Everyone Is *Home*

YELLOWKNIFE'S
10 YEAR PLAN **TO END HOMELESSNESS**

Canada

CITY OF
YELLOWKNIFE

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD
CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE
ON HOMELESSNESS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the development of this 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, the City of Yellowknife, the Yellowknife Community Advisory Board on Homelessness and Turner Strategies have been assisted immeasurably by the organizations and individuals who participated in the consultation process, and who provided critical information and guidance. **We wish to gratefully acknowledge their contributions and assistance.**

THIS PLAN IS DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO HAVE OR CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE **HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY**. OUR WORK ENDS WHEN **EVERYONE IS HOME.**

Everyone is Home: Yellowknife's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness was endorsed by Yellowknife's City Council on **June 26, 2017.**

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TURNER | STR△TEGIES

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CHN	Core Housing Need
GNWT	Government of Northwest Territories
HF	Housing First
HIFIS	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
ICM	Intensive Case Management
LGBTQ2S+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit and other gender/sexual identities
NWT	Northwest Territories
PSH	Permanent Supportive Housing

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A CALL TO ACTION

The people of the North have taken on and overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. Yellowknifers carve their lives from an environment others see as harsh and unforgiving as much as it is breathtaking. As in many Northwest Territories communities, the city is forging a future made up of increasing diversity, grounded in ways of life existing since time immemorial.

Yellowknife is at a crossroads as a community. Whether thinking about the economic future, urban revitalization, commitment to authentic Reconciliation, or approach to governance, the city has to grapple with emerging complex social challenges if it is to become the prosperous and thriving community residents envision to create together. Homelessness is a true test of the Yellowknife's resilience – an expression of extreme deprivation with consequences and impacts that affect every single person. **It calls upon all to act.**

Continuing to manage homelessness **costs more than ending it**; the impacts of homelessness on emergency rooms, jails, police, and the courts is significant and does little to address root causes. Moving towards a **Housing First approach**, which places emphasis on moving people rapidly into housing with wrap-around supports, will help end their homelessness, and relieve pressure on emergency services in the community.

Homelessness in Yellowknife and the North is a **legacy of Canada's colonial past**, intimately tied to the ongoing impacts of residential schooling and intergenerational trauma. As such, homelessness is much more than someone's lack of housing or shelter – it is a manifestation of dispossession, displacement, and disruption for people, families, and entire Indigenous communities at a spiritual, social, and material level.

Finding a way forward to end homelessness is therefore **more than providing housing and shelter** – as much as these remain essential. True wellness places importance on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of people, families, and communities, and their interconnectedness with one another and the land. [1]

Ending homelessness is a collective responsibility, and this Plan is a call to action for all to take another step on a journey of **healing and Reconciliation**.

"WE DON'T GIVE UP ON EACH OTHER."

-lived experience voice

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[1] Christensen, J. (2017) No Home in a Homeland - Indigenous peoples and Homelessness in the Canadian North. UBC Press.

HOW WAS THE PLAN DEVELOPED?

This Plan was set in motion by the Yellowknife Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, which represents diverse community organizations and government working together to develop solutions and action. Over the course of six months, starting in January 2017, Turner Strategies' team of researchers engaged in consultations with a total of 63 people with lived experience, Indigenous peoples (including Elders), service providers, government, and business representatives.

These stakeholders participated in community conversations on the current state of homelessness in the community, and provided crucial input on a path forward. Of 56 Yellowknife participants, 13 provided a lived experience perspective. Another seven individuals provided insight on the regional dynamics involved in migration from smaller communities as well.[2] The Plan also incorporates recommendations and input brought forward during the 2016 Community Partnership Forum[3] and the ensuing Yellowknife Homelessness Road Map Action Plan.[4]

Based on this input, combined with research that drew on available data and information on homelessness and housing in Yellowknife, the researchers built a draft Plan that was presented to City Council, the Yellowknife Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) in April 2017. Feedback on the draft direction from various key stakeholders was then incorporated into a final draft for City Council endorsement. The Plan was launched subsequently to the broader Yellowknife community.

INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS AS COLONIAL LEGACY

Indigenous peoples experience homelessness, as well as other forms of social exclusion, at a higher rate than the general population. Specific policy interventions are therefore needed in order to account for these circumstances.

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[2] Two separate reports provide a synthesis of these consultations and an overview of the literature reviewed.
[3] 2016 Community Partnership Forum (2016) Retrieved from: http://nwthc.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/2016_homelessness_in_yellowknife_-_community_partnership_forum_-_summary_0.pdf
[4] Yellowknife Homelessness Road Map Action Plan (2016) Retrieved from: https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/resources/City_Council_and_Mayor/Mayor/YK-Homelessness-Road-Map-Action-Plan-FINAL-3.pdf

Homelessness amongst Indigenous peoples is a colonial legacy. The interconnectedness of post-colonialism, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, and ongoing systematic social and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples is pervasive in Canada,[5] and Yellowknife is no exception.

Indigenous peoples have been displaced and dispossessed through forced settlement (putting an end to traditional, sustainable, nomadic ways of life), imposition of government systems, legislation such as the Indian Act, and policies focused on assimilation.[6] Families have been irrevocably disrupted via residential schooling, harmful child welfare practices – including the "60s scoop" where thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their homes and communities by child protection agencies during the 1960s.[7] [8] **Homelessness is one of the by-products of this long-lasting colonial legacy** along with high rates of alcohol and drug use, domestic violence, health challenges, and poverty.[9]

Despite these ongoing ramifications, and the suffering of Indigenous peoples across Canada, Indigenous peoples are moving forward; this spirit of resilience and revitalization is essential to finding a path to healing. **Survivors and new generations of Indigenous peoples are creating futures of strength and promise.**

In this spirit of resilience, the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada**[10] provides vision for a new way forward to:

"PROMOTE RECONCILIATION BY ENGAGING CANADIANS IN DIALOGUE THAT REVITALIZES THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND ALL CANADIANS IN ORDER TO BUILD VIBRANT, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES."[11]

THE **LIVED EXPERIENCE** VOICE

It is of paramount importance that the main recommendation from the lived experience consultation undertaken for this Plan was resoundingly a call for support in healing. As people faced the realities of day-to-day survival in homelessness, they asked for assistance to overcome their mental health and addiction challenges – to get to the **core and root causes behind their struggles**. This means addressing experiences of trauma and abuse, ongoing marginalization and health challenges while helping the person "**walk in two worlds**" – both Indigenous and Canadian ways of life.

While housing is irrevocably needed from their perspective, without holistic supports that are non-judgmental, flexible, and readily accessible, they would continue to struggle. This confirms that homelessness is more than a

[5] Christensen, J. (2017) No Home in a Homeland - Indigenous peoples and Homelessness in the Canadian North. UBC Press.

[6] Coates, K. (2008). The Indian Act and the future of Aboriginal governance in Canada: Research paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance. Ottawa, ON: National Centre for First Nations Governance. Retrieved from: http://fngovernance.org/ncfng_research/coates.pdf

[7] Johnston, P. (2016) Revisiting the "Sixties Scoop" of Indigenous children. Policy Options. Retrieved from: http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2016/revisiting-the-sixties-scoop-of-indigenous-children/

[8] Miller, J. R. (2000). Skyscrapers hide the heavens. A history of Indian-White relations in Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press

[9] Place, J. (2012) The Health of Aboriginal People Residing in Urban Areas. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. Retrieved from: http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/53/Urban_Aboriginal_Health_EN_web.pdf

[10] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf

[11] Reconciliation Canada. (2016). Our Story. Retrieved from http://reconciliationcanada.ca/about/history-and-background/our-story/

lack of housing or shelter; it is a manifestation of dispossession, displacement, and disruption for people, families, and entire Indigenous communities at a spiritual level as well.[12]

From the voices of those with lived experience, there was a call to leadership for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples: people spoke about the need for positive role models, and finding ways to increase their inclusion as Indigenous peoples. Regardless of where they originally came from, people called for an acknowledgement of common humanity and kindness to move forward together.

"**PEOPLE NEED HOPE**; IF YOU DON'T HAVE HOPE, YOU HAVE DESPAIR."

-lived experience voice

MIGRATION & RURAL HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness in Yellowknife has increased significantly in recent years as reported in the Plan consultation process. The issue is complex and multifaceted, complicated by a colonial past and a Northern context.[13][14][15] The over-representation of Indigenous peoples among those at risk of or experiencing homelessness is beyond denial: as one consultation participant put it,

"IT'S NOT A QUESTION OF WHAT PERCENT OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION IS INDIGENOUS – BUT RATHER WHETHER THERE ARE ANY WHO ARE NOT".

-community conversation participant

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[12] Christensen, J. (2017) No Home in a Homeland - Indigenous peoples and Homelessness in the Canadian North. UBC Press.
[13] Falvo, N. (2011) Homelessness in Yellowknife: An Emerging Social Challenge. (Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press).
[14] Minich K., et al. (2011) Inuit housing and homelessness: results from the International Polar Year Inuit Health Survey 2007–2008. Int J Circumpolar Health. 70:520–31.
[15] Schmidt, R. et al. (2015) Trajectories of women's homelessness in Canada's 3 northern territories. Int J Circumpolar Health 2015, 74: 29778 - http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/ijch.v74.29778.

In the 2015 Homeless Point-in-Time Count conducted by the City of Yellowknife

91% OF THOSE ENUMERATED SELF-IDENTIFIED AS INDIGENOUS.

The Homeless Count suggests that about

11% OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ENUMERATED WERE BORN IN YELLOWKNIFE,

This finding has two important implications. First, just because Yellowknife is not a person's place of birth, this does not mean they don't consider the city their home. In fact, Yellowknife is the ancestral and adopted home of a large number of Indigenous peoples from the western and eastern Arctic.

Second, homelessness in Yellowknife is not simply a 'Yellowknife problem.' Unemployment, poverty, a lack of affordable housing, as well as an array of other social problems throughout the Northwest Territories, have contributed to homelessness in Yellowknife. Addressing homelessness in Yellowknife does not simply address Yellowknife problems; rather, it responds to pan-territorial challenges.

Of note, many people who live and thrive in Yellowknife come from elsewhere in the north and south, and dealing with the kinds of crisis that can contribute to homelessness does not mean someone has less of a right to access resources and find support from the community.[16]

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[16] Dr. J. Christensen, Plan Review Comments, June 21, 2017, Personal Communication.

Figure 1 What Aboriginal Community are you from? (Yellowknife Point In Time Count Report, 2015, n=78) [17]
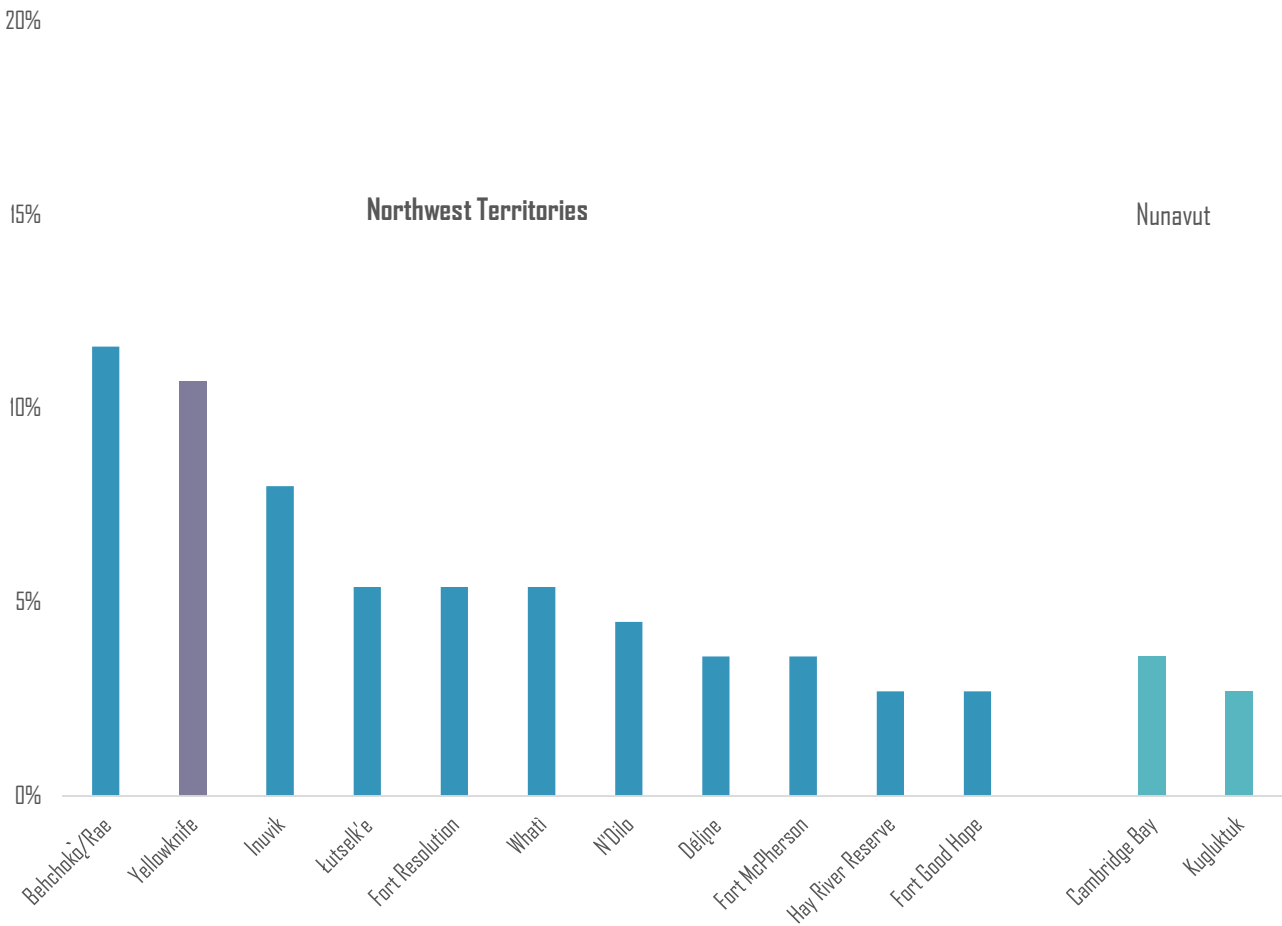
Common reasons for people to relocate to Yellowknife from Indigenous communities include: access to services; seeking to escape trauma in their home communities; and overall improvement in well-being for themselves and their children. Conditions in Indigenous communities – yet another element of the colonial past – are an additional 'push factor' for many to migrate into cities. This in turn acts as part of the spiritual aspects of homelessness as dislocation and disconnection from home communities, cultural identities, the land, and Indigenous ways of life. [18] While employment and education opportunities act as a pulling factor to Northern urban centres, Core Housing Need and a lack of infrastructure in small Northern settlements often pushes men and women at risk of homelessness from their home communities. [19]

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[17] Yellowknife Point In Time Count Report (2015) Retrieved from https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/living-here/resources/Social_Services/Homelessness/Yellowknife-2015-Point-in-Time-Count-REPORT.pdf
[18] Christensen, J. (2012) "They want a different life": Rural northern settlement dynamics and pathways to homelessness in Yellowknife and Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The Canadian Geographer, 56(4): 419–438.
[19] Christensen, J. (2013) Pathways to homelessness: rural-urban migration and housing insecurity in Yellowknife and Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Northern Public Affairs Journal, 1: 51-54.

Core Housing Need measures assess whether a household experiences one or more of three defined housing problems: adequacy, suitability, or affordability. In addition, it assesses whether a household falling below one of these standards has the necessary income capacity to address this issue[20]. **Core Housing Need, particularly in its most extreme instances is a form of hidden homelessness.[21]**

In the North, the climate results in housing deteriorating faster. Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and makeup of resident households; overcrowding or a lack of privacy can exacerbate already strained relationships with family or friends. Inadequate facilities and resources related to shelter and supports in smaller communities contribute to migration into Yellowknife.[22] Housing adequacy and suitability is the most prevalent problem in the rural communities of the NWT, and while this overcrowded and substandard housing persists, it will be a push factor for people to continue to migrate to urban centres. [23]

Homelessness is a reality in Indigenous communities in the North.

In Behchokǫ, a community close to Yellowknife, social housing has simply not kept up with population growth. Coupled with lack of economic opportunities, these challenges have spurred migration into Yellowknife; notably, Behchokǫ stakeholders reported that the community is itself a service centre that attracts migration from the other Tłı̨chǫ communities in rural areas. In this sense, migration is an ongoing process with multiple stops as people seek better circumstances.

In some instances, people do want to go back home – and should be supported in this decision. This does not mean the solution to Yellowknife homelessness is to 'send people back': the reasons they leave are legitimate, as is their fundamental right to free movement. The challenge is to develop an appropriate response to the reasons for this movement in the first place at the local and regional levels, both in Yellowknife and in the other 32 NWT communities. This requires an enabling territorial approach that supports capacity and leadership at the local levels to respond to homelessness.

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[20] Pomeroy, S. (2004) An International Comparison of Housing Need Indicators. Retrieved from http://www.focus-consult.com/ResearchFiles/By%20Year/2004/Intl%20Comparison%20of%20Housing%20Need%20Indicators%202004.pdf
[21] For the full definition of homelessness used in the Plan, please see the Canadian Definition of Homelessness: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Homeless Hub: www.homelesshub.ca/homelessdefinition/
[22] ibid (2013).
[23] Christensen, J. (2017) No Home in a Homeland - Indigenous peoples and Homelessness in the Canadian North. UBC Press..

CORE **HOUSING NEED** TRENDS

Core Housing Need is occurring at high levels in many of NWT communities – as high as almost half of the households in some cases.

