds of supports and services would help young people looking for housing the participants made the following comments:

**Y:** Make apartment buildings for low income

**Y:** Most places are not nice to live in. You need a place to call if you have a problem that needs to be fixed

**Y:** Other tenants in the place do meth and crack – those residents are wrecking the place; the drug smoking causes black mold; the fumes travel through the building. It is unsafe.

### **C. Perspectives of the Elders' Council**

On September 17th, 2013 a dialogue took place between the Task Force Members and the Elders'

Council. In response to a review of the work of the Creating and Maintaining Affordable and Supportive Housing Sub-Group, the Elders' Council made the following observations.

Jo Jo commented on the numbers of people who are homeless, believing that the percentage of Indigenous people is closer to 75% in her opinion and that there is an unaccounted for number of people who do not interact with systems (hidden homeless). She also believed that the numbers of women who are homeless is growing.

There was a lengthy discussion on cultural values, housing needs, and population trends. The Elders agreed generally that Aboriginal families tend to be larger and to have values of caring for extended family (grandchildren).

### LIVED EXPERIENCE STORY

This is a female who became involved with the At Home/Chez Soi when it began. She was interviewed for the housing initiative and randomized into the treatment as usual (TAU) control group.

She is 49 years old and is currently precariously housed. She states that sometimes her son-in-law gets mad at her or there is arguing happening between her daughter and him, she leaves for a while. During these times, she usually goes on a binge and travels with her drinking circle in the downtown area.

She related that she became homeless in 2007 after her common law spouse passed away in his sleep. They were living on Maryland Street in a one-bedroom suite. After his death, she could no longer stay in this home as a single person. She stated that she couldn't really stay there anyway given the circumstances. She related that she was already drinking steadily before his death but really began to drink more frequently afterward. She mostly frequented the downtown area never going to the Main Street area. She stated that she didn't feel safe going to Main Street and preferred downtown as did many in her social circle. She did go to [a shelter] for one night with one of her friends but did not return.

She stated that there is a fairly large group of people who are homeless or living in rooming houses in the downtown area. She noticed that these people would never go to the shelters and they help each other. She has slept at her friends' places, staying for a while then moving to other friends' places. She stated she and her common law spouse and other friends would go to the Health Sciences Centre and sign in for medical treatment. Often she said she did this when it was rainy and cold wintery conditions. She stated that she could sleep undisturbed for the whole evening and leave in the morning stating she was feeling better. She said that this survival tactic worked well until the man died in emergency. (Brian Sinclair). After this tragedy, she said that security would wake everyone up every hour to make sure they were alive.

She began another common law relationship in 2008 and they combined their rent allowances for a one-bedroom place. She described three places she lived in as bed bug infested, hot and

cold depending on the season. She stated that the landlord of this one place on William Avenue when told about the broken window would always say "I'll be down there in a few days to fix it". But she would never show up. She said, "We were paying \$560.00 a month and we had to go to the second floor to use the washroom". She called the police after a domestic violence incident and her common law spouse was arrested. He was issued a no contact order. She subsequently lost this place in 2010 as she couldn't afford the \$560.00. She regretted calling the police when she ended up homeless as a result.

In 2009, she stated she became involved with At Home/Chez Soi when contacted by researchers about the project. She completed an intake process and was subsequently told that she wasn't accepted into the housing program and had become part of the treatment as usual. She said she did complete one follow up interview as part of TAU and didn't participate in any other interviews. She returned to her reserve in 2011 for approximately eighteen months and lost contact with the university researchers.

When asked about programs or services that would help her and individuals in her situation, she stated that she knows that she has a problem with alcohol and binge drinking. She hasn't considered going into any treatment program or detox centre and knows the services exist. She stated that she would like to live in a place that is maintained and safe. She said that she would appreciate living in such a place but hasn't had any such place so far. She stated she has lived in over ten addresses in the last fifteen years in the city with all being run down in some way or the landlord being non-responsive.