Figure 2: Percent of Households in Core Housing Need by NWT Community in 2014[24]
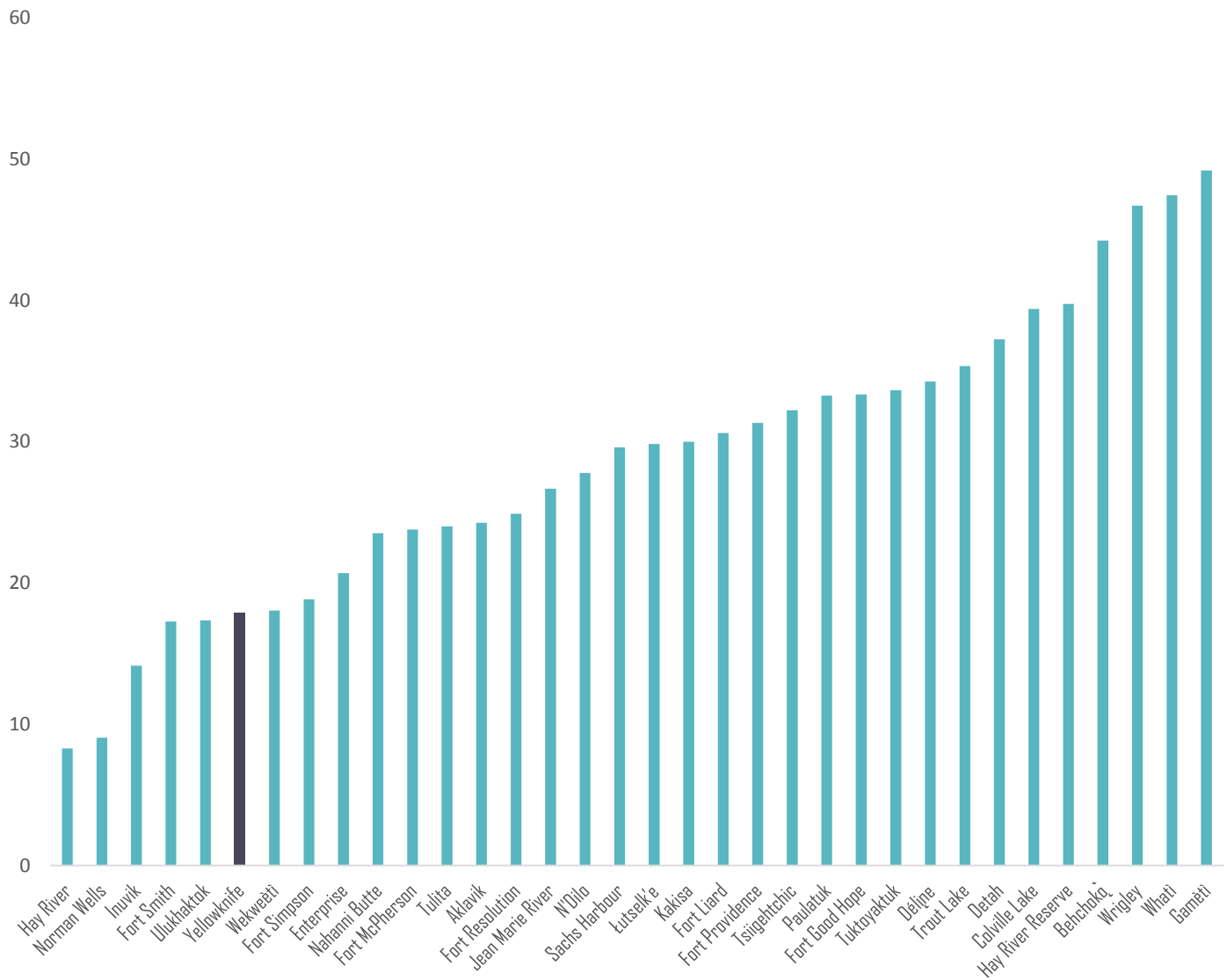
[24] Source for graph is the 2014 Housing Need Survey, NWT Bureau of Statistics, data set "Housing Problems and Core Need by Community", retrieved from http://www.statsnwt.ca/Housing/housing-conditions/

Core Housing Need in rural communities differs from trends in Yellowknife.

The figure below shows how different the challenges in smaller centres are compared to Yellowknife; overcrowding and housing in need of major repairs is more common in the small communities, whereas Yellowknife's affordability challenge is more prominent.

Figure 3 Percent of Households in Core Housing Need (CHN) in NWT Regions [25]
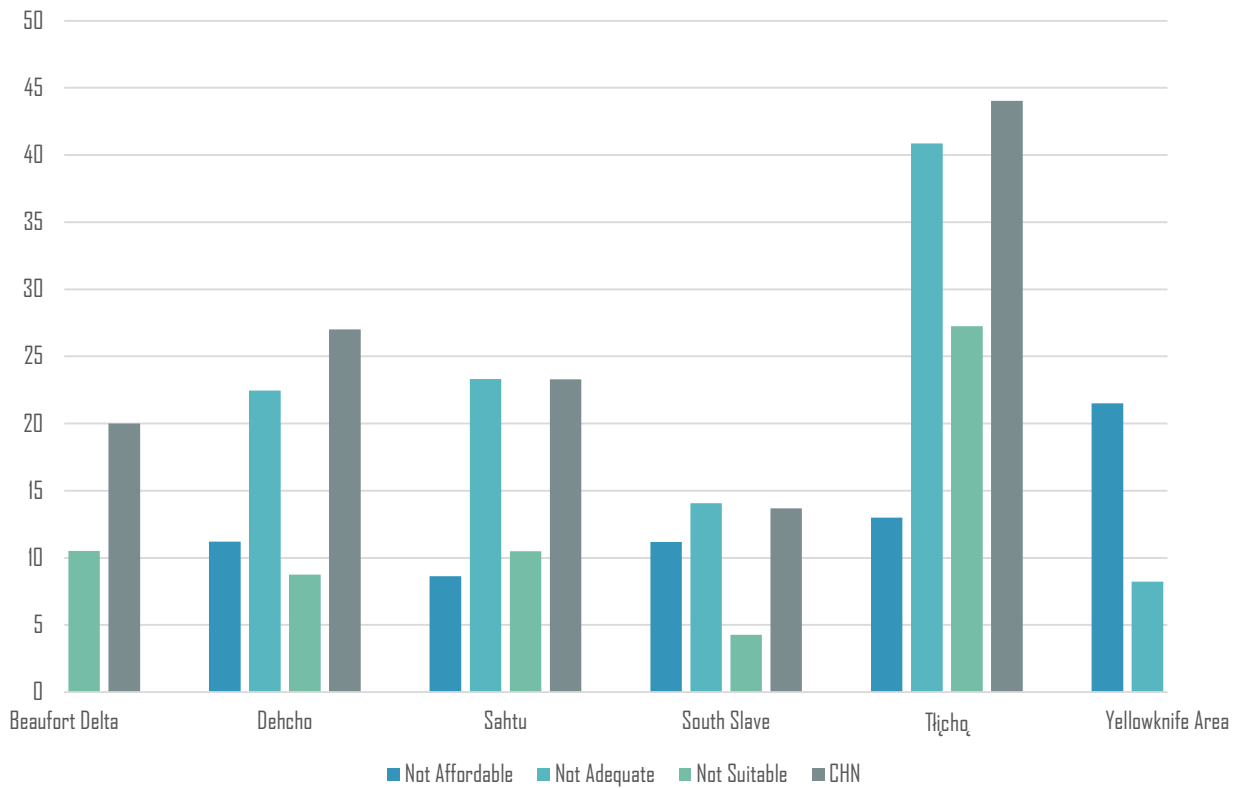
These dynamics contribute to migration into Yellowknife from these communities.

Housing adequacy (housing in need of major repairs) and suitability (overcrowding) are notably higher in smaller communities compared to Yellowknife. Yellowknife certainly faces these challenges as well, but overall, affordability is the greatest factor in its Core Housing Need.

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[25] Source for graph is the 2014 Housing Need Survey, NWT Bureau of Statistics, data set "Housing Problems and Core Need by Community", retrieved from http://www.statsnwt.ca/Housing/housing-conditions/

Notable clusters of high Core Housing Need in surrounding communities close to Yellowknife.

Figure 4 Mapping Core Housing Need[1]
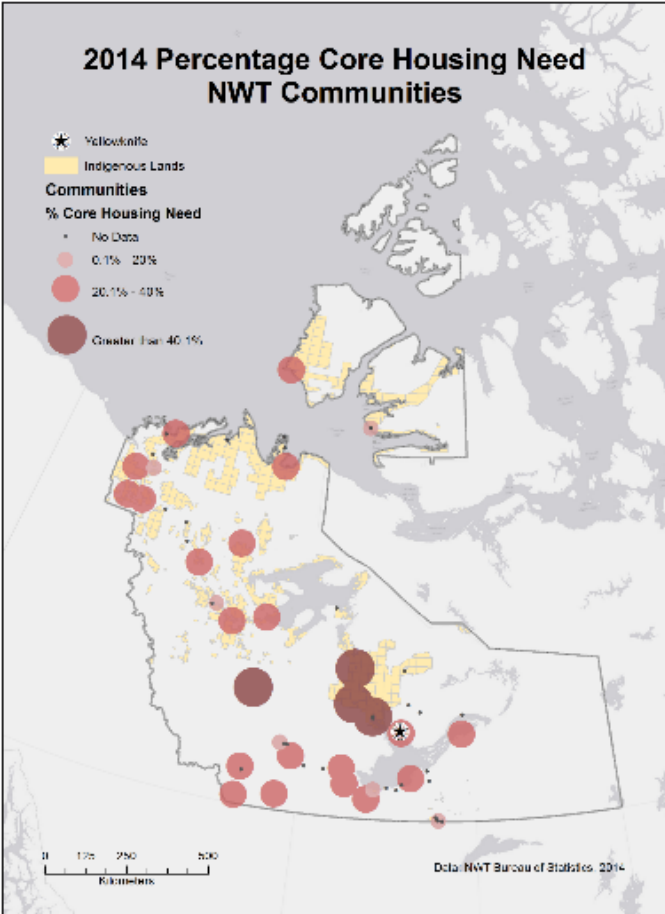
Core Housing Need issues vary across NWT communities.

Affordability and adequacy problems are notable in Yellowknife while smaller communities see higher incidence of adequacy due to poor housing conditions.
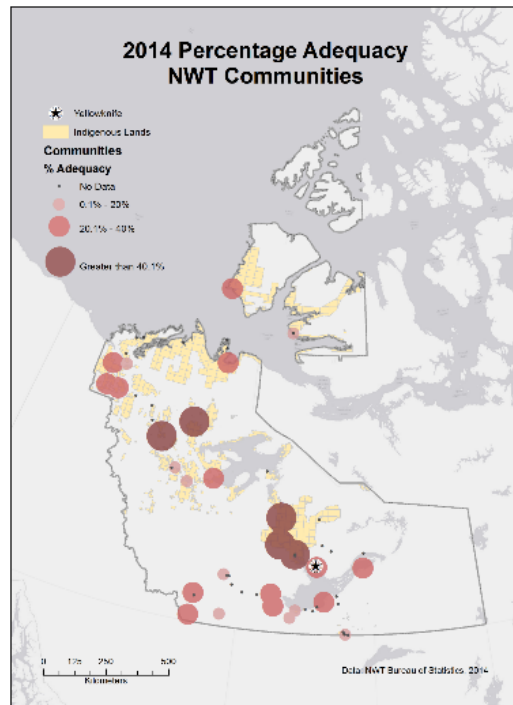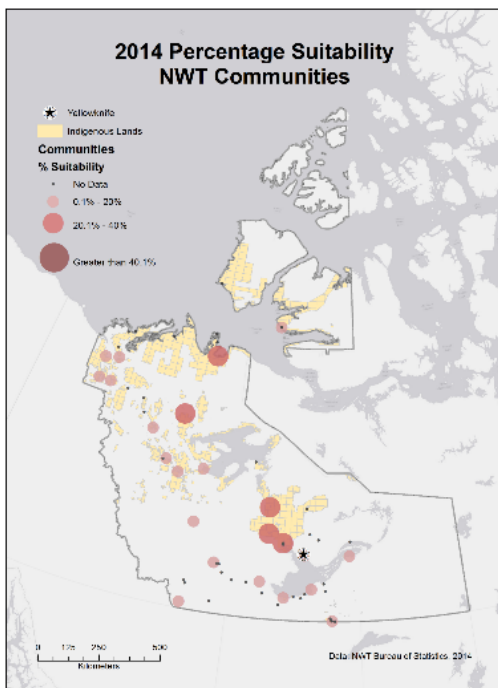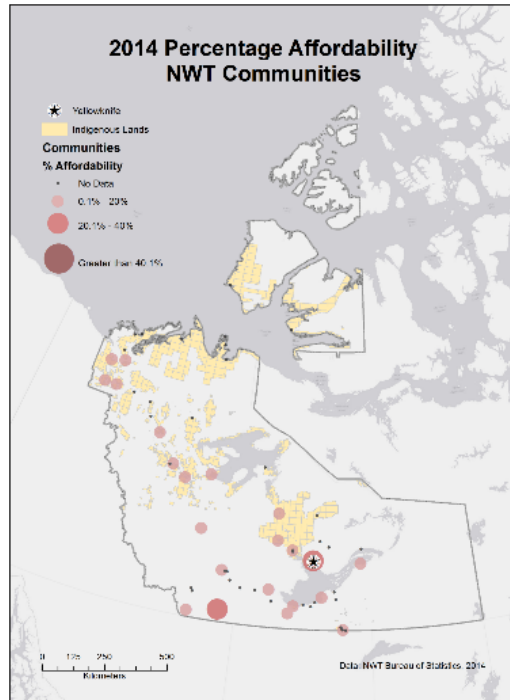
Core Housing Need has improved in rural areas, but doubled in Yellowknife due to affordability issues.

Notably, from 2009 to 2014 progress was made in housing conditions in smaller non-market and market communities, and Core Housing Need dropped from 42% to 32%, and from 16% to 13% respectively. However, these improvements were countered by a doubling in Core Housing Need in Yellowknife from 9% to 18% between 2009 and 2014.[26] The data on Core Housing Need highlights the levels of need in these communities, which in turn contribute to migration into Yellowknife.

Figure 5: Core Housing Need Jump in Yellowknife

NWT BUREAU OF STATISTICS
2009 & 2014 HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

Households in Core Housing Need

17.9%

9.1%

1300
975
650
325
0

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[26] GNWT Annual Business Plan 2017-18 (2017) Retrieved from: http://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/documents/all_departments_final_2017-18_business_plans_for_website_2.pdf

URBANIZATION IMPACTS

NWT Communities are shrinking, while Yellowknife continues to grow.

Most smaller NWT communities are seeing population decreases. While the NWT population suggests constancy overall, looking closer, this stabilization is a product of population growth in Yellowknife (+365) and the Sahtu region (+92), which is mitigating a decline in other regions. The Deh Cho, Beaufort Delta, South Slave, and Tłı̨chǫ regions saw a decrease of 548 people between 2011 and 2016. While people leaving are moving to other provinces and territories, some also migrate into Yellowknife.

Figure 6 Population Changes in NWT Communities 2011-2016 by Number of Individuals[27]
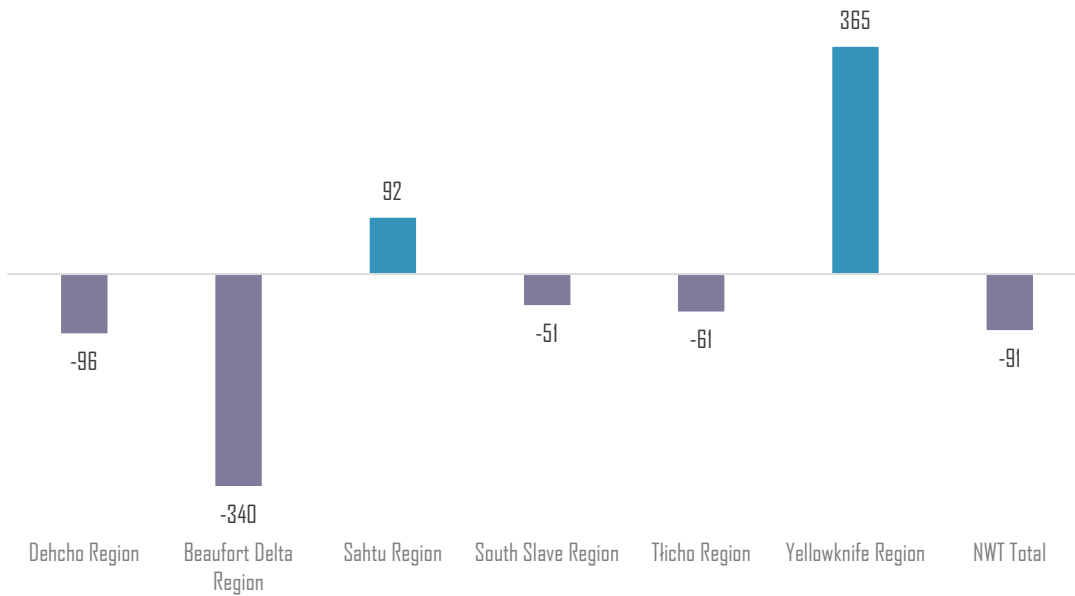
NWT is experiencing similar urbanization trends observed across Canada.

From 1985 to 2016, the population across NWT regions grew by 11,890 people; however, **88% of these were in the Yellowknife Region.**

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[27] Source for graph is data from NWT Bureau of Statistics, data set "Population Estimates as of July 1, by Community, Northwest Territories", Retrieved from http://www.statsnwt.ca/population/population-estimates/bycommunity.php

Figure 7 Percent of Total Population Growth in NWT from 1985-2016 by Region.[28]
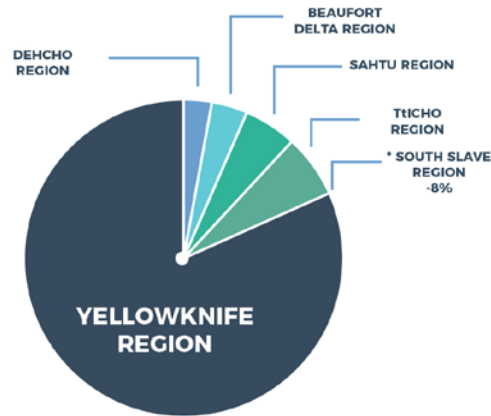
In another image using 2016 Census data, we see this pattern of **small communities decreasing** as well.

Figure 8 NWT Communities Seeing Population Decline between 2011 and 2016 Census periods[29]

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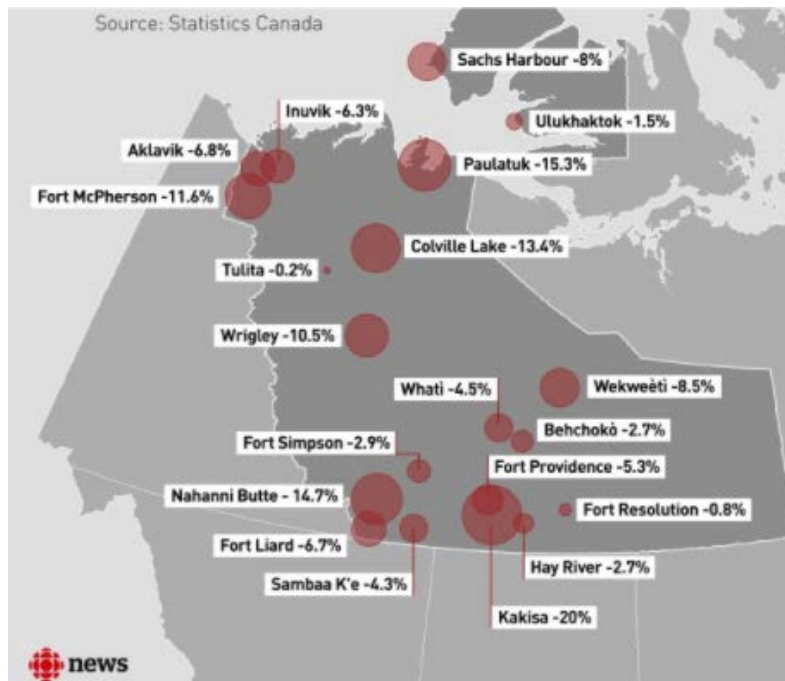
[28] Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, Historical Census Population Counts, by Community and Region. Retrieved from http://www.statsnwt.ca/population/population-estimates/bycommunity.php
[29] Source for data is Census 2016, Statistics Canada, map prepared by CBC. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nwt-population-trends-communities-yellowknife-1.3974284

This is reaffirmed by NWT Bureau of Statistics data showing **out-migration** outpacing in-migration in the territorial population.

Figure 9 Population Changes in NWT from 2007-2016 [30]

Year	Total NWT Population	Births	Deaths	Net Migration	%Change from Previous Year
2016	44,469	687	-235	-615	0.5
2015	44,244	685	-227	-158	0.8
2014	43,889	687	-217	-104	0.2
2013	43,786	689	-209	-405	0.4
2012	43,594	688	-200	-400	0.2
2011	43,501	690	-188	-115	0.5
2010	43,278	700	-184	-85	0.3
2009	43,149	711	-186	-537	-0.5
2008	43,350	721	-201	-626	-0.1
2007	43,374	725	-174	-139	0.5

Yellowknife receives over half of migrants in NWT.

Looking closer at general migration trends, of the total migrants in NWT who resided elsewhere five years prior to 2011 Census, Yellowknife received 34% of all intra-territorial migrants, 62% of interprovincial migrants, and 77% of external migrants from outside Canada. **In total, Yellowknife received 56% of all these NWT migrants compared to the other 32 NWT communities.**

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[30] Data accessed from NWT Bureau of Statistics, Population Estimates. Retrieved from http://www.statsnwt.ca/population/population-estimates/
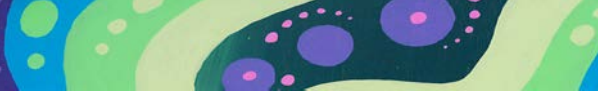
Figure 10 Mobility in NWT Communities, number of individuals who resided outside community 5 years prior to 2011 Census *(n=7,955)*[31]
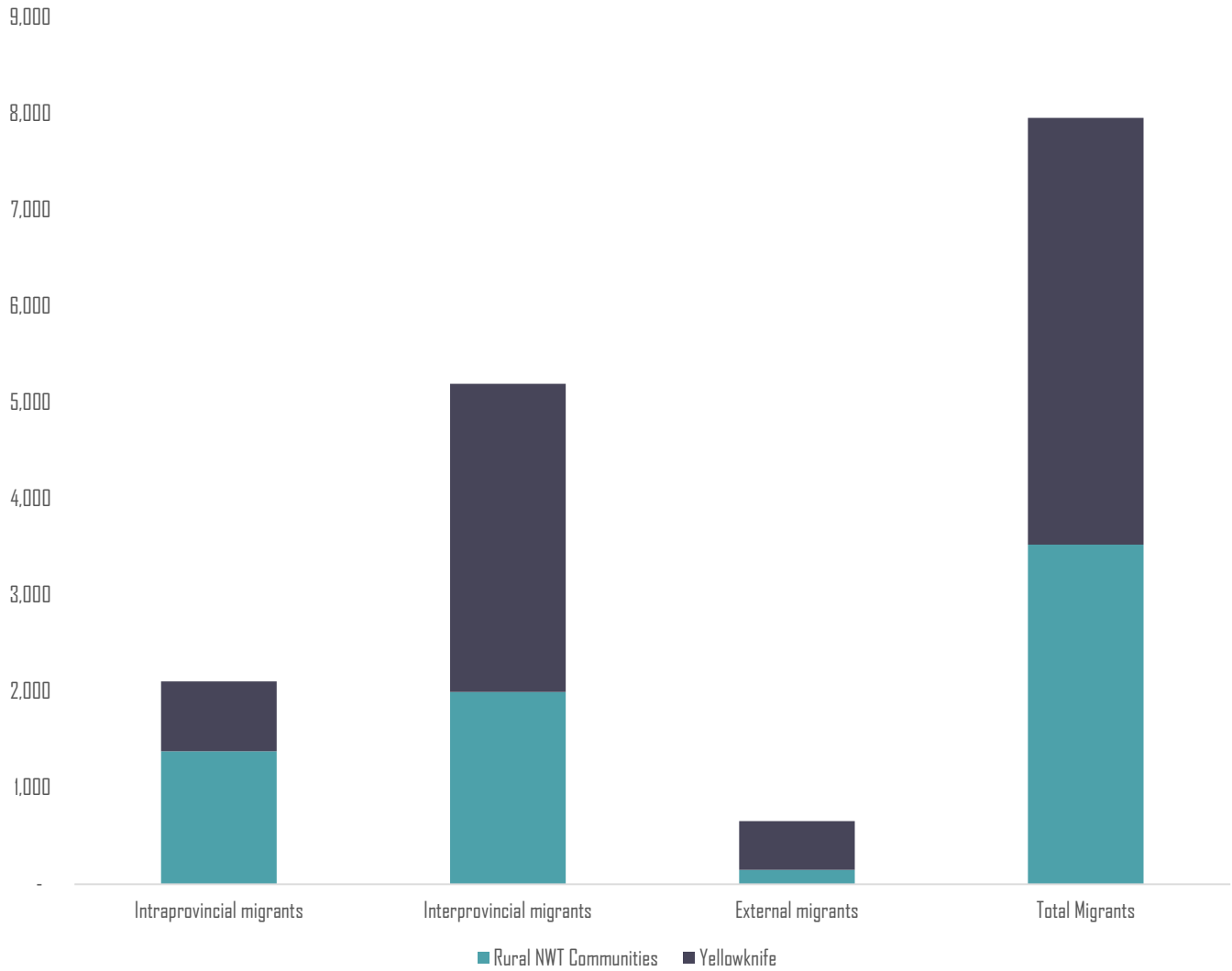
Population changes, migration, and the conditions in various housing markets impact Core Housing Need and homelessness dynamics in Yellowknife.

These population trends are significant as they indicate growing urbanization of the NWT, which puts it in line with Canadian trends of rural population decline over the past 150 years.[32] This places pressure on housing and services in the city and increases affordability challenges for vulnerable populations as suggested by the doubling in Core Housing Need in Yellowknife from 2011-2015. Research highlights the pressures on housing stock such population changes engender, which marginalize vulnerable populations when affordable alternatives are inadequate.[33]

The link between urbanization and homelessness has been made globally, as well as in Canada. In Yellowknife, this link is further suggested by the 91% of 2015 Homeless PIT Count respondents who were not originally from this community. The additional dynamics at play in the NWT involve the significant over-representation of Indigenous people, and the flows from small rural communities with poor housing conditions, and access to services or opportunities as one of the ongoing effects of colonialism.[34] This does not mean rural homelessness is not occurring; rather, it sheds light on Yellowknife dynamics.

HOUSING MARKET TRENDS

As mentioned above, migration plays a key role in Yellowknife's housing market, which in turn impacts affordability and homelessness. As labour opportunities and services draw migration to Yellowknife, added pressure on limited rental stock impacts affordability.

Most housing stock being built is intended for homeownership.

A total of 937 dwellings were completed this past decade in Yellowknife; however, most of these were intended for homebuyers. While population growth is accommodated by these new homeownership units (which may be used as rentals as well), many newcomers may prefer renting as opposed to buying a house. Construction and servicing costs are key factors in driving the price of homeownership out of reach for many Yellowknife residents.

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[32] Statistics Canada. 2014. Canada's rural population declining since 1851. *Canadian Demography at a Glance,* Catalogue No. 98-003-X.
[33] Frankish. J., Hwang, S. and Quantz, D. (2005) Homelessness and Health in Canada: Research Lessons and Priorities. Canadian Journal of Public Health / Revue Canadienne de Santé Publique. Vol. 96, Supp. 2: Reducing Health Disparities in Canada, pp. S23-S29.
[34] Christensen, J. (2013) Pathways to homelessness: rural-urban migration and housing insecurity in Yellowknife and Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Northern Public Affairs Journal, 1: 51-54.
Christensen, J. (2017) No Home in a Homeland - Indigenous peoples and Homelessness in the Canadian North. UBC Press.

Figure 11: Yellowknife New Housing Construction by Number of Starts and Completions from 2006-2016[35]
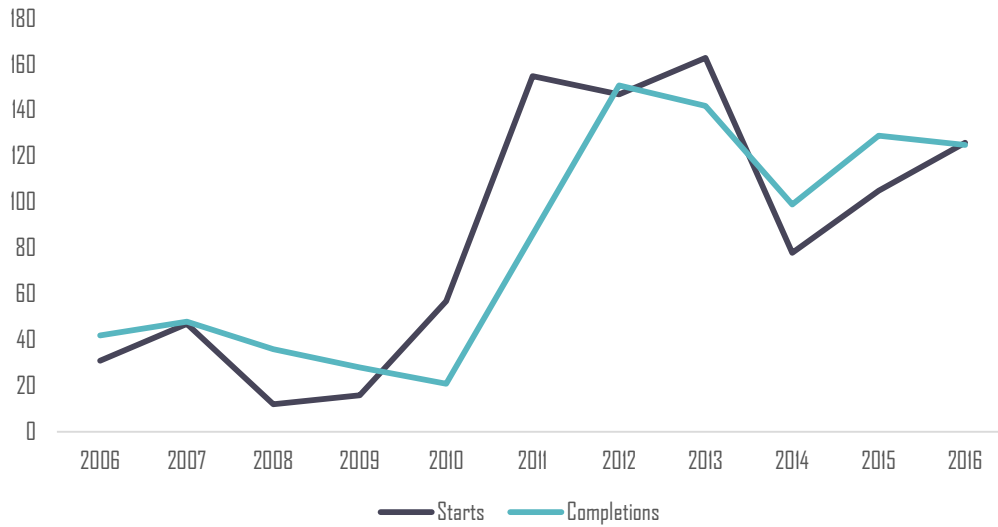
Costs of home ownership are growing and **out of reach** for low income residents.

The average purchase price of a home in Yellowknife in 2016 was $462,040, on par with the Canadian average of $470,661.[36] Housing prices have escalated dramatically in the last 10 years throughout Canada. The cost of building materials is higher in the North; however, this does not account for the rapid and high rate of housing costs.

Yellowknife has approximately 7,000 housing units: 52% owned, and 48% are rented. Perhaps due to rising housing costs, the homeownership rate has decreased slightly between 2006 and 2014. This places increased demand on rental housing supply.

Figure 12: Average Value of Owned Dwellings Yellowknife, NWT, and Canada[37]

Year	Yellowknife	% Change	NWT	% Change	Canada	% Change
2006	$302,750		$226,909		$276,095	
2011	$399,166	32%	$301,405	25%	$345,182	25%
2016[38]	$462,040	16%	$451,414	33%	$470,661	37%

Materials, labour, and transportation costs result in much higher housing costs in the NWT. Requirements due to the climate (such as permafrost), the need for additional insulation, and larger heating requirements increase the cost of building. Further, permafrost and low water tables make it difficult to drill wells, and prevent the construction of underground sewage or septic systems, which impact the installation of drinking water tanks and

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[35] CMHC (2017) Housing Market Information Portal. Retrieved from https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en#TableMapChart/7860/3/Yellowknife

[36] CREA (2017) National Average Price Map. Retrieved from http://www.crea.ca/housing-market-stats/national-average-price-map/

[37] Statistics Canada (2013) Yellowknife, CY, Northwest Territories (Code 6106023) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released September 11, 2013.

[38] CREA (2017) National Average Price Map. Retrieved from http://www.crea.ca/housing-market-stats/national-average-price-map/

sewage holding tanks.[39] Further, the North faces not only higher energy prices, but also much higher heating costs because of the long heating season and lower temperatures.[40]

These considerable costs are embedded within housing prices for new homebuyers. One strategy to overcome high costs is looking to alternatives, like mobile and pre-fab modular homes, which have become the popular choice[41] as they do not require concrete foundations. Construction quality has improved with advancements in building materials, and efficiency standards providing a cost savings on utilities and heating expenses compared to older housing stock.[42]

Yellowknife's housing stock is aging and in need of repair.

Nearly 35% of the entire housing stock was built prior to 1980, and another 45% was added in during the 1980s and 1990s. Many houses are therefore reaching the age where major structural components will need to be replaced, often at a high cost in order to bring the dwellings up to current codes.

Figure 13 Percent of Private Dwellings in Yellowknife by Year of Construction[43]

■ Built before 1946 ■ Built from 1946 to 1960 ■ Built from 1961 to 1980 ■ Built from 1981 to 2000 ■ Built from 2001 to 2011 ■ Built from 2006 to 2011
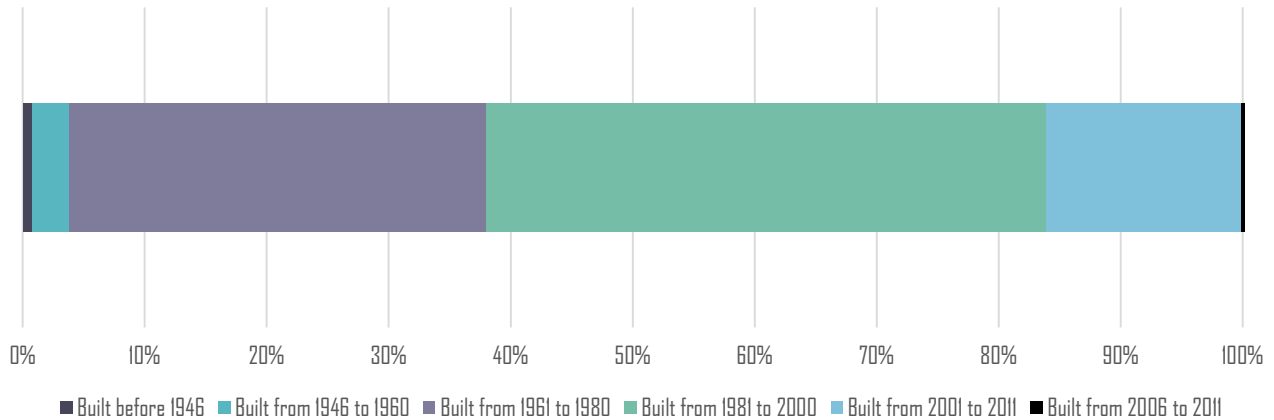
Yellowknife's housing stock is not diversified; rental construction is declining.

Apartments account for 10% of private dwellings, while single detached units and other buildings account for 90%. Greater housing diversity would contribute to affordability and provide more options to residents. In last year's rental market survey, the purpose-built rental universe increased only marginally by 1.7% (34 units) to 1,978.[44] Notably, this represents a **15% loss of rental units since 2006**.

[39] Falvo, N. (2015) Ten things to know about homelessness in Canada's North. Northern Public Affairs. Retrieved from http://www.northernpublicaffairs.ca/index/falvo-ten-things-to-know-about-homelessness-in-canadas-north/
[40] Zanasi, L. (2007) Expiry of federal funding for Social Housing: Implications for the Territorial Housing Corporations. Retrieved from http://housing4all.ca/sites/default/files/documents/reports/3_expiry_implications_for_territorial_govts_-_english_only.pdf
[41] CMHC (2016) Housing Market Information. Northern Housing Market Report. Retrieved from https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/65446/65446_2016_A01.pdf.
[42] Ibid (2016).
[43] CMHC (2016) Housing Stock (2011) — Yellowknife. Retrieved from https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmiportal/en/#Profile/7860/3/Yellowknife
[44] CMHC (2017) Rental Market Report. Yellowknife Highlights 2016. Retrieved from: https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/catalog/productDetail.cfm?lang=en&cat=59&itm=21&sid=nL71HF7fppuTXZuAHPNJ89HuTtg6JfDHIZtbQeKPOaIppVfDhEbFSReUaRcPIfRV&fr=1487270061665

Figure 14: Number of Units in Yellowknife Rental Universe by Bedroom Type[45]
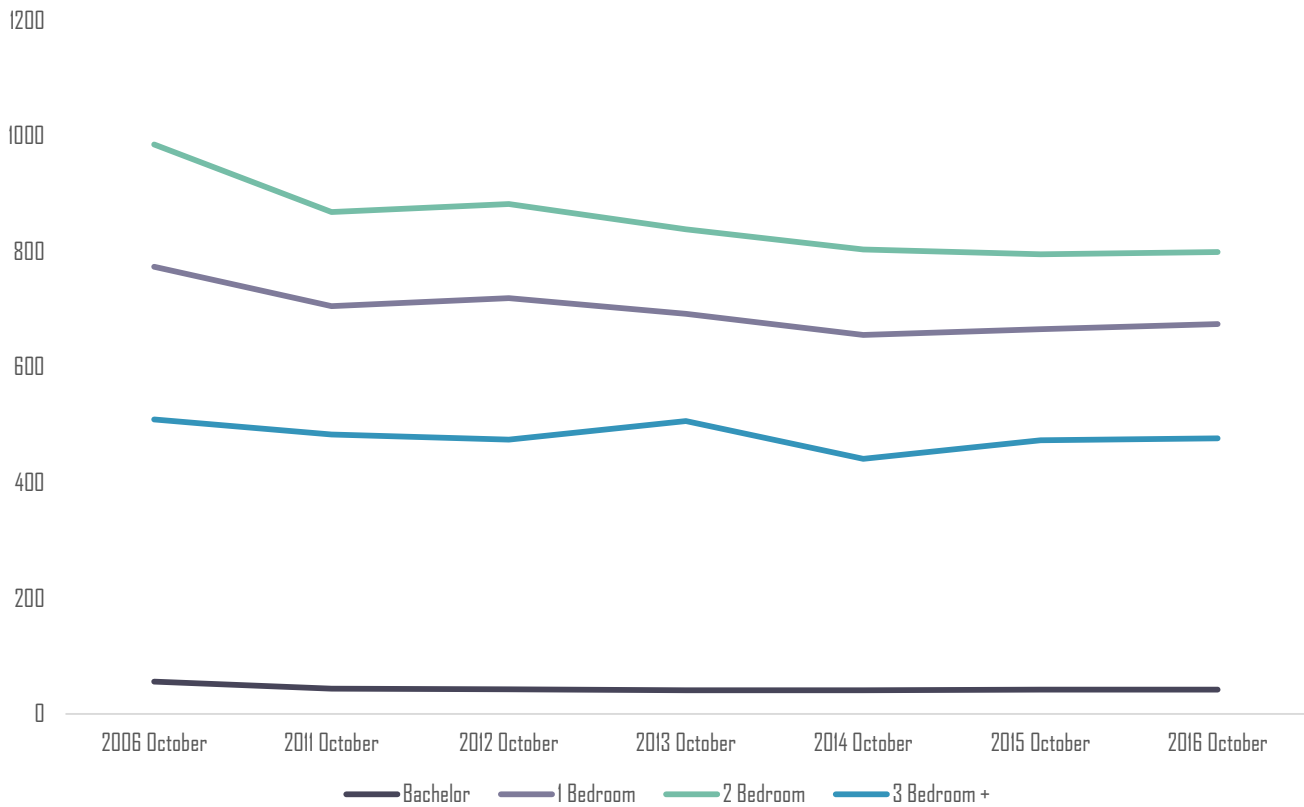
Yellowknife tenants pay one of the highest average rent in Canada.

The cost of renting is about $20,000 per year for an average two-bedroom unit. While more private rental is in the pipeline, there is clearly a deficit when it comes to rental stock that is affordable for low-income households, as Core Housing Need rates suggest.