She also stated that there are soup kitchens in the downtown area and that she and her friends use them frequently. She would use the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre for advocacy services, support when she needs it, and for telephone calls. She also relies on other social services to use the telephone and talk to workers. She stated that the Task Force should take into consideration the homeless who don't use the emergency shelters. She describes many individuals living precariously housed in the rooming houses in the downtown area. She stated that finding a place is the most challenging with so many barriers. These barriers are so great to her that she goes to the path of least resistance, the slum landlord, who welcomes her with few expectations. In return, she has to cope with the slum conditions, bed bugs, and lack of response to tenant complaints. She stated she would welcome a service that would help her find a good place. She said she has never felt at home in any of those places she lived. She also has struggled to get her damage deposit back from landlords and stated that she didn't have the energy or support to try to advocate for herself.

Interviewer's Note: A harm reduction approach would likely help this woman maintain a home. This approach would complement an eviction prevention strategy. The At Home/Chez Soi would have been ideal for her, but unfortunately for her, she didn't enter the housing and service stream or have access to another similar service.

## **D. Summary of Consistent Messages**

### **CREATING AND MAINTAINING AFFORDABLE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

Many people with lived experience (including youth), community organizations and the Elders' Council identified the need for more housing supply: clean, functional, affordable housing. Both Indigenous peoples and people with lived experience identified the need for more Indigenous specific housing, and for Indigenous peoples and people with lived experiences to be involved in the actual building or renovating of new homes. Youth with lived experience mentioned the need for educational and employment opportunities in order to be able to afford adequate housing. The Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association, newcomers, Indigenous peoples and community organizations identified the need for housing that is culturally appropriate, for example, providing enough space for multiple generations living under one roof. If people are receiving EIA, they voiced that they should have the choice to live with their adult children, or other relatives, if this is their way of life. We heard that youth aging out of care would benefit from unique housing developments and supports to meet their needs. This included public housing, including housing for young parents. Regulatory changes that allow basement suites or pocket suites were also discussed as solutions to the current housing shortage in Winnipeg.

Many representatives from the private sector and the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association who attended these Engagement Sessions identified their support for the solutions issued by the Rental Roundtable Report. These include creating financial incentives, such as accessing the newly established rental housing construction tax credits, incentives targeted towards rental development projects and providing capital grants on a per unit basis to stimulate reasonable market rents. In terms of financial models identified, people discussed solutions such as expanding Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for the purposes of building rental housing to areas outside of downtown Winnipeg, making land available at reduced costs, and accessing the Community Forward Fund Assistance Corporation which makes loans and provides financing to non-profits and charities on a non-profit basis and developing social bonds.

People talked about increasing housing supply through developing a mechanism for gifting the acquisition of land. This could be done through a partnership or a land trust. Furthermore, increased participation of the private sector in the development of housing units could be facilitated by working with government and other key stakeholders to ready land parcels for building. People talked about the need to work in partnership with one another, including the private sector and the non-profit sector in building new housing. This was also supported by Indigenous peoples.

Also mentioned was the idea of establishing a fund to support the development of new

and renovated housing units. This could be done in partnership, by pooling funds from a range of investors including governments and the private and philanthropic sectors. The nature of this suggestion was supported by people with lived experiences and the Elders' Council.

Participants mentioned that the private sector could work actively with governments to sustain, enhance and facilitate the uptake of grants and tax incentives that support the development of non-market rent housing units. This could also be done in relation to facilitating the development and maintenance of smaller units. It was noted by both the private sector and the non-profit sector that there is a need to build in supports to ensure housing is successful and sustainable for both landlords and tenants. This could be achieved through providing a portable shelter allowance to top up the difference between rent and social assistance shelter allowance, increasing the shelter allowance for persons on social assistance and establishing a rental housing fund and private sector partnerships aimed at supporting rental allowance top-up, room repairs and support services. This was supported by people with lived experiences and the Elders' Council.

## IV. Appendices

### Appendix “A”

This Appendix includes the names of all the participants of the Engagement Sessions, as well as a list of organizations and Indigenous peoples with whom we have met. We apologize if we have omitted anyone in error. The people with lived experience who participated in Focus Groups have completed confidentiality waivers, and thus, their names do not appear.