Yellowknife's vacancy rate for two-bedroom apartments rose from 2.3% in October 2015 to 5.6% in October 2016 as people moved away or moved into homeownership. Despite the vacancy rate rise, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment was still high at $1,636 in October 2016. As a result, tenants paid one of the highest average rent in Canada: Yellowknife rent costs are notably higher than the national average of $926.[46]

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[45] CMHC (2017) Primary Rental Market Statistics — Yellowknife. Retrieved from: https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmiportal/en/#Profile/7860/3/Yellowknife
[46] CMHC (2017) Housing Market Information Portal. Retrieved from https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en#TableMapChart/1/1/Canada

Figure 15: Yellowknife Historical Rental Market Statistics Summary[47]

Year (October)	Vacancy Rate (%)	Availability Rate (%)	Average Rent ($)	Median Rent ($)	% Change	# Units
2005	4.6	5.9	1,231	1,200	0.8	2,219
2006	2.9	4.5	1,291	1,295	4.9	2,326
2007	1.3	1.9	1,305	1,300	1	2,300
2008	0.8	0.9	1,362	1,355	6.4	2,417
2009	5.3	5.4	1,426	1,395	5.3	2,138
2010	0.9	0.9	1,442	1,420	1.3	2,120
2011	1.3	1.5	1,523	1,495	5.2	2,103
2012	3.2	3.2	1,577	1,570	4.2	2,121
2013	3.6	3.9	1,607	1,600	1.3	2,080
2014	4.8	5.4	1,630	1,604	1.4	1,943
2015	2.3	3.2	1,660	1,640	1.7	1,978
2016	5.6	5.8	1,626	1,600	-1.2	1,994

Investigating further, Yellowknife's vacancy rate for bachelor apartments stood at 0% in October 2016.[48] The housing shortage has created a situation in Yellowknife in which even full-time, single workers are unable to find accommodation even if they are paid well above minimum wage.

Figure 16: Number of Yellowknife Apartment Types and Availability, October 2016[49]

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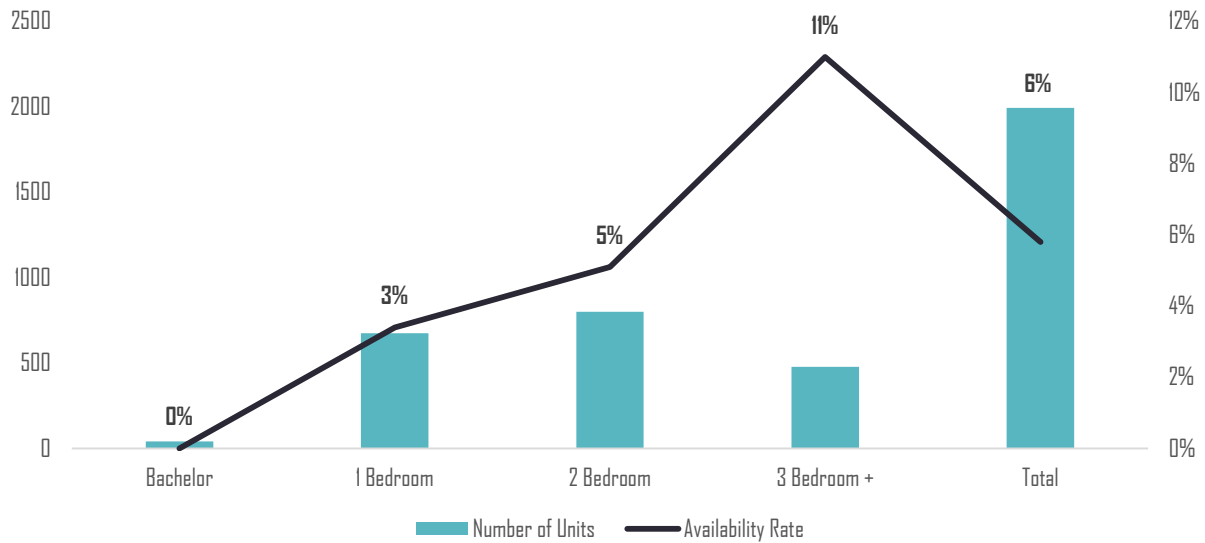
[47] CMHC (2017) Housing Market Information Portal. Retrieved from https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en#Total
[48] CMHC (2016) Rental Market Report – Yellowknife Highlights. Retrieved from https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64523/64523_2016_A01.pdf?lang=en
[49] CMHC (2017) Housing Market Information Portal. Retrieved from https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en#TableMapChart/7860/3/Yellowknife

HOMELESSNESS PREVALENCE

From a Western perspective, homelessness is the experience of housing instability resulting in someone sleeping rough, in emergency shelters, transitional facilities, or even jail and hospital rooms. Those who are visibly homeless are, however, the tip of the iceberg; research indicates that most people experiencing homelessness are in unsuitable housing, couch surfing, or in unsafe situations in "hidden homelessness".[50] Nevertheless, as noted above, hinging the definition of homelessness on the presence or lack of housing falls short of the reality experienced by people who are also impacted at a spiritual and emotional level.

Understandably, enumerating homelessness is difficult even when only looking at it from a Western perspective. However, without an estimate based on the best available data, it is difficult to develop an informed approach and action plan. To this end, the research team worked with local service providers and government agencies to compile and analyze the current state of homelessness in Yellowknife as a starting point for ongoing planning. As data improves along with knowledge of the issue, these estimates can and should be updated to ensure the Plan is a living document in practice.

A 2009 study of shelter trends in Yellowknife reported **936 unique individuals** had used the emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities in the city over the course of 2008.[51] Assuming the same level of use cross-referenced with reports from emergency shelters and transitional housing providers in 2016, this figure is estimated to have risen to 1,500 at the time of the Plan's writing.

During the course of one year, an estimated 1,500 people used emergency shelter or transitional housing facilities.

Not everyone who experiences homelessness will use emergency shelter or transitional housing services; some research suggests that, for every person using these services, as many as 3.5% are part of a hidden homelessness[52] population who is 'couch surfing,' living in poor housing, in institutions without a fixed address (jail, hospital, treatment, child welfare, etc.), sleeping rough, living in unsafe/abuse situations, or paying unaffordable rates for housing.

This estimate is reinforced by the increasing levels of Core Housing Need reported by the GNWT's Housing Need Survey, which doubled from 2009 to 2014. **In five short years, Core Housing Need doubled in in Yellowknife to 18% of households a total of 2,150 people.**[53]

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[50] For the full definition of homelessness used in the Plan, please see the Canadian Definition of Homelessness: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Homeless Hub. Retrieved from www.homelesshub.ca/homelessdefinition/

[51] Yellowknife Homelessness Report Card 2008 (2009) Retrieved from http://www.yellowknife.ca/en/living-here/resources/Social_Services/Homelessness/Homelessness_Report_Card_Spring_2009.pdf

[52] Gaetz, S., Donaldson, J., Richter, T., Gulliver, T. (2013). The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Homeless Hub. Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SOHC2103.pdf

[53] NWT Housing Corporation (2015) 2014 NWT Community Survey - Summary of Housing Results. Retrieved from http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/td_180-175.pdf

Table 1 Homelessness Patterns

Transitional homelessness	Most people experience homelessness for a short time and infrequently in their lifetime. Usually, this is a result of lack on income or housing affordability challenges. Most exit homeless with minimal or no intervention.
Episodic homelessness	Some people who experience homelessness, do so in recurring episodes throughout their lifetime. This group is likelier to face challenges involving health, addictions, mental health, or violence.
Chronic homelessness	A small portion experience long-term and ongoing homelessness as result of complex barriers, particularly related to mental health and addictions.

AT HIGH RISK/ TRANSITIONAL HOMELSSNESS

EPISODIC HOMELSSNESS

CRONIC HOMELSSNESS

225 300 975

DEFINING SUCCESS

The Plan's ultimate vision is that **Yellowknife is a community where everyone is home and belongs.**

This Plan is not suggesting that no one ever experiences homelessness again – the reality of macroeconomic forces and population trends outside of local control will continue to impact the housing and labour market, as well as the availability of services close to home. As a result, this Plan's objective is specific to what the community can achieve over the next ten years.

Objective: By 2026, homelessness in Yellowknife will be **prevented wherever possible;** if homelessness occurs, it is a **rare and brief experience**.

Looking at homelessness from a broader perspective also means that addressing its root causes will likely comprise generations of work, and not be resolved in ten years. Yet, an effective community response can go a long way in mitigating homelessness and improving people's lives.

From an Indigenous perspective, homelessness is conceptualized as a physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual[54] imbalance that needs to be addressed at individual, family, and community levels. Within this approach, the Plan

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[54] Christensen, J. (2017) No Home in a Homeland - Indigenous peoples and Homelessness in the Canadian North. UBC Press.

sets a direction for building a local response that ensures that homelessness is prevented wherever possible; if it occurs, it is rare and brief.

To ensure joint accountability for the Plan, measures are put forward to assess progress against this vision of a **functional zero end to homelessness.**[55] The Plan's progress will be assessed against a set of agreed-upon outcomes and indicators to gauge progress over the course of the next ten years (Appendix 1 identifies indicators that should be monitored). These indicators are very specific; they build on each other, provide a way for diverse stakeholders to track progress towards common objectives, and help articulate what is meant by ending homelessness.

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First is a guiding approach that calls for a rethinking of how communities address homelessness that has helped shape the core tenets of this Plan. Housing First has proven successful in moving people from homelessness to housing and wellness, while creating significant cost savings for public systems realized from a reduction in emergency health, justice, and policing costs.[56]

Rather than requiring someone experiencing homelessness to demonstrate their sobriety, employment status, or participation in various programs, Housing First calls for immediate access to permanent housing and the supports needed to maintain it without any conditions. As a basic human need and right, housing is considered essential to stabilization, after which point underlying issues such as addictions, mental health, trauma, domestic violence, etc. can be addressed.

Housing First programs provide housing options AND **wrap-around supports** that are flexible and tailored to participant needs and strengths. Each program participant has a dedicated support worker who helps them navigate resources, maintain housing stability, access health and addictions supports, employment, etc. Service participants are active partners in the process and self-direct their goals, while contributing a portion of their income towards rent. Importantly, **going to treatment, maintaining sobriety, or compliance with services is not a requirement for housing**.

These approaches aim to connect with people where they are at; this includes effective **mobile outreach** components to connect with those who are sleeping rough and require more concentrated engagement into housing. This also means Housing First supports can come to the participant – providing services in their home, rather than requiring them to travel to appointments.

LOCAL APPROACHES

In Yellowknife, and with the investments from the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the City of Yellowknife funds the **Yellowknife Women's Society to operate a Housing First program**. Here, case workers and a peer support worker with lived experience help people with complex needs experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness find housing, and access the wrap-around supports to support their recovery and stability.

[55] Turner, A., Pakeman, K. & Albanese, T. (2016). "Discerning Functional Zero: Considerations for Defining & Measuring an End to Homelessness in Canada". http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/Functional_Zero.pdf.
[56] Gaetz,S. Scott, F. & Gulliver, T. (Eds.) (2013) Housing First in Canada: Supporting Communities to End Homelessness. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press. Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/HousingFirstInCanada.pdf

At the time of the Plan's writing, **14 individuals had been housed** through the program. In May 2017, the City, using HPS funds, launched a new **Housing First initiative with the YWCA with the capacity to serve 12 families**.

The GNWT, federal funds, and donations further contribute to agencies such as the **Salvation Army** and **Yellowknife Association for Community Living** programs, which serve individuals with mental health needs in a similar fashion with promising results. Similarly, the YWCA houses and supports families in rental apartments.

The **Centre for Northern Families** is working with the GNWT and community partners to expand harm reduction and trauma-informed services to vulnerable women by increasing facility capacity to deliver longer term supportive housing. Other effective community approaches are evident in the work of the Salvation Army, YWCA, and SideDoor Ministries who operate supportive housing programs for people with complex challenges in dedicated buildings that have onsite supports for adults, women, families, and youth. **SideDoor**'s recent opening of **Hope's Haven** is an apt example of the application of Housing First principles in supportive housing for youth.

Another promising initiative is delivered by the Department of Justice to assist individuals with complex needs in accessing and navigating services. This **Integrated Case Management** program has "pathfinders" (i.e. case managers) who work with participants referred to them from other GNWT departments in health, housing, income assistance to access housing, income assistance, mental health services, legal aid, physical health services, substance use treatment, and cultural supports. The program also works at the policy level to support systems change by working with other GNWT departments to identify systems gaps and barriers.

A SOUND INVESTMENT

The moral case for ending homelessness is clear. What research and on-the-ground experience concur is that homelessness has a cost for all, impacting wellness at an individual and collective level. **Ending homelessness is a common-sense solution not just from the perspective of what a caring society ought to address, but from a financial perspective as well.** Across the U.S., Europe, and Canada, communities have reported significant success in this regard. [57] Sometimes, it is this economic case that resonates with key decision-makers.

In many cases, it is cheaper to house and support people on their path to recovery than it is to manage their homelessness through emergency responses involving police, shelters, hospitals, and jails. In a study of homelessness in four Canadian cities, Stephen Pomeroy reports that institutional responses to homelessness, including prison and psychiatric hospitals, can cost as much as $66,000 to $120,000 per year. This is notably higher than the cost of providing an individual with housing and supports (between $13,000 and $18,000 annually). [58]

[57] Gaetz, S. (2012) "The real cost of homelessness: Can we save money by doing the right thing?" in Homeless Hub Paper, ed. Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press (Toronto: York University). Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/costofhomelessness_paper21092012.pdf.
[58] Steve Pomeroy (2005) The Cost of Homelessness: Analysis of Alternate Responses in Four Canadian Cities Ottawa: National Secretariat on Homelessness. Retrieved from: http://homelesshub.ca/resource/cost-homelessness-analysis-alternate-responses-four-canadian-cities. A more nuanced study that follows people over time after they receive Housing First is currently underway in Calgary; it is being led by Dr. Ali Jadidzadeh of the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

Managing or ending homelessness?

Shelter, jail, hospital: $66,000 to $120,000 per year

VS.

Housing with supports: $13,000 and $18,000

The Mental Health Commission of Canada's At Home/Chez Soi study was launched in 2008 with a $110 million budget; it aimed to test the efficacy and cost effectiveness of Housing First programs that provided housing with wrap-around supports in five cities.

Discussing the report's findings, Nick Falvo (2014) notes:

"For the 10% of participants who were using the most services upon enrolment in the AHCS study, every $1 invested in housing and professional support during the course of the study resulted in average savings of just over $2. And across all study participants, every $1 invested in housing and professional support resulted in $0.75 in savings on health, justice-related and social services." [59]

FOR EVERY $1 INVESTED IN ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS, AVERAGE SAVINGS WILL BE $2.

Members of Alberta's 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness were among the first to adopt the Housing First model in Canada on a regional level. Between 2009 and 2016, they have collectively housed and supported over 13,000 previously homeless Albertans, resulting in significant reductions in homelessness across the province. [60]

Alberta Housing First clients who were housed between 2007 and 2013 experienced significant reductions in public-system usage: [61]

- o 85% fewer days in **jail**;
- o 64% fewer days in **hospital**;
- o 60% fewer interactions with **EMS**;
- o 60% fewer **emergency room** visits; and
- o 57% fewer interactions with **police**.

[59] Falvo's 2014 post-study analysis can be read here: http://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/10-%E2%80%98take-aways%E2%80%99-final-report-homechez-soi-study
[60] Government of Alberta (2016) Alberta Statistics on Homelessness. Retrieved from: http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/homelessness/16052.html
[61] 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness. (2014) Ending Homelessness. Retrieved from: https://www.7cities.ca/ending_homelessness

ENDING HOMELESSNESS WILL DECREASE

- DAYS SPENT IN JAIL
- INTERACTIONS WITH POLICE

- DAYS IN HOSPITAL
- EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES USE
- EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS

In Calgary, when 72 people with complex needs were housed and supported, the average saving after 12 months of **Housing First program intervention went from $45,000 to $3,000 per service participant per year: a 93% cost reduction.**[62] Counting the cost of their housing and support, these service participants went from being homeless in shelters using services for about $55,000 per year, to being housed at a cost of about $21,000. **A $34,000 net savings** was realized from serving complex needs clients.

Ending homelessness will require the restructuring and revision of the way services are delivered and policies are implemented. In some instances, additional resources will be needed to advance the proposed measures. Yet, without a commitment to address homelessness, the associated health care, criminal justice, social services, and emergency shelter costs will continue to rise.

The proposed measures of this Plan will shift the system response significantly towards permanent solutions. As a result, cost savings realized using this approach is estimated at **$5M annually** when the Plan is fully implemented.

Investing strategically in providing critical supports and housing is an investment that makes sound economic and moral sense.

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[62] Calgary Homeless Foundation (2013) Annual General Meeting. Retrieved from: http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2013-AGM-Remarks.pdf

DIRECTIONS & GOALS

Ending homelessness is not the problem of one group, department, or government: all stakeholders have roles and responsibilities. The levels of homelessness seen today are not an inevitability – this does not have to be a reality or legacy for future generations.

The recommendations being put forward in this report are not new; Yellowknifers know what is needed, and clear emphasis is made on taking action using a shared leadership and accountability approach to Plan implementation.

Community input and research have culminated in key directions for the Plan. These priorities are inter-related and mutually reinforcing directions. The Plan sets forward key directions and strategies based on current knowledge. As learning through implementation increases and conditions shift, so must the Plan as a living document. Ongoing reviews are critical to inform future direction and assess learnings and progress.

Figure 17 Plan Directions

Plan Goals Summarized

1. LEADERSHIP

1 Strike a Yellowknife Homelessness Commission at the highest decision-making levels to champion the Plan.

2 Increase affordable housing options for Yellowknifers.

3 Engage Yellowknifers in the movement to end homelessness.

2. COORDINATION

1 Introduce an Interagency Council to coordinate homelessness services.

2 Improve information and knowledge about homelessness.

3 Support the creation of homelessness strategies across NWT communities.

3. RECONCILIATION

1 Advance the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

2 Embed an Indigenous lens to ending homelessness.

3 Support the enhancement of Indigenous wellness and cultural supports in Yellowknife.

4. HEALING

1 Enhance access to mental health and addiction supports.

2 Ensure adequate emergency response capacity is in place to ensure Zero Exposure Deaths.

3 Develop and implement Northern Indigenous Housing First programs with wrap-around supports.

LEADERSHIP

Strike a Yellowknife Homelessness Commission at highest decision-making levels to champion Plan.

There is a need for **high-level territorial, Indigenous and community leadership on homelessness**, regardless of sector, to champion the Plan to End Homelessness moving forward. The level of leadership needed is at the Premier, Chief/President, and Mayor (or designate) levels. Indigenous community leaders including **Indigenous health and wellness practitioners** should be encouraged to have a meaningful and sustained leadership role in the Plan.

The role of the proposed Commission is to set high-level direction for Yellowknife across stakeholder groups, as well as drive change within respective organizations and departments. This would keep homelessness on the political and public priority agendas, while ensuring coordinated decision-making. Further, funding asks can be better aligned and advanced to support the capital and operations needs of the Plan for government and community.

Ensuring **Indigenous leadership and lived experience voices** are well-represented within this governance, structure will be essential. This includes Indigenous government leaders, as well as **Elders, wellness and health practitioners and those with lived experience.**

Considering this proposed Commission, the role of the **Yellowknife Community Advisory Board on Homelessness** should be reviewed as well to align with the Plan's direction. The Commission would not replace the need for service-level coordination amongst providers, but rather elevate the issue to key decision-making levels.

Recognizing the need for shared accountability, a critical first task for the Yellowknife Homelessness Commission is to gain buy-in from diverse stakeholders in a **Plan Accountability Framework**, which would guide implementation roles and responsibilities in key groups, departments, and organizations. Reports should be provided on an annual, ongoing basis to the public against the Accountability Framework to report on Plan progress. It is important to engage key stakeholders in the endorsement of the Accountability Framework and ensure their input in incorporated.

The Commission will need to be supported from an administrative and coordination perspective as well. Where the Commission is to be 'located' from an organizational perspective will also need to be carefully considered to ensure it remains a community-led and owned initiative. At this point, the recommended approach is to keep the **Commission as a joint approach**, made up of stakeholders rather than owned by any one organization or department.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS WITH ROLES IN ENDING HOMELESSNESS

City of Yellowknife

Indigenous Leaders
- Indigenous Governments, including Yellowknives Dene First Nation, North Slave Metis Alliance, Tłı̨chǫ
- Indigenous Elders, healing and wellness practitioners

Government of Northwest Territories
- Education, Culture and Employment
- Executive and Indigenous Affairs
- Justice
  Municipal and Community Affairs
- Health and Social Services
- Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
- Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority

Government of Canada
- Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Correctional Services Canada
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Non-Profit Organizations
Business Sector

Increase affordable housing options for Yellowknifers.

Core Housing Need is a pervasive Northern challenge. Yellowknifers pay higher rental rates than anywhere else in the country. Clearly, there is a need to **enhance the range of affordable housing options** in both the market and non-market sectors. The community benefits tremendously from the rent supports and social housing provided through the NWT Housing Corporation, yet more capacity is needed.

The successful **engagement of private-sector business, including developers, builders, and landlords** will be critical to the Plan's success; their engagement in Plan activities should be supported and celebrated. Ultimately, government will not solve the affordable housing crisis without partnerships and innovation for a made-in-the-North approach with the private sector. There are promising approaches already emerging in **new construction methods and housing forms, such as tiny homes**.

To help mitigate homelessness, the Plan calls for the addition of a minimum of **180 affordable housing spaces** – (about 90 two-bedroom units) which could be configured into bachelor, one, or two bedroom units depending on the needs of individuals and families. In addition, about **200 rent support spaces** are needed, which can be portable and follow the tenant, or be tied to actual units in the private market. Appendix 2 outlines the approach to this estimate.

To ensure new units built account for the needs of Indigenous peoples, the Plan recommends working throughout the development process with those with **lived experience, Indigenous leaders, Elders, healing and wellness practitioners**. This means considering innovative ways of incorporating cultural elements within housing design – such as gathering spaces in buildings, workspaces for crafts and/or butchering, open floor plans, and larger home design for multigenerational families, as well as outbuildings (e.g. sheds, smokehouses, etc.).

Significant leadership to increase affordable housing in the community is needed to mitigate vulnerability amongst those in Core Housing Need. Ultimately, affordable housing can help bring about a preventative and sustainable end to homelessness long term. All levels of government (territorial, federal, Indigenous, and municipal) and the private sector must work together to develop and invest in a **long-term real estate strategy for Yellowknife** to address this affordable housing gap. Additional investment from the GNWT and Government of Canada will be needed to enhance the number and quality of affordable housing stock, and enhance accessibility of private rental through rent supports. **Solely relying on a limited private rental market,** given its historical volatility, will limit the sustainability of this approach, enhancing the vulnerability of people with low incomes during periods of economic growth.

There is a need to **enhance capacity to develop and operate affordable housing locally** to increase diversity of stock for lower-income populations. This not only requires new ways of doing business with the private sector, but also considering **social enterprise models** to develop and operate permanent supportive and affordable housing.

Here the **City of Yellowknife can play a leadership role** in developing a "toolbox of incentives" policy and regulatory measures that can advance the goal of increasing affordable housing options, including:

- o Exemption of development/construction fees on new affordable housing projects;
- o Introduction of attractive density bonusing or other incentives for the private sector;
- o Fast-tracking of applications on affordable housing and new rental projects;
- o Allowances for tiny homes/small lot options;
- o Improvement of policy pertaining to secondary suites to enhance safety and encourage new units;
- o Measures to ensure that zoning accounts for accessibility needs amongst vulnerable groups.

There are also **policy and practice barriers that the GNWT can undertake to decrease homelessness risk**. Policy and practice barriers are consistently reported by people with lived experience, non-profit and public system workers with respect to income assistance and social housing. For instance, the amount of monthly social assistance is inadequate to meet living costs, leaving people with little income for basic needs, including food. Practices around cutting certain people off income assistance or screening them out of social housing **increases their likelihood to fall into homelessness** as well. Government leadership will be essential to investigating and resolving these barriers to mitigate homelessness.

Engage Yellowknifers in the movement to end homelessness.

There is no doubt that Yellowknifers are committed to making this community a better place to live. Residents are **extensively engaged** in volunteering, donating, and increasing awareness about social issues. The potential to increase the community's goodwill to support the Plan is tremendous. The Plan calls for leveraging of public education, awareness, fundraising, and volunteerism efforts, particularly with an already engaged business community via the Homeful Partnership.[63]

Looking to community building efforts from a **Reconciliation perspective**, ongoing community events can celebrate Indigenous cultures and create a welcoming and positive space for those experiencing hardship and to reduce stigma. Events such as **community feasts, led by Elders**, can become part of the healing work at the individual and community levels as well, creating connection and trust. Here, the proposed Indigenous Wellness Centre can play a key role in facilitating broader engagement, knowledge about, and celebration of Indigenous culture.

Working with the **media, business sector, volunteers, and Indigenous leaders**, public understanding about homelessness in the context of Reconciliation can challenge reactive approaches to this complex social issue. This can help balance the concerns for enhanced public safety with the need for long term solutions. The role of the Yellowknife Homelessness Commission in this community awareness work is also essential: showing leadership in a coordinated fashion, and keeping the issue on the public and political agenda will be essential to maintaining momentum.

COORDINATION

Introduce an Interagency Council to coordinate homelessness services.

Significant strides in local capacity have been made in Yellowknife to respond to social challenges. This demonstrates the value of devolution as a strategy to increase the self-sufficiency and accountability of local regions, thereby strengthening the Territories as a whole.

Strengthening communities involves strategic capacity building at the local level, alongside governance models supportive of local decision-making. The issue of homelessness is an apt example of the potential of **local leadership to resolve community challenges**. There is a need to review current roles and responsibilities on homelessness support, and resource coordination to ensure an integrated approach is in place when it comes to delivery. Currently, non-profit organizations and the GNWT are the primary service providers in Yellowknife. There is no local body whose role it is to coordinate these services, and ensure they are working in a seamless manner on the ground.

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[63] See Homes for the Homeless and A City Safe For Everyone: http://www.yellowknifehomeful.com/

This does not mean the devolution of GNWT employees or programs onto local communities, but rather the **commitment to better coordinate through a local Interagency Council** made up of key departments and non-profits involved in the delivery of housing and supports for those experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The Interagency Council would work closely with the Yellowknife Homelessness Commission to inform decision-making and strategy at the highest levels.

As in the case of the Commission, ensuring **Indigenous leadership and lived experience voices** are well-represented within the Interagency Council's structure will be essential. This includes Indigenous leaders, Elders, wellness and health practitioners and those with lived experience.

Through the work of the Interagency Council, a **coordinated access** process can be introduced to assess need and manage appropriate program and housing placements. This can help reduce the 'run around' and frustration service participants experience by having to tell their story multiple times, and by being sent from one provider to the next.

To help coordinate the service delivery for individuals and families, the Council can **bring together key providers to ensure an integrated approach** is in place. Moving in this direction means coming together, and making hard decisions about access to limited supports – but it can also provide a better level of coordination for what is available, and allow for better tracking of system gaps to feed into planning and advocacy work.

As in the case of the Yellowknife Homelessness Commission, the organizational home of the Interagency Council requires careful consideration of the pros and cons of having it as a standalone organization or network, or whether it should sit within government administration. It is recommended that the **Interagency Council be developed in consultation with the key organizations** noted in the Leadership section, and include **Indigenous and lived-experience perspectives** throughout its activities.

It will be important to articulate the roles of the Yellowknife Homelessness Commission and the Interagency Council vis-à-vis the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness as well. The City would be represented at the Commission level (Mayor/Councilor), as well as through the Interagency Council (Administration), ensuring **HPS investment is coordinated with other funding streams** and community-wide strategies.

Figure 18 Plan Governance Model
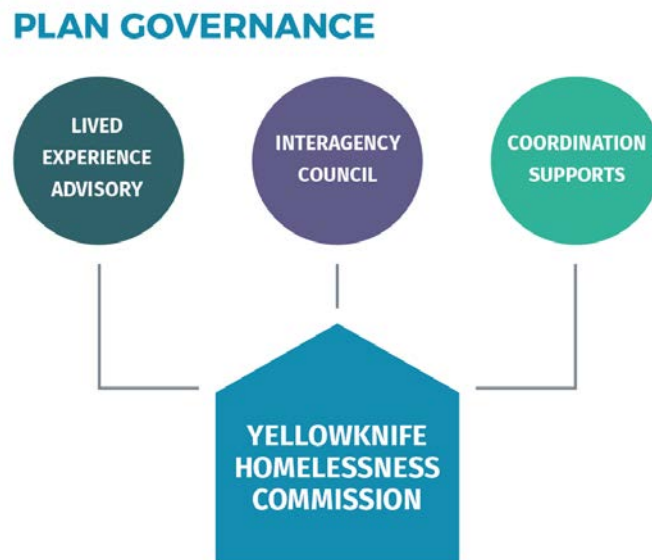
Improve information and knowledge about homelessness.

Through the development of this Plan, it became evident that there are some key knowledge gaps impacting Yellowknife's capacity to respond to homelessness. There is limited access to local data on trends, making it challenging to understand the scope of what lies ahead. There is limited data on key demographics including real-time migration patterns, age ranges, etc. This will make it difficult to track how service participants access diverse housing and support programs.

A broader understanding of what 'ending homelessness' means from an Indigenous lens is needed: research will be important to understand the current dynamics and the effects of colonialism as well as lived experience and traditional knowledge practices. **Learning circles** facilitated by Elders in key organizations and departments involved in ending homelessness can highlight this wisdom in a meaningful way that respects **different approaches to developing knowledge**.

Information is an invaluable resource in this work, especially when it is accurate and available in real-time to help better respond to needs across Yellowknife's homeless-serving sector. Though various data systems exist in the community, these are not integrated, and information often does not flow between providers. When it comes to government services, data sharing is further limited and hampered by barriers to information sharing.

The work of the Interagency Council can enhance understanding about homelessness, and coordinate efforts more strategically. There are software options, such as the **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)**—developed by the Government of Canada and available free of charge—which should be **expanded across Yellowknife's homeless-serving system** in a way that would allow for better coordination. A common information system enables partners to **better understand service participant access** to services and outcomes longitudinally. This can help the generation of **unduplicated records,** and have a common information database from which to make collective decisions at the program and system levels.

By requiring a common system across funded programs, funders can improve the visibility of data from across the system: partners can gain a much better sense of needs, and track performance at a community level. This will ensure the community is able to **adjust approaches in real-time, as a system, rather than on a program-by-program basis.**[64]

The standardized **Point-in-Time Homeless Count** can be leveraged to help address some of these basic knowledge gaps, and build partnerships with academia to tackle more complex research questions. Moving research into practice requires concerted knowledge mobilization activities on an ongoing basis. By enhancing the use of research and data to drive the Plan's implementation, stakeholders can enhance its continuous improvement and adaptation to changing environments.

Support the creation of homelessness strategies across the NWT communities.

Recognizing **interdependence between NWT communities and Yellowknife** and resulting migration pressures, it is important for the NWT's 33 communities and all levels of government to support and collaborate on local responses. By supporting the creation of **homelessness strategies across communities** and regions, a coordinated network of leaders can emerge on housing and homelessness. As one consultation participant pointed out,

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[64] For an overview of what homelessness data sharing looks like across Canada, see this July 2016 blog post: http://calgaryhomeless.com/blog/the-role-of-sharing-data-in-ending-homelessness/

"YOU'RE NOT GOING TO END YELLOWKNIFE HOMELESSNESS IN YELLOWKNIFE – IT'S THE SMALLER COMMUNITIES WE NEED TO ALSO FOCUS ON."

-community conversations participant

Considering the findings of the **2016 GNWT Homelessness Forum Consultation,** housing and homelessness are by no means Yellowknife-only issues. Ultimately, homelessness cannot end without considerable policy and funding changes throughout the territories. Policy alignment across departments and government is needed to support an end to homelessness. **Governments should not fund Housing First programs through one department, yet discharge people into homelessness through another.**

A **coordinated, territorial homelessness response from the GNWT** is essential to supporting local solutions. Each community has unique challenges and strengths that can be supported by GNWT's coordinated strategy. This would also ensure that resources and policy decisions are being made in an integrated fashion within government to reduce duplication, and working at cross-purposes. Local communities can self-determine priorities, and implement solutions through resources, enabling policy and procedural changes, as well as joint lobbying for investment.

A coordinated approach for **funding, policy, and planning across government** is needed to support ending homelessness goals across the territories. GNWT has invested considerable resources in addressing housing and homelessness challenges across the territories, yet Plan consultations consistently point to the need for enhanced coordination of these responses within government.

A critical consideration for the territorial response is to address concerns raised regarding the discharging practices, lack of adequate **transition planning from correctional, child welfare, and health systems into homelessnes**s. A commitment to **zero discharge into homelessness from government services**, including social housing, should be supported. A review should address concerns about **access barriers to social housing, and the inadequacies of the current income assistance benefit levels** to keep up with housing costs. **Administrative burdens** on recipients increase instability when resulting in social assistance cut-offs; these practices should be reviewed and remedied accordingly.

The creation of **local initiatives to tackle mental health and addictions challenges**, as well as housing instability and Core Housing Need, can help mitigate homelessness in smaller communities, and stem flows into larger centers. Here again, an Indigenous lens can be relevant in developing holistic healing responses to complex intergenerational impacts of trauma. **Indigenous-led** economic and social development will ultimately be needed to incite thriving communities and sustainable changes.

The creation of a **platform for dialogue with other NWT communities** to enhance knowledge exchange can also provide for a stronger voice at the national and territorial levels, and with other jurisdictions. It is essential that communities support one another in sharing information and solutions, enhance local capacity, leverage resources, and align messaging and advocacy efforts. The development of a **NWT network on housing and homelessness** can help the mutual goal of ending homelessness, and provide a vehicle to enhance regional coordination amongst communities, and with territorial and federal governments.

RECONCILIATION

Advance the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

A critical step in this work is creating opportunities for people to engage in open and honest conversation to understand diverse histories and experience. This is more than integrating Indigenous peoples' perspectives in the Plan's development: **it involves committing to support Indigenous leadership and self-determination in Plan governance, and implementation in alignment with the core values of Reconciliation.**

"RECONCILIATION IS ABOUT ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A **MUTUALLY RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES** IN THIS COUNTRY. IN ORDER FOR THAT TO HAPPEN, THERE HAS TO BE **AWARENESS OF THE PAST**, **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE HARM** THAT HAS BEEN INFLICTED, **ATONEMENT FOR THE CAUSES**, AND **ACTION TO CHANGE BEHAVIOUR**."[65]

The **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action**[66] point to the systemic changes that are needed across education, child welfare, health, justice, and social programs to support healing amongst Indigenous peoples. This healing will not happen immediately – it may take generations of change, and impacts will remain. **But, without a commitment today and every day, this shift cannot take root in earnest.**

This Plan fully recognizes and commits to the principles of Reconciliation to co-create a new vision for a relationship between Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. Plan implementation will strive to challenge all forms of racism and systemic discrimination as a core value.

In the spirit of Reconciliation, and its call for Canada to uphold the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples,**[67] this Plan recognizes mutual accountability specifically to Articles 21 and 23:

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[65] Truth and Reconciliation Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. P 7-8.

[66] Truth and Reconciliation Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from: http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

[67] UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html [accessed 3 May 2017] http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

Article 21 Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retaining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Article 23 Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

As such, the Plan calls for the community of Yellowknife to take action in support of the Reconciliation Commission of Canada's [68] recommendations. **The Plan to End Homelessness must be part of a broader commitment to Reconciliation.**

Embed an Indigenous lens to ending homelessness.

Indigenous peoples have the wisdom and knowledge to self-determine their future path, including approaches to address the challenge of homelessness. As such, Indigenous ways must guide the path forward: an **Indigenous approach to Indigenous challenges** is the only way to support healing and wellness in an authentic manner. To this end, the Yellowknife Plan to End Homelessness strives to embed an **Indigenous lens** throughout implementation.

Rather than presenting cultural services or traditional practices as appendages, the **Plan strives to embed a holistic healing approach from the start.** [69] Here, the wisdom and knowledge of **Elders, health and wellness practitioners were foundational** to building the Plan's approach. An Indigenous concept of wellness is inherently holistic, emphasizing the interconnectedness of mind, body, emotion, and spirit as a foundation to healing.

Putting an Indigenous lens into practice means emphasizing Indigenous partnership in the Plan, underlining the value and strength in Indigenous health and healing practices, promoting not just Indigenous leadership and Elders but also traditional healers and spiritual healers. This translates to an emphasis culturally-embedded supports as well as medical or institutional supports combined in ways that respect and address the specific needs of particular groups. The section on Healing speaks to the application of an Indigenous lens in further detail to interventions and housing.

Interventions that fail to address the root causes behind homelessness, mental health, addictions, poverty, etc. from both an individual, community, and societal perspective will ultimately fall short of making sustainable and authentic change.

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[68] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.* Retrieved from
http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf

[69] It is important to disclose that the Plan was not written by an Indigenous person. The Plan writers made best efforts to connect with Indigenous knowledge holders, including those with lived experience, during the consultation process, prioritizing these perspectives as the starting points to priority-setting. Thanks to the wisdom of key Elders in the community, the Plan was subject to review and edits to ensure these perspectives were reflected accurately.

Indigenous approaches to healing[70] stress that, "strategies need to be determined by, and within, Aboriginal communities themselves." Here, the **Medicine Wheel** is, "one of the main tools by which identity can be reclaimed on an individual basis… towards self-actualization, self-development and self-knowledge.[71] As one lived experience participant noted, Yellowknife needs to,

"WORK AS A **CIRCLE** – NOT AS A SQUARE."
-lived experience voice

Table 2 Indigenous Wellness

Wellness Component	Impact of Imbalance	Approach to Balance
Spiritual	Loss of religion, ceremony, cultural knowledge. Hopelessness, despair, dispossession.	Reconnection to Creator and Creations; ceremonies and traditions.
Mental	Loss of teaching Elders/experiential learning; loss of language. Substance damage to the mind.	Elder/experiential learning; supportive education – knowledge of two worlds; accurate history and truth.
Emotional	Loss of identity, stress, anxiety, depression, PTSD.	Culturally competent counseling and supports.
Physical	Loss of strong bodies, abuse of substances (alcohol, drugs, tobacco) Obesity – diabetes, cardiovascular disease	Traditional foods and diet, hunting and gathering on the land;
Source: Dapice, A. N. (2006). The medicine wheel. Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 17(3), 251-260.		