#### **Prevention of Homelessness Engagement Session, June 10th:**

Ben Fry, Cindy Coker, Clark Brownlee from the Right to Housing, Damon Johnston from the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Dave Dessens from the City of Winnipeg, Floyd Perras from Siloam Mission, Fred Knoedler from the Patal Vocational School, Gordon McIntyre from the Winnipeg Rental Network, Henri Chevillard from the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Jay Rodgers from the General Authority, Jocelyn Greenwood Macdonald from Youth Services, Joy Cramer, Kate Kehler from the John Howard Society of MB, Kevin Fontaine from the Assembly of MB Chiefs - WRHA

Patricia Baker Oak Table Community Ministry, Rosalie Ouskan from the Assembly of MB Chiefs, Student from Patal Vocational School, Student from Patal Vocational School, Terry Sakiyama from Patal Vocational School, Todd Laurie from the WRHA, Valerie Olson from the Assembly of MB Chiefs, Vicki Verville from Probation Services – COHROU, Deborah Clark a Community Outreach Worker, Steve Courchene, Don Robinson, Diane Lau, Sara Riel, Marjorie Soldevilla, Service Canada, Shannon Watson from Housing and Community Development, Lori Hudson from MB Housing and Community Development, Dave Mouland from Winnipeg Harvest, Paula Hendrickson from Aboriginal Health and Wellness, Sean Gander from New Directions, Winston Yee from the City of Winnipeg, Genny Funk-Unrah from Klinik, Rudolph Olson, Chantal Mutual from Pluri-Elles, Rikki Fontaine, Donald Benham from Winnipeg Harvest, Lynne Summerville from the West Broadway Community Ministry, Almera Oduca from Spence Neighbourhood, Michael Hertlein, Margaret Reda, Cyril Keeper, Jarred Baker from Aboriginal Health and Wellness, Betty Edel from Ma Mawi.

#### **Emergency Shelters, Continuum of Housing, Health and Social Services Engagement Session, June 4th:**

Aaron Peterson from the Salvation Army, Alden Weibe from the Lived Experience Circle of Winnipeg, Bertha Fontaine from Native Addictions Council of MB, Carolyn Brock from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Charlene Ouelette from Ikwe-Widdjitiwin Inc., Corrine Warkentin from the Mount Carmel Clinic, Darlene Hall from the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, Deena Brock from the Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters, Diane Lau from Sara Riel Inc.,



Brandon from the CCPA, Rudy Peters from Sunset House, Darcy Penner from CCEDNet, Laura Devlin from Riverside Lions, Marty Dolin, Menno Peters from WHRC and MNHP, Lawrence Poirier from Kinew Housing Inc., Peter Squire from Winnipeg Realtors, Rob Johnston from the RBC (also Task Force Co-Chair), Steve Chipman from Birchwood Automotive Group (also Task Force Member), Michael Robertson from MMP Architects (also Task Force Member), Garry Loewen as Facilitator, Brian Bechtel as the Director of the WPRC, Joanna Plater from United Way, and Connie Walker from United Way.

## **Housing Supply Private Sector Engagement Session, September 25th:**

Marty Maykut from Streetside Development Corporation, Bill Coady from Sunstone Group, Karam-paul Sandhu from Sandhu Developments, Doug McKay from Longboat Development, Karl Leopp, Richard Walls from Red Road Lodge, Mel Boisvert, Avrom Charach, Bob Downs from Shindico, Matthew Narvey from Tower Realty Group, Frank Koch-Schultz from Edison Properties, Gisele MacDonald from Chartier Property Management, Jeff Olafson from Gardon Construction, Peter Sampson and Mario Lopez from the Professional Property Managers Association, Rob Johnston from the RBC (also Task Force Co-Chair), Peter Squire from Winnipeg Realtors, Steve Chipman from Birchwood Automotive Group (also Task Force member), Ian Rabb from Winpark Dorchester (also Task Force member), Carolyn Ryan from the Province, Winston Yee from the City, Menno Peters from MNPH, Michael Robertson from MMP Architects (also Task Force member), Floyd Perras from Siloam Mission (also Task Force member), Garry Loewen as Facilitator, Brian Bechtel as Director of WPRC, Connie Walker from the United Way and Joanna Plater from United Way.