This lens helps shed light on the unique experiences of every individual and family, and acknowledges where common systemic issues impact certain groups in the community. People's identities and experiences are layered: an Indigenous person experiencing homelessness may be a mother, a young person, and someone facing addiction challenges simultaneously. The only way to meet her and her family's unique needs is through a holistic approach using an Indigenous lens.

Holistic approaches to wellness and healing are integral to the response to homelessness. This work is more than just about housing individuals.

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[70] Dapice, A. N. (2006). The medicine wheel. Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 17(3), 251-260. Retrieved from https://www.med.uottawa.ca/sim/data/assets/documents/Aboriginal_medicine_wheel.pdf
[71] Goforth S. (2007) Aboriginal healing methods for residential school abuse and intergenerational effects: a review of the literature. Native Social Work J. 6(1):11–32. Retrieved from: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/OSUL/TC-OSUL-392.pdf; pages 20, 23.

Key tenets of the proposed approach involve:

- o **Seeing people first**, rather than labels or issues, and building on their gifts and strengths;
- o **Embedding cultural practices and beliefs**[72] throughout interventions as identified from a participant's perspective;
- o **Honouring people's interconnectedness** with the land and nature, their histories, cultural practices and traditions, and their broader network of community and family networks;
- o **Making space for the voice of the person** in accounting for their history, evaluating present conditions, and defining their future;[73]
- o Providing individuals and families with **choice and flexibility** of supports to meet their needs in **culturally competent, safe, and non-judgmental ways**;
- o **Aligning system structures** and processes to respect choice, respond to cultural difference, foster community connection, promote flexibility, portability and accessibility;[74] and
- o Ensuring supports result in **quality of life outcomes** valued by and **meaningful for participants**; [75] such as resolving imbalances in their spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Support the enhancement of Indigenous wellness and cultural supports in Yellowknife.

In alignment with the call for an embedded Indigenous lens across strategies, the Plan prioritizes **Indigenous interventions and capacity-building for Indigenous peoples**. Enhanced capacity of existing services is also needed to better respond to Indigenous peoples' needs through training and change management supports. This requires ongoing support for public and non-profit systems to shift in practice towards a person-centered, holistic approach.

The **Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation** is a self-determined traditional wellness initiative with the mandate of culturally reviving traditional healing services and practices in the North. This aims to bridge cultural divides for the purpose of ensuring that traditional wellness knowledge does not get lost with the next generation. Both Inuit and Dene Elder leaders have come together with young Indigenous leaders, including Métis, to develop an **Indigenous Wellness Centre** for the people of the North. This work, along with efforts already underway to provide cultural supports and healing, is complementary with the proposed priorities of this Plan and helps fill a critical gap around mental health and addictions in the community.

"THERE'S TWO THINGS YOU NEED IN YOUR LIFE; YOUR HEALTH AND YOUR NAME."

-lived experience voice

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[72] Yeh, C. J., Hunter, C. D., Madan-Bahel, A., Chiang, L., & Arora, A. K. (2004). Indigenous and interdependent perspectives of healing: implications for counseling and research. Journal of Counseling and Development, 410-419. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2004.tb00328.x/pdf

[73] Mount, B. (1992) Person Centered Planning; A Sourcebook of Values, Ideas and Methods to Encourage Person-Centered Development. New York, Graphic Futures Inc.

[74] Sanderson, H., Thompson, J., and Kilbane, J. (2006) The Emergence of Person Centred Planning as Evidence Based Practice *Journal of Integrated Care* 14(2). Retrieved from http://www.in-control.org.uk/media/85688/person%20centred%20planning%20evidence-based%20practice.pdf

[75] The Council on Quality and Leadership. (2009.) Principles and Practices in Person-Centered Services. Retrieved form http://www.thecouncil.org/assets/0/183/560769ec-ea26-48be-802e-0c98f6c2d798.pdf

Elders are a guiding force and vision for this work, particularly linking with youth to revive cultural healing practices, and create space to innovate traditional wellness.[76] This work is essential to developing a framework for the Arctic on traditional medicine use in collaboration with Western forms of care, and increasing service capacity to respond in culturally-safe manners to the needs of Indigenous peoples. **Traditional medicine healers** can create and deliver the programming, and help set proper protocol for program initiation and delivery.

Cultural supports will be essential to support the work of the Plan, and can help create gathering spaces for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, showcasing and celebrating Indigenous culture. Such efforts can help in the revival of cultural practices including dancing, drumming, sweats, crafts, and feasts welcoming newcomers to Yellowknife, and orienting people to urban life. **Such supports can connect Indigenous people with peers and Elders, speaking their language, and practicing traditions to assist them on their healing journeys.**

HEALING

Enhance access to mental health and addiction supports.

In light of the significant mental **health, addiction, and domestic violence challenges** in Yellowknife and across NWT communities, there is a need to advocate for enhanced access to addiction treatment and mental health supports. **This was a key priority for those with lived experience**. Sending people South for treatment may continue to be an interim measure, but ultimately, **local capacity is needed to take care of people closer to home.**

In keeping with the spirit of Reconciliation, looking at homelessness as a colonial legacy can help stakeholders reflect on the design and delivery of interventions from a different vantage point. Rather than 'managing', 'directing', or 'punishing', the Plan calls for a move towards **healing and finding strength**. Enhanced awareness about the impacts of intergenerational trauma, traditional ways of life, and healing can be a vehicle for practiced change, and the potential to support new Indigenous leaders to emerge in the homeless-serving sector – **including those with lived experience**. This is where Indigenous knowledge and wisdom can guide this path: **Healers and Elders are a source of learning who can help move beyond an us/them division for long-term impact.**

There is tremendous potential to **develop responses that are Indigenous-led and delivered,** moving from an emergency response to one of healing and wellness. This includes offering access to Elders and Healers as part of supports, and it integrates on-the-land approaches to recovery. Responding with cultural competency in a Northern context will make Yellowknife's approach distinct and effective.

Ensure adequate emergency response capacity is in place to ensure Zero Exposure Deaths.

Emergency shelters and the proposed sobering centre play a key role in addressing homelessness as gateways to permanent housing and community supports. Together, with transitional housing, these facilities provide adults, youth, and women and children fleeing violence with safe places to be, and access to a range of resources and supports. They are essential to a **well-functioning system** of care, and can help tailor appropriate interventions

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[76] Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation (2017) Proposed approach to Indigenous Wellness Centre.

for these populations. This role should be enhanced by focusing on increasing the number of positive exits into housing, and decreasing recidivism into homelessness.

Sobering centres provide a safe place for those under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol to sober up as a more effective alternative to police responses to public intoxication. Evidence suggests sobering centres are cost efficient and reduce emergency health services and police use; they can be important facilitators for vulnerable clients to connect to treatment and long-term housing. Such services can be effective vehicles for improving individual and community health and well-being as part of a set of comprehensive responses to intoxication. [77]

Yellowknife's sub-Arctic temperatures mean that homelessness can be lethal. Having access to shelters 24/7 year-round should therefore be part of the **commitment for zero deaths from exposure**. Where emergency shelters are unable to accommodate demand, an emergency preparedness plan should come into effect to ensure people have access to safe places to come in from the cold.

This also means that **no one is denied shelter** because they are intoxicated, or have a history of being barred. If community agencies are unable to safely shelter someone at risk of exposure, public systems should step in. The proposed introduction of harm reduction measures to intoxication, such as sobering centres or **Managed Alcohol Programs**, can help with this identified need.

Consultation participants noted that over the past several years, there has been an increase in calls for service to the RCMP and the City of Yellowknife's ambulance service to assist homeless and/or publicly intoxicated individuals. Sheltering agencies and the Stanton Hospital's Emergency Room have seen a concurrent growth in the use of their facilities by these individuals. Many communities have established **safe ride programs** where staff routinely circulate through the community's streets, assisting individuals in need and, in some cases, transporting them to the appropriate facility, be it a shelter, hospital, or a medically-supervised **sobering centre.**

Develop and implement Northern Indigenous Housing First programs with wrap-around supports.

Moving forward, the Plan recognizes that the program and housing spaces available now are not meeting demand. There is a need to **enhance capacity in program models that follow the Housing First approach** – each with features tailored to the participant group they are designed to support. This is where the holistic wellness approach comes into the forefront of initiatives as the required services will need to have cultural competency built in from the start.

The following enhancements in the Yellowknife Homeless-Serving System are proposed. The full analysis behind the recommended numbers is included in Appendix 2.

HOUSING FIRST PROGRAMS

Prevention and Rapid Rehousing programs provide targeted, time-limited financial assistance and support services for those at high risk of, or experiencing homelessness to help them quickly exit emergency shelters, or

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[77] Turner, A. (2015) *Alternatives to Criminalizing Public Intoxication: Case Study of a Sobering Centre in Calgary, AB.* University of Calgary, School of Public Policy. Retrieved from https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/public-intoxication-turner.pdf

retain housing they are at risk of losing. These programs target service participants with lower levels of need using case management and financial supports (rent subsidies, damage deposits, etc.). Generally, after several months of assistance, participants move on and live independently after receiving services – though in communities with high housing costs, they may need ongoing rental subsidies to maintain housing stability.

> **Action:** Develop capacity to serve a caseload of 15 people at any point in time using this model.

Intensive Case Management (ICM) programs provide longer-term case management and housing support to participants experiencing homelessness and facing addictions, mental health, and domestic violence with a flexible length of stay (generally between one and two years). Programs assist service participants in market and public or non-profit housing through wrap-around services and the use of financial supports to subsidize rent and living costs. Such programs ultimately aim to move service participants toward increased self-sufficiency; thus, services are focused on increasing housing stability in a sustainable manner. The longer-term goal of the approach is to help people, once stabilized, to move on to community supports, though they may need rent subsidies longer term.

> **Action:** Increase current capacity by 20 program spaces tailored for youth, women, families, and   single people.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) provides long-term housing and support to individuals who are homeless and experiencing complex mental health, addiction, and physical health barriers. PSH can be delivered in a congregate housing model, or in scattered private/social housing units to very high acuity service participants. The important feature of the program is its appropriate level of service for those experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness who may need support for an indeterminate length of time while working towards enhanced independence. While support services are offered, and made readily available, the programs do not require participation in these services to remain in the housing.

> **Action:** Develop 80 new place-based units of Permanent Supportive Housing.

> **Action:** Introduce 85 scattered site Permanent Supportive Housing program spaces using rental housing with wrap-around supports.

These responses will be tailored to the unique needs of **Indigenous peoples, women, families, youth, single adults, and seniors.**

TAILORED RESPONSES

Housing First, from a Northern perspective, requires specific tailoring for the needs of unique populations including Indigenous peoples, youth, immigrants, women and children fleeing violence, and seniors. The integration of such interventions with wellness and healing efforts would be essential to ensure the approach is suitable for people experiencing homelessness. These different groups will have different needs in terms of supports and resources for healing. Here, gender, age, and sexual orientation are some of the axes of identity that impact individual needs. Culturally-embedded supports as well as medical or institutional supports will need to be combined in ways that respect and address the specific needs of particular groups.

There are several program and housing options that can be built upon to enhance Housing First capacity, but there are also program models that are completely absent from Yellowknife's homeless-serving system. There is a need to therefore enhance current services, and introduce new supports to address gaps, particularly for persons experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness. **Training, capacity-building and, in some cases, enhanced funding** is needed.

One of the main struggles reported by people in Housing First programs is the need to belong and connect as well as contribute back to community. Having access to such opportunities from an Indigenous wellness perspective could mean offering options to participate in **beading, hunting and gathering, sweat lodges, and feasts as per individual choice**. This includes offering access to Elders and Healers as part of supports as well as integrating **on-the-land approaches to recovery**. Ensuring individuals and families are supported in reconnecting with Indigenous ways of life and ceremony, as well as community events that enhance belonging and a sense of identity, would be essential in a **Northern Indigenous Housing First** model.

It is critical that while we acknowledge the vast over-representation of Indigenous people amongst those experiencing homelessness in Yellowknife, **there are other who are not**. We know women and children in **ethno cultural communities** experience hidden homelessness, and may be less likely to seek supports. There are youth and adults in Canadian-born households who are in need of supports tailored to particular contexts and needs. Thus, our approach must be person-centered and flexible in practice.

Women require specific attention due to gender-based histories of exploitation, violence, and **victimization**. Women face the ongoing and systematic gender effects that lead to a higher likelihood of experiencing poverty and low income.[78] Notably, women are likely to be less visible in their experiences of homelessness: they are relatively under-represented in homeless counts at about 25% of those enumerated. It is therefore important to highlight their experience of housing instability – be it couch surfing, living in unaffordable or inappropriate housing, or unsafe situations.

Lone-parent families – often led by women – must manage housing instability with limited incomes, and the need to balance childcare needs. There is a connection between domestic violence and homelessness. The exploitation of girls and women remains a reality as is their disproportionate experience of gender-based violence.

Young people who have experienced disruption or trauma during childhood and/or who are from low income socioeconomic backgrounds are at increased risk of homelessness. The main trigger for homelessness among young people is relationship breakdown (usually with parents or step-parents). For many, this is a consequence of long-term conflict within the home, and often involves violence. Depression and other mental health problems are prevalent as are substance use issues. The over-representation of **LGBTQ2S youth** amongst homeless populations points to the challenges faced by young people who are distinct from those of adults.

Homelessness compounds a number of the problems faced by young people. This is particularly evident with mental health problems and/or the onset (or exacerbation of existing) substance use problems. There is particularly strong evidence that homelessness impedes young people's participation in employment, education, or training.[79]

Of relevance to Yellowknife are the **migrants** from smaller Indigenous communities into the city who experience challenges of acclimatization. **Newcomers** to Canada are often under-represented in homeless counts, but nevertheless experience hidden homelessness. The challenges they face are compounded by race, language, and cultural barriers as well as gender roles and expectations.

[78] Schmidt, R. et al. (2015) Trajectories of women's homelessness in Canada's 3 northern territories. Int J Circumpolar Health 2015, 74: 29778 - http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/ijch.v74.29778.
[79] Gaetz, S. et al. (2016) Without a Home: The National Youth Homeless Survey. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press. Retrieved from http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/WithoutAHome-final.pdf

In Yellowknife, **single adults** are particularly hard hit by the limited amount of affordable housing. While public housing is available to some extent for families, it is very limited for single adults, which leaves them highly vulnerable to the fluctuations and whims of a private housing market. Private rental housing markets, by contrast, are highly exclusive, discriminatory, and controlled by a small handful of rental companies which exacerbates housing unaffordability, and inaccessibility for some.

Seniors can become homeless for a variety of reasons, including a lack of income to pay for housing, the shortage of affordable and secure housing, deteriorating physical and mental health, a relationship breakdown, and/or suffering from violence and abuse. The risk of homelessness for seniors can also be increased by the death of a spouse, social isolation, discrimination, or a lack of awareness of available benefits and services.[80] Older homeless persons suffer more frequently from a variety of health problems such as chronic disease, functional disabilities, and high blood pressure.

To implement Housing First, intergovernmental, inter-community cooperation and collaboration is critical. Indigenous and public governments and all NWT communities need to work together for any approach to work. [81]

PLAN COSTS

This section provides cost estimates of the proposed measures. Of note, there was limited information in some cases, and assumptions had to be made throughout (Appendix 2). The projected costs should be reviewed periodically, and updated as more accurate information emerges to ensure the Plan is a living document.

The proposed measures will shift the system response significantly towards permanent solutions. As a result, the Plan can provide an estimate of cost savings realized using this approach.

Plan operations costs average about $9M per year while the generated cost savings at full ramp up are estimated at $5M annually.

Full implementation of the Plan averages $11 million annually over the next 10 years. This would include the full slate of housing and supports proposed. About $87 million is projected for operations costs, and $26 million for capital.

[80] Government of Canada. (2016). National Shelter Study. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/communities/homelessness/reports-shelter-2014.html
[81] Dr. J. Christensen, Plan Review Comments, June 21, 2017 Personal Communication.

Table 3 Projected Changes in Homeless-Serving System by 2026

Affordable Housing	Permanent Supportive Housing	Rent Supplement	Rapid Rehousing and Prevention	Housing First Intensive Case	Scattered Site Permanent
180	80	200	15	20	85
180 spaces – about 90 2-bedroom units	place-based facility model - 80 units total	200 rent supplement units	program with 15-person caseload capacity	Case Management with 20-person caseload capacity	Supportive Housing 85-person caseload capacity leveraging market housing

Importantly, there are about $23 million in projected cost savings to account for over this timespan; an estimated $5M in annual operations cost savings will continue to accumulate from 2026 onwards.

Figure 19 Plan Costs

Figure 20 Plan Costs over 10 Years per Intervention (Operations & Capital Costs)

Indigenous Wellness & Cultural Supports, $4,815,000

Affordable Housing, $25,355,317

Permanent Supportive Housing - Place Based, $31,151,000

Permanent Supportive Housing - Scattered Site, $16,107,965

Rent Supports, $26,304,000

ICM- Scattered Site, $5,304,000

Prevention/Rapid Rehousing- Scattered Site, $3,930,000
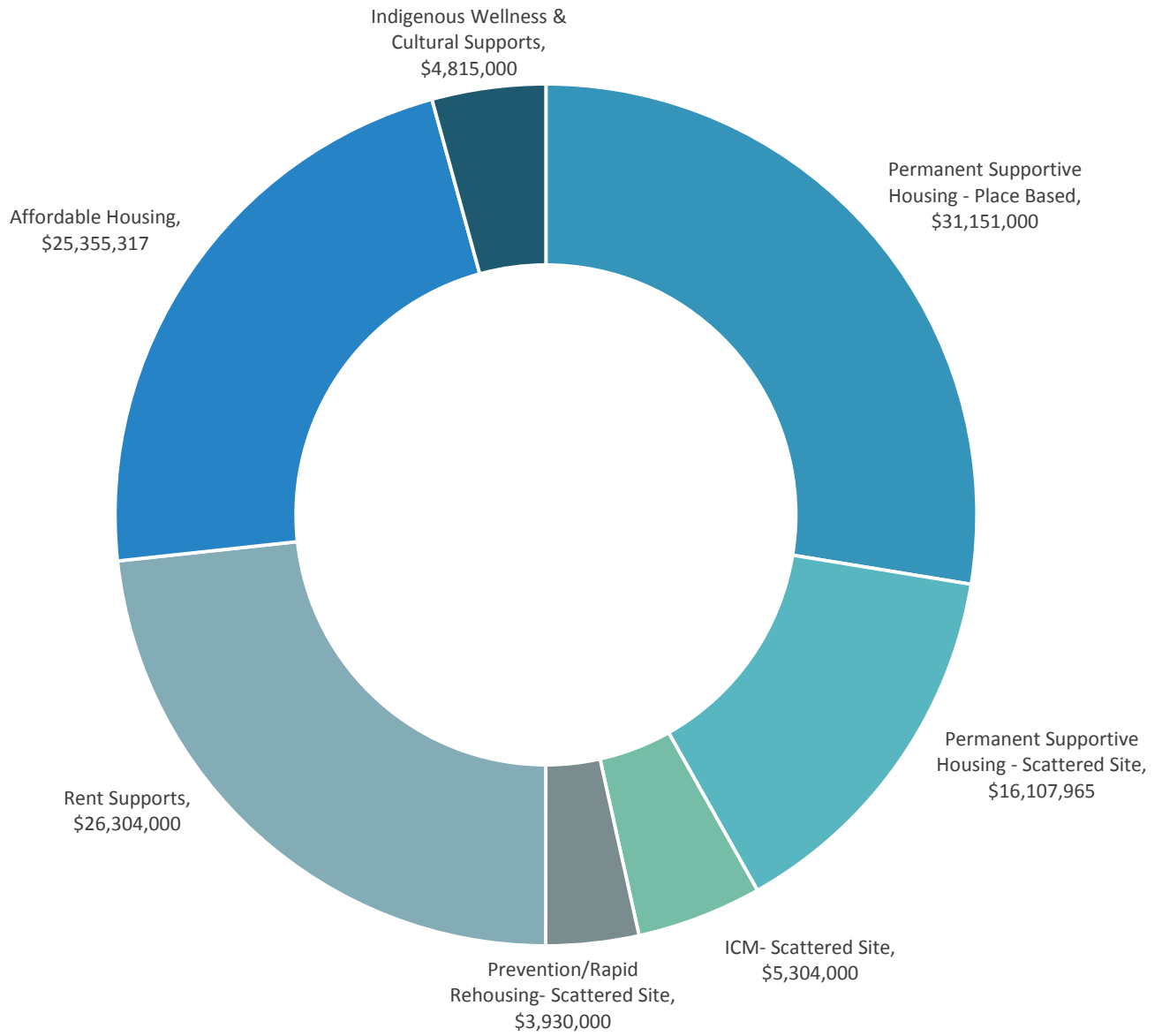
STARTUP FUNDING

It is not feasible to secure the necessary long-term investment for the Plan in one fell swoop. Startup funding to begin implementing the key measures, test promising evidence-based approaches, and develop the infrastructure to redesign homelessness responses over the long term is a fraction of the total costs. The measures outlined rely on the high vacancy rates in the private market over the initial phase to leverage existing units and postpone capital investments into the second phase of the Plan.

Over the next three years, the following estimates will allow the Plan to begin implementation in earnest; this will allow Yellowknife to build on existing strengths and investments to make significant, quick and visible impact in community.

Figure 21 Plan Start-up Costs

The proposed start-up measures will result in **260 people** being moved out of homelessness with wrap-around supports.

PEOPLE HOUSED & SUPPORTED

110
CHRONICALLY & EPISODICALLY HOMELESS PEOPLE HOUSED

150
TRANSITIONAL HOMELESSNESS /AT RISK POPULATION HOUSED & SUPPORTED

Indigenous healing supports delivered complementary to homelessness interventions

Coordination of homeless-serving system & integrated information management introduced

Table 4 Start-up Plan Costs and Impact

Intervention	YEAR 1 New Cost	YEAR 1 Result	YEAR 2 New Cost	YEAR 2 Result	YEAR 3 New Cost	YEAR 3 Result	TOTAL IMPACT
Permanent Supportive Housing – Scattered Site	0	N/A	$250K	House **7** participants in market housing w/ wraparound supports.	$500K	Continue to support participants; and add **7** more spaces.	**15** Individuals housed & supported
Housing First - Intensive Case Management	0	N/A	$300K	Continue to support current participants; and add **10** more spaces.	$600K	Continue to support current participants; and add **10** more spaces.	**96** Individuals housed & supported
Rapid Rehousing/ Prevention	$400K	Set up program, house/stabilize **15** homeless individuals/families.	$400K	Continue to deliver program to **14** new participants.	$400K	Continue to deliver program to **14** new participants.	**68** Individuals housed & supported
Rent Supports	$400K	Create **20** rent support spaces in market housing.	$900K	Add **30** more rent support spaces in market housing.	$1,500K	Add **30** more rent support spaces in market housing.	**86** Individuals housed & supported
Indigenous Wellness & Cultural Supports	$25K	Supplies, tent set up, start healing activities with Elders	$150K	Set up outside healing tent, huts, engage Elders; host community events	$600K	Full ramp up of services	**264 INDIVIDUALS HOUSED & SUPPORTED**
Coordinated Access & HMIS	$35K	Community Assessment & planning	$200K	Set up Coordinated access, assessment and HMIS rollout	$300K	Full rollout of Coordinated Access & HMIS	
TOTAL COSTS	**YEAR 1**	**$860K**	**YEAR 2**	**$2.2M**	**YEAR 3**	**$3.9M**	

ACTION PLAN

This section outlines actions and corresponding directions over the next three years. The primary body accountable for leading the work to achieve these actions is the proposed Yellowknife Homelessness Commission. Key Plan partners would be accountable to the Commission on delivering against agreed-upon actions. These timelines and activities will be reviewed in full by the Commission to finalize a work plan moving forward.

Direction	Actions	Key Stakeholders
2017		
Leadership	Develop draft Terms of Reference for the Commission, identify and secure membership.	Indigenous leaders & Elders Government of Canada City of Yellowknife Government of NWT Non-profit organizations Business sector People with lived experience
	Develop a Plan Accountability Framework with partners as basis for identifying roles and responsibilities.	
	Develop an advocacy plan to secure the start-up funding needed for Plan implementation.	
	Ensure a clear link with the Interagency Council is established from the start.	
	Ensure the Commission has appropriate representation from Indigenous leaders.	
	Establish a Lived Experience Advisory Group to review and inform decision-making on Plan priorities moving forward that is integrated within the Commission and Interagency Council activities.	
	Develop an integrated approach to ensure the lived experience voice is at the Commission table; this includes having a direct link to the Lived Experience Council.	
	Invest resources to support Commission activities on an ongoing basis.	Government of Canada Government of NWT City of Yellowknife
Coordination	Develop draft Terms of Reference for the Interagency Council, identify and secure membership.	City of Yellowknife Yellowknife Community Advisory Board on Homelessness Non-profit agencies Homelessness service providers
	Review current Yellowknife Community Advisory Terms of Reference and HPS funding allocation process and suggest revisions based on Plan priorities. Ensure alignment between Yellowknife Community Advisory and CE activities, the Interagency Council, and Commission.	
	Secure resources to support Interagency Council activities.	Interagency Council Yellowknife Homelessness Commission Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Indigenous leaders Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Government of Canada
Reconciliation	Apply Indigenous Lens to current practices related to homelessness; develop a plan to remedy areas of deficiency; and monitor implementation on an ongoing basis.	Indigenous leaders & Elders City of Yellowknife Government of NWT Non-profit organizations GNWT Agencies

	Finalize the City land transfer for the Indigenous Wellness Centre.	City of Yellowknife Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation Government of NWT
Healing	Ensure low barrier emergency shelter capacity is in place so no one dies from exposure in Yellowknife.	Government of NWT
	Increase access to rent supports and affordable housing.	Government of Canada Government of NWT
	Ensure these crisis responses are integrated to support Plan priorities.	Government of NWT City of Yellowknife
	Support the Department of Justice's Intensive Case Management Program with enhanced access to housing units (market/non-market).	Government of NWT
2018		
Leadership	Develop ongoing multilateral agreement between the Government of Canada, the Government of NWT, and the City of Yellowknife to implement and fund the Plan.	Yellowknife Homelessness Commission Government of Canada City of Yellowknife Government of NWT
	Develop a set of municipal incentives to stimulate and increase affordable rental housing builds.	City of Yellowknife
	Explore innovative social finance and enterprise options to increase affordable housing in Yellowknife.	City of Yellowknife
	Support business sector engagement in addressing affordable housing and homelessness solutions.	Government of NWT
	Develop a detailed strategy for the development of affordable housing and Permanent Supportive Housing called for in the Plan.	Government of Canada Yellowknife Homelessness Commission Indigenous leaders CMHC Builders Developers Financial institutions
Coordination	Develop sector-wide training and capacity building efforts to enhance collective impact.	Interagency Council Non-profit agencies
	Develop and maintain a detailed services and housing directory.	Yellowknife Homelessness Commission Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Indigenous leaders Government of Canada
	Share knowledge and information with other communities in the NWT working to develop local homelessness responses.	
Reconciliation	Support efforts for the Indigenous Wellness Centre to begin operations.	Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation Yellowknife Homelessness Commission Government of Canada Government of NWT
Healing	Develop a harm reduction crisis response strategy to address public intoxication – including a mobile response and transportation team (safe rides), and sobering centre.	Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Yellowknife Homelessness Commission
	Identify concrete plans to introduce an addiction treatment, manage alcohol and sobering centre facilities operated through an Indigenous lens.	

	2019		
Coordination	Select a common intake and assessment process at key access points in the community.		Interagency Council Non-profit agencies Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Indigenous leaders Government of Canada
	Establish an integrated information management committee of the Interagency Council to select a software solution for the homeless-serving sector.		
	Identify data sharing barriers and advance their resolution with partners.		
	Identify research and data gaps, and create a research agenda to address these.		
	Create a common set of metrics to assess progress at the program and system levels across non-profit and public sector providers of homeless supports and housing.		
Reconciliation	Support the Indigenous Wellness Centre's activities, and enhance access to capital/operations resource needs.		Government of Canada Government of NWT
	2020		
Coordination	Develop a common set of non-profit reports through an integrated information system to reduce the administrative burden on agencies.		Interagency Council Non-profit agencies Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Indigenous leaders Government of Canada
	Introduce a 'zero discharge into homelessness' policy for health, correction and child welfare and ensure transition supports are in place across providers.		Government of NWT
Healing	Develop a cost-benefit analysis of current approaches to mental health and addictions service and treatment provision; address calls for increased capacity at the local level.		
	Enhance capacity to address the needs of all chronically and episodically homeless persons, leveraging social housing and private units across the city.		Interagency Council Non-profit agencies Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Indigenous leaders Government of Canada
	Conduct a detailed review of salaries, benefits, and working conditions for homeless-serving non-profit sector agencies.		Interagency Council Homelessness Commission
	Ongoing		
Leadership	Develop policy and funding agenda to advance the Plan; an ongoing advocacy effort should support this agenda on an ongoing basis.		Yellowknife Homelessness Commission Interagency Council
	Review and respond to challenges reported by people with lived experience and non-profit agencies in accessing social assistance and social housing that increases risk of homelessness.		Government of NWT
	Develop and implement an ongoing marketing and communications strategy to increase public engagement and action on homelessness.		Yellowknife Homelessness Commission
	Create learning opportunities to enhance participation in ending homelessness through volunteering, and to enhance knowledge about root causes of homelessness in colonialism.		Government of NWT Business sector Indigenous leaders City of Yellowknife

	Support non-profit development of affordable and supportive housing.	Yellowknife Homelessness Commission City of Yellowknife Government of NWT Government of Canada
Coordination	Develop thorough understanding of investments in homelessness, their efficacy, and areas of improvement as well as a territorial response to homelessness.	Government of NWT Ministers of Housing and Homelessness, Health and Social Services, and Justice
	Work with other communities to develop an NWT network to share knowledge and best practices and enhance capacity building in support of ending homelessness goals.	Interagency Council Yellowknife Homelessness Commission Non-profit sector Indigenous leaders Business sector
	Undertake ongoing reviews of system and program effectiveness against Plan priorities, and make these public.	Interagency Council Non-profit agencies Government of NWT City of Yellowknife Indigenous leaders Government of Canada
	Continue to participate in the national Homeless Count efforts led by the Government of Canada.	
	Maintain an active research focus on identifying migration trends across communities impacting local homelessness	
	Develop a plan to monitor, evaluate, and report on the impact of new strategies on agencies, and identify areas where efficiency gains can be made.	
Reconciliation	Ensure the Indigenous Wellness Centre is fully integrated with homelessness initiatives to ensure an Indigenous lens is applied to interventions.	Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation Indigenous Leaders Yellowknife Homelessness Commission
	Ensure an Indigenous lens is applied to the design of new homelessness capital projects or programs.	
Healing	Support the ongoing activities of the Indigenous Wellness Centre, and integrate traditional healing across mental health and addictions interventions.	Interagency Council Non-profit and GNWT agencies Government of Canada Government of NWT
	Support public and non-profit providers to deliver emergency services using a low barrier, harm reduction approach through training and capacity building.	Interagency Council Non-profit agencies
	Operationalize the slate of Housing First programs outlined in the Plan, including Prevention/Rapid Rehousing, Intensive Case Management, and Permanent Supportive Housing.	Government of NWT Government of Canada City of Yellowknife vis HPS funding
	Enhance relationship with landlords to work on the delivery of Housing First programs.	Interagency Council Non-profit agencies GNWT service providers Landlords
	Ensure Plan supports and housing are dedicated and tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples – those with addictions and mental health, youth, women, seniors, and families.	Indigenous leaders Interagency Council Non-profit agencies GNWT service providers

APPENDIX 1 –
PROGRESS INDICATORS

Optimized Homeless-Serving System [82]

Quantifiable measures are listed below.

1   The total number of unsheltered and emergency sheltered persons is consistently decreasing year-over-year towards zero.
2   The length of stay in emergency shelters/unsheltered is consistently decreasing year-over-year towards zero days.
3   The number of persons entering versus exiting the homeless-serving system has a steady or decreasing rate.
4   The community has capacity to provide universal access to low-barrier shelter. All unsheltered persons in a community are engaged with services, and are offered low-barrier shelter, and housing at least every two weeks.
5   No more than 10% of those who exit homelessness return within 12 months.
6   People are diverted/prevented from experiencing homelessness wherever possible. As a result, there is a consistent reduction year-over-year in the number of homeless persons in emergency shelter and transitional housing/outreach with no previous homelessness experience.
7   The percent of those entering the homelessness prevention system from other public systems is consistently decreasing over time (e.g., child protection, corrections, social housing, health, addiction treatment etc.).
8   Adequate affordable housing supply is in place and accessible to meet demand from those at imminent risk of homelessness to ensure no one becomes homeless in the first place.
9   Program and housing participants served by homeless-serving system (including social housing, emergency shelter, transitional housing, Housing First, etc. programs) increasingly report being moderately or highly satisfied nearing 100% with:
    - Shelter quality and safety;
    - Culturally appropriate supports;
    - Housing security of tenure affordability and safety;
    - Case management services;
    - Being treated with dignity, respect, and having self-determination/choice in housing and supports;
    - Access to supports to address diverse needs including Indigenous healing and wellness, addiction, trauma, mental and physical health issues, employment, education, etc.;
    - Process of referral and intake into programs, shelters, housing;
    - Housing secured, stabilization and aftercare supports; and
    - Perception of quality of life, including sense of belonging, participation in community activities, connection with friends and family.

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[82] These indicators are aligned with the national Functional and Absolute Zero Defining on Homelessness – available online http://homelesshub.ca/endinghomelessness.

From a qualitative perspective, several shifts should be seen as the Plan is implemented, including the following:

10   Enhanced access to Indigenous wellness supports, and culturally-appropriate services and housing.

11   Community planning and service delivery is highly coordinated using a systems approach that includes coordinated entry, assessment, formal standards of care, integration strategies with public systems, performance management, and funding allocation process.

12   There is evidence of increased systematic and effective inclusion of those with lived experience in community coordination efforts and decision-making to develop and deliver services in the homelessness prevention system.

13   All levels of government, including Indigenous leadership, commit that no one should be forced to live on streets, and provide sufficient resources to meet emergency shelter demand at minimum.

14   Coordination efforts are increasing between homeless and public systems to ensure appropriate referrals, and timely access to services/supports to prevent and end homelessness.

15   Diverse funding streams are increasingly coordinated and aligned with community needs to ensure service delivery levels sustain a high functioning system.

16   There is increasing evidence of policy coordination across and within governments to ensure ending homelessness objectives are supported. This includes removal of laws that criminalize homelessness.

APPENDIX 2 –
PROJECTIONS & COSTS

This section outlines key assumptions in Plan projections and modeling. Note that a full Excel workbook with model results is in place for additional information on parameters and results. Ongoing refinement of this model is needed as new data emerges, or there are changes in implementation.

Homelessness Patterns

To conceptualize levels of need among the population, acuity levels were estimated. Acuity refers to the level of needs in the homeless population, and considers several factors. Acuity levels are not distributed evenly amongst those at risk or experiencing homelessness. There is limited information at this point to assess homelessness patterns and acuity, or to estimate how many people are experiencing chronic, episodic, or transitional homelessness at various acuity levels.

Acuity levels and homelessness history are critical for planning and interventions: these factors help the community discern what types of interventions need to be ramped up (or scaled down), and to what effect. To build a homeless-serving system that ends homelessness means ensuring that the right services are available at the right time, tailored to individual needs.

As a starting point, the Plan is projecting the following breakdown of homelessness patterns for planning purposes using existing local information, research Housing First implementing communities,[83] and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. As better data emerges, this projection should be updated to adjust strategy and implementation in real-time. These assumptions are echoed by Yellowknife's 2009 shelter use analysis, which suggests a majority of facility users were there for less than one month during the course of 2008. About 23% used these facilities for one to three months, another 4% for three to six months. Only 6% used shelter or transitional facilities for more than six months altogether during that year.

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[83] See pages 10-11 from Calgary Plan to End Homelessness, Calgary Homeless Foundation. Retrieved from http://calgaryhomeless.com/assets/10-Year-Plan/10-year-plan-FINALweb.pdf.
Homelessness Partnering Strategy (2014) Homelessness Partnering Strategy Directives 2014-2019 - Directive 1: Chronically and Episodically homeless populations definition of chronic and episodic. Retrieved from http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/funding/directives.shtml#d1.

See the Government of Alberta definitions of chronic and episodic homelessness. Retrieved from http://humanservices.alberta.ca/homelessness/14630.html.

Also see the Canadian Homelessness Research Network's review of chronic, episodic, and transitional definitions internationally. Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/BackgroundCHRNhomelessdefinition.pdf Canadian Definition of Homelessness: What's being done in Canada & elsewhere? (2012)

Figure 22 2009 Emergency Shelter & Transitional Housing Use: Report Percent per Length of Stay over One Year.
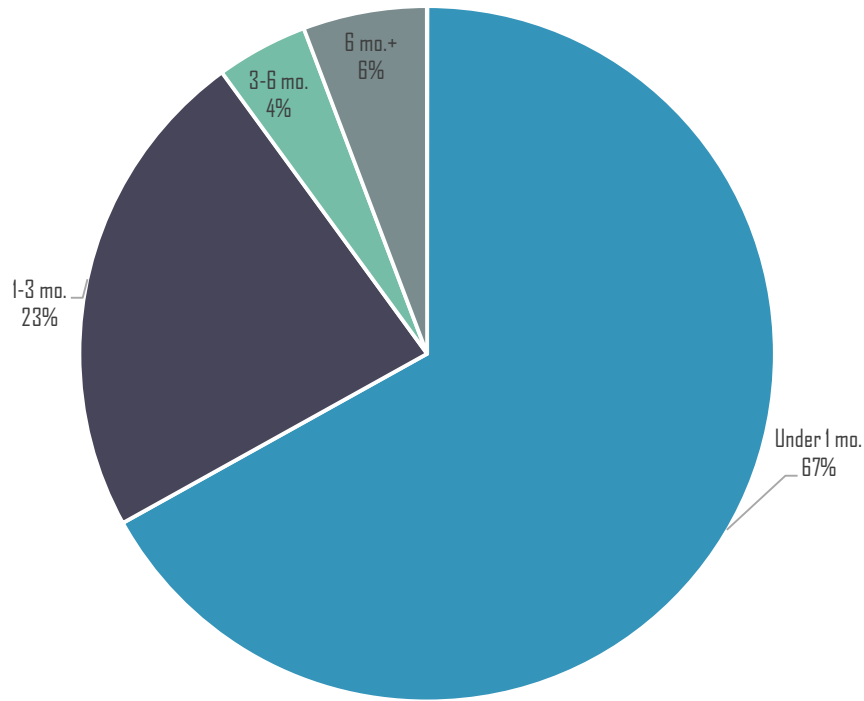
As those who experience episodic and chronic homelessness tend to have the highest levels of public system use (health, police, corrections, police, etc.) as well as emergency shelter stays, they are also likely to have higher acuity levels, and are often vulnerable as result of poor health, etc.

Understanding Levels of Need

It is important to account for both acuity and homelessness history in projecting demands for interventions. In other words, the Plan cannot only focus on those who fit the category of chronic and episodic homelessness while ignoring others with high levels of needs (and who have not been homeless long enough to qualify for supports). Without addressing the needs of those at risk, or experiencing transitional homelessness, the Plan risks lengthening their experience of housing instability.

The following chart provides a breakdown of estimated acuity levels amongst those experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness. Using this framework, the number individuals who require supports or housing by 2026 was assessed, according to estimated homelessness pattern and acuity levels.

Table 5 Acuity Estimates

	High Acuity Levels	Moderate Acuity Levels	Low Acuity Levels
Chronic/Episodic Homelessness	50%	40%	10%
Transitional/At High Risk Homelessness	10%	20%	70%

Appropriate interventions must be in place to address the needs of individuals and households across the acuity and chronicity spectrums with consistent assessment processes to match service participants to the right intervention at the right time. Knowing the level of demand can help anticipate what program types are needed to enhance or introduce into the homeless-serving system. Homelessness histories and acuity levels are good indicators for estimating programming needed. As the figure below suggests, a number of intervention options can be used to respond to unique service participant needs – which have already been described in the Healing Direction.

Based on this approach, assuming a 12% population growth over the next ten years, the Plan estimates the need to serve 100% of those who experience chronic and episodic homelessness, and about 35% of those at high risk because of Core Housing Need, or experiencing transitional homelessness. If these projections are broken out by various interventions, the homeless-serving system will need to develop enough capacity to meet the needs of individuals to close the gap.

Table 6 Estimated Capacity Needs

Core Housing Need & Homelessness Patterns – Annual Basis	Estimated # Individuals Prioritized in Plan Interventions 2017-2026
Core Housing Need. Many people never use homelessness services – but remain at risk of homelessness due to income issues, lack of affordable housing, overcrowding, or poor housing conditions. 1,242 or 18% of households were in Core Housing Need in 2014 – 2,952 individuals in total; of these, Plan estimates 23% or 675 individuals were at high risk for homelessness due to extreme affordability issues, overcrowding, poor housing conditions. Measures propose addressing the needs of 35% of these 675 individuals with an estimated 12% population growth from 2014 to 2026.	**264 individuals**– 9% of total in Core Housing Need by 2026
Experiencing Homelessness. Based on shelter and transitional housing data from 2009 and 2014, an estimated 7% of Yellowknifers, or 1,500 individuals, use these facilities per year. The Plan estimates serving all who experience chronic and episodic homelessness, but only 35% of those in transitional homelessness. An estimated 12% population growth from 2014 to 2026.	**966 individuals by 2026** This includes 100% chronic & episodically homeless and 35% of transitionally homeless: **251 chronic** **335 episodic** **381 transitional** (35% of 1,088 total transitional by 2026_

Costing Interventions

Moving to the next phase, there is a need to estimate the number of spaces to meet these projected demands with some assumptions about turnover. Based on target turnover rates and successful exits from these programs/housing, estimates of needs and associated costs per intervention and housing type were developed. Available information on operating costs from current programs in Yellowknife was used wherever available.

Operations costs included a rent supplement component calculated at $1,600 for market scattered site housing, and $1,290 for non-market housing. This cost is often covered by part of the income assistance individuals receive. These rates were confirmed with current program information from local agencies.

Capital costs were developed using information shared by GNWT from housing developments being developed in Yellowknife in 2017. Note that costs are presented per space, not per unit, in the case of affordable housing. All Permanent Supportive Housing spaces are assumed to be single units.

Program graduates from Prevention/Rapid Rehousing, Intensive Case Management, and scattered site Permanent Supportive Housing intervention were assumed to need ongoing rent supports due to low-income challenges.

Turnover rates were estimated based on information shared by agencies during the development process with the researcher, and complemented by estimates with available research where no data was available. The model assumed a certain level of negative exits of about 18%, depending on intervention (back into homelessness), to ensure accounting for recidivism in the proposed programs. This is included in the turnover rate used.

Table 7 Program & Capital Cost Estimates

Program Type	Operations Costs/Space	Capital Costs	Annual Turnover Rate
Permanent Supportive Housing - Place Based	$49,200	$ 165,625 per single person unit	21%
Permanent Supportive Housing - Scattered Site	$40,480	-	21%
Intensive Case Management - Scattered Site	$34,200	-	53%
Rent Supports	$19,200	-	8%
Affordable Housing	$15,480	$ 137,630 per space – i.e. $275,260 for 2-bdrm unit	16%
Prevention/Rapid Rehousing	$29,200	-	175%

Cost Savings

Projected cost savings will grow throughout implementation totaling **$23 million** over 10 years. An estimated **$5M in annual operations cost savings** will continue to accumulate from 2026 onwards.

Table 8 Annual Plan Costs

Year	Operations	Capital	Operations Cost Savings	Total
2017	$837,000	$-	$-	$837,000
2018	$2,263,361	$-	$-	$2,263,361
2019	$3,929,721	$-	$348,500	$3,929,721
2020	$6,010,525	$4,140,625	$697,000	$10,151,150
2021	$8,389,729	$5,382,813	$1,589,500	$13,772,541
2022	$10,370,532	$4,554,688	$2,652,000	$14,925,220
2023	$12,273,935	$4,140,625	$3,417,000	$16,414,560
2024	$13,756,139	$4,968,750	$4,182,000	$18,724,889
2025	$14,575,343	$2,484,375	$4,947,000	$17,059,718
2026	$15,039,746	$-	$5,202,000	$15,039,746
10 Year Costs	$87,446,032	$25,671,875	$23,035,000	$113,117,907

To generate this estimate, data from 861 Housing First service participants' cost avoidance analysis in Calgary with health and corrections system interactions was used; as better Yellowknife data emerges, the estimate can be updated.

The cost savings assumed savings of $34,000/year for individuals experiencing high chronicity of homelessness and who have high acuity, essentially assuming they would be candidates for Permanent Supportive Housing Place Based. The costs for those eligible for Permanent Supportive Housing Scattered Site models were assumed to be 75% of the $34,000 figure. Serving ICM clients would result 50% of the $34,000 in cost savings annually. For Households At Risk or Experiencing Transitional Homelessness, no cost savings was assumed.

It is important to remember that these are very conservative estimates based on a limited number of cost items. They do not include the full scope of savings realized from increased life expectancy, enhanced contributions to society long-terms, particularly for youth and families. These costs do not account for the long-term cost implications of homelessness over the course of a lifetime – loss of wages, productivity, costs of public system involvement with corrections, health, etc. The social return on investment for ending homelessness is yet to be fully examined from a long-term perspective.

These figures suggest is that it simply makes no moral or economic sense that homelessness is accepted. Now, let's get on with it.

APPENDIX 3 – **KEY TERMS**

Accessible: In reference to a type of housing unit, accessible refers to units that are designed to promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This sometimes includes physical elements such as low height cupboards or light switches, wide doorways, and adapted bathrooms.

Acuity: An assessment of the level of complexity of a person's experience. Acuity is used to determine the appropriate level, intensity, duration, and frequency of case managed supports to sustainably end a person's or family's homelessness.

Affordable Housing: Rental or ownership housing that requires capital subsidies or capital subsidies plus ongoing operating subsidies. Affordable housing also has rents or payments below average market cost, and is targeted for long-term occupancy by households who earn less than median income for their household size.

At-Risk of Experiencing Homelessness: A person or family that is experiencing difficulty maintaining their housing and has no alternatives for obtaining subsequent housing. Circumstances that often contribute to becoming at-risk of homeless include: eviction; loss of income; unaffordable increase in the cost of housing; discharge from an institution without subsequent housing in place; irreparable damage or deterioration to residences; and fleeing from family violence.

Case Management: A collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, and evaluation of the options and services required to meet an individual's health and human service needs. It is characterized by advocacy, communication, and creative resource management to promote quality, cost effective outcomes.

Chronic Homelessness: Those who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency homeless shelter. People experiencing chronic homelessness face long term and ongoing homelessness related to complex and persistent barriers related to health, mental health, and addictions.

Coordinated Access: A single place or process for people experiencing homelessness to access housing and support services. It is a system-wide program designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable first and creates a more efficient homeless-serving system by helping people move through the system faster, reducing new entries to homelessness, and improving data collection and quality to provide accurate information on client needs.

Core Housing Need: A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to access local housing that meets all three standards.

Couch Surfing: Frequently sleeping on friends and/or family's couches on a regular or intermittent basis, moving from household to household.

Domestic Violence: the attempt, act, or intent of someone within a relationship, where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust, to intimidate either by threat or by the use of physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control and/or exploit through neglect, intimidation,

inducement of fear or by inflicting pain. Abusive behaviours can take many forms including: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual and economic, and the violation of rights. All forms of abusive behaviours are ways in which one human being is trying to have control and/or exploit or have power over another.

Emergency Shelter: Any facility with the primary purpose of providing temporary accommodations and essential services for homeless individuals.

Episodic Homelessness: A person who is homeless for less than a year and has fewer than four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Typically, those classified as episodically homeless have recurring episodes of homelessness as a result of complex issues such as addictions or family violence.

Evidence-Based: First developed in the sphere of medicine, this term is defined as the integration of best practice research evidence within clinical expertise and patient values. In the context of social programs, services and supports, evidence-based refers to the use of high-quality evidence (e.g. randomized control trials) to develop, test, and modify programs and services so that they are achieving intended outcomes.

Extreme Core Housing Need: refers to extreme housing affordability and very low-income issues for households who were earning less than $20,000 per year and paying 50% or more of their income on shelter costs.

Family: In the context of homelessness, those who are homeless and are: parents with minor children; adults with legal custody of children; a couple in which one person is pregnant; multi-generational families; and/or part of an adult interdependent partnership.

Functional Zero End to Homelessness: The Plan uses the concept of "functional zero" as the measurement for ending homelessness. A functional zero end to homelessness means that communities have a systematic response in place to ensure that homelessness (including sheltered, unsheltered, provisionally accommodated and at imminent risk of homelessness) is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief and non-recurring experience. An absolute end to homelessness refers to a true end in which all individuals have the appropriate housing and supports to prevent any experience or immediate risk of homelessness. Functional and absolute zero are not opposing concepts; rather, as we strive towards an 'absolute' end to homelessness, we can use the functional zero definition to describe and assess progress.

Harm Reduction: Any policies, programs, or practical strategies designed to reduce harm and the negative consequences related to substance abuse, without requiring the cessation of substance use. Harm reduction is typically characterized by meeting substance users "where they're at," addressing conditions and motivations of drug use along with the use itself, and acknowledging an individual's ability to take responsibility for their own behaviours. Examples of interventions include safer use, managed use, and non-punitive abstinence.

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS): Federal government-developed Homeless Management Information System software option.

Homelessness: Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing. Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, including unsheltered (or absolute) homelessness, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated and at risk of homelessness.

Homeless (Point-in-Time) Count: Point-in-time homeless counts provide a snapshot of the population experiencing homelessness at a point in time. Basic demographic information is collected from emergency shelters and short-term housing facilities, and a survey is done with those enumerated through a street count. Public systems, including health and corrections, provide numbers of those without fixed address on the night of the count as well.

Homeless-Serving System: A homeless-serving system (HSS) comprises a range of local or regional service delivery components serving those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The Edmonton homeless-serving system, like other counterparts across the world comprises of key components or building blocks that work together towards system goals.

Homeless Management Information System: A local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness.

Housing First: Describes the approach or model of programs that aim to help homeless persons or families quickly access and sustain permanent, affordable homes. The key principles that distinguish a Housing First approach include varied, flexible and responsive support services, no preconditions to housing, financial assistance, assistance with tenancy management and case management services.

Indigenous peoples: Indigenous is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups. It is most frequently used in an international, transnational, or global context. This term came into wide usage during the 1970s when Aboriginal groups organized transnationally and pushed for greater presence in the United Nations (UN). In the UN, "Indigenous" is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others through colonialism. Peoples is used to capture the diversity of nations and communities in Canada.

Intensive Case Management (ICM): Intensive case management is a team-based approach to support individuals, the goal of which is to help clients maintain their housing and achieve an optimum quality of life through developing plans, enhancing life skills, addressing mental and physical health needs, engaging in meaningful activities and building social and community relations. It is designed for clients with lower acuity, but who are identified as needing intensive support for a shorter and time-delineated period.

Length of Stay (in Homelessness): The number of days in a homeless episode or across multiple episodes of homelessness. The type of homelessness/shelter situation may vary significantly within the episode.

LGBTQ2S+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, and 2-spirited (LGBTQ2S+). LGBTQ2S+ youth experience the additional layer of challenges faced by those with sexual orientations and gender identities that are different from the mainstream. LGBTQ2S+ youth are overrepresented among the population experiencing homelessness as a result of homophobia and transphobia in the home and across the service and housing systems.

Managed Alcohol Program (MAP): An alcohol harm reduction strategy for people who have unstable housing, chronic relapsing problems with alcohol and repeated unsuccessful attempts at abstinence-based treatment. MAPs aim to stabilize the health and social well-being of those individuals by providing various services such as connections to housing, without requiring abstinence. This stabilization is accomplished through regulated access to less hazardous forms of alcohol up to a controlled number of doses each day consumed in a safe environment.

Market Rent: Market rent means the amount a unit could be rented for on a monthly basis in the private market, based on an appraisal.

Negative Exit: As measured through the HMIS database, reasons include criminal activity/violence, disagreement with rules/person's, needs could not be met, non-compliance with program, non-payment of rent, reached maximum time allowed, unknown/disappeared, don't know or declined to answer.

Outreach: Outreach programs provide basic services and referrals to chronically homeless persons living on the streets and can work to engage this population in re-housing. Outreach can have different intentions, from connecting to basic needs and services, to an explicit housing mandate. This range of outreach programs exists in Edmonton.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): Permanent supportive housing combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use (Homeless Hub, 2017b).

Placed-Based Permanent Supportive Housing: Congregate or independent permanent supportive housing units situated in one building or location.

Scattered-Site Permanent Supportive Housing: The provision of permanent supportive housing services in the community, delivered through home visits or community-based agencies.

Place-Based Housing: Refers to physical housing with program supports for individuals typically with high acuity.

Positive Exit: As measured through the HMIS database, reasons include completed program, left for housing opportunity before completing program or referred to another program.

Poverty: Poverty is defined as when people lack, or are denied, economic, social and cultural resources they need to have a quality of life that ensures full and meaningful participation in the community.

Public Housing: Public Housing refers to public programs which provide income-based subsidies for the rental of housing for residents in need. Currently the NWTHC operates more than 2400 Public Housing units which are managed by LHOs located in 30 communities throughout the NWT.

Prevention: refers to the activities, interventions and planning that prevents individuals and families from experiencing homelessness.

Rapid Rehousing: Provide targeted and time-limited financial assistance, system navigation, and support services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in order to facilitate their quick exit from shelter and obtain housing.

Recidivism: The rate in which a client receives a positive housing outcome and returns to homelessness, particularly shelter or rough sleeping.

Rehoused: from a data management and technical perspective, rehoused describes a situation where a client was previously housed in a permanent home and has been placed in a new home while remaining in the same Housing First Program. More colloquially, rehoused refers to a person exiting homelessness and becoming housed again.

Rent Supports: rent supplements assist households in need of affordable housing by providing rent subsidies. Rent supplements have multiple structures: some rent supplements are paid directly to the landlord, and others

are paid directly to the tenant; some follow a rent-geared-to-income structure where the supplement "tops up" the amount payable by the tenant (typically at 30% of income) to the market rate, and others are a monthly fixed amount. Rent supplements are also sometimes called rent subsidies.

Scattered Site Housing: A housing model that utilizes individual rental units located throughout the community, typically owned by private market landlords. Rent supplements are typically applied.

Sleeping Rough: People who are unsheltered, lacking housing and not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation. In most cases, people who are sleeping rough are staying in places not designed for or fit for human habitation, including: people living in public or private spaces without consent or contract (public space such as sidewalks, squares, parks or forests; and private space and vacant buildings, including squatting), or in places not intended for permanent human habitation (including cars or other vehicles, garages, attics, closets or buildings not designed for habitation, or in makeshift shelters, shacks or tents).

Sobering Centre: Facility that provides a safe place for those under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol to sober up as a more effective alternative to police responses to public intoxication. Evidence suggests sobering centres are cost efficient and reduce emergency health services and police use; they can be important facilitators for vulnerable clients to connect to treatment and long-term housing. Such services can be effective vehicles for improving individual and community health and well-being as part of a set of comprehensive responses to intoxication.

System of Care: A local or regional system for helping people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. A system of care aims to coordinate resources to ensure community level results align with strategic goals and meet client needs effectively.

System Planning: Creating a system of navigation for accessing services from many different agencies, resulting in a system of care.

Transitional Housing: Housing facilities that provide services beyond basic needs and that, while not permanent, generally allow for a longer length of stay than emergency housing facilities (up to three years).

Transitional Homelessness: Homeless for the first time (usually for less than three months) or has had less than two episodes in the past three years. The transitionally homeless tend to enter into homelessness as a result of economic or housing challenges and require minimal and one-time assistance.

Youth Homelessness: A youth experiencing homelessness is an unaccompanied person age 24 and under lacking a permanent nighttime residence. They can be living on the street, in shelters, couch surfing, in unsafe and insecure housing, and / or living in abusive situations. They may also be about to be discharged without the security of a regular residence from a care, correction, health, or any other facility.

Youth: Any individual who is between the ages of 15 and 30 (Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy). The specific definition used will be flexible, depending on the specific activity or strategy and partners involved.

**YELLOWKNIFE'S
10 YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS**

CITY OF
YELLOWKNIFE