## **Indigenous Peoples and Community Organizations**

Council of Child Caring Treatment Centres

The Manitoba Metis Federation

The North End Women's Centre

RAY

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Winnipeg Rental Network

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## Appendix “B”

The following individuals comprised the Elders’ Council in an effort to ensure the process was culturally appropriate and guided by the perspectives of Indigenous Elders. All these individuals bring traditional wisdom and perspectives to the Community Task Force.

Mae Louise Campbell is an Ojibway Métis Elder. She has gained respect within the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal community as an Elder with a vision of healing for the people, a warm generous heart, and a sense of humour that “makes the medicine go down.” Mae Louise has traveled across Canada sharing traditional Aboriginal teachings. She has sat on many boards, been the guest speaker at numerous organizational and political meetings, and led thousands of sharing/healing circles.

Bertha Fontaine is an Ojibway Elder who has served as the Executive Director of the Native Addictions Council of Manitoba (NACM). She has observed over the years that many men and women who enter addictions treatment struggle with homelessness, child welfare, unresolved trauma, and residential school experiences. Ms. Fontaine is committed to long term healing from addictions and that recovery continues when the individual completes the program. She believes strongly in cultural ceremonies, the teachings of the Elders and that these values should inform the long term plan to end homelessness.

Jo Jo Sutherland is a Cree Elder from Saskatchewan who currently works at the Native Women’s Transition Centre. She received teachings from her parents who were traditional healers and carries on the traditions as a sweat lodge holder and pipe carrier. Jo Jo, being a residential school survivor, is sensitive to intergenerational and historic trauma of the men and women she helps. She has experience and training in post-traumatic stress and healing interventions. She has worked with people with lived experience, women and families, and homelessness.

David Budd is Cree from the Fisher River First Nation who is currently the Youth Cultural Advisor at the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. He has many years of experience working with young people, cultural programming, and traditional healing. He is a certified life skills coach through the Saskatchewan Indian College. David Budd is a young Elder who is recognized by his community for his commitment to the traditional ceremonial teachings and practices. He is a Sundance man, sweat lodge holder, and pipe carrier.

Michael Esquash is Ojibway-Cree from the Swan Lake Ojibway Nation. He has been involved in the traditional way of life for most of his life and continues as a helper with the Mount Carmel Clinic Assertive Community Treatment (ACT). For the past two years, he has conducted sharing and teaching circles with ACT program participants on a weekly basis. Prior to this work, he worked at the Stony Mountain Correctional Facility as an Elder’s Helper in the traditional programs with the inmates.

**About the Author**

Celeste McKay is Métis from Manitoba, with a background in social work and law, including an LL.M. degree from the University of Ottawa (2007) specializing in international human rights of Indigenous women, an LL.B. (University of Victoria) (1998) and a B.S.W (University of Manitoba) (1993). Ms. McKay works in the areas of human rights, policy, research and advocacy, locally, nationally and internationally, primarily on behalf of Indigenous peoples' organizations. As a social worker, Celeste worked within the local Winnipeg community, at agencies including the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and the Native Women's Transition Centre. At a national level, she worked for Native Women's Association of Canada as a Consultant and then as the Director of Human Rights and International Affairs, where she led policy matters related to Indigenous women, including the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Discussions on matters including housing. At the international level, she has worked with UN-HABITAT on Indigenous peoples' rights related to housing, property and land. In addition to policy work within Winnipeg, she currently works for Dr. Wilton Littlechild in his role as an Expert Member of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Her greatest source of joy is her son, Evan Raoul Chartrand.

Celeste has been involved as Lead Consultant on the Task Force since January 2013.



# **WPRC**

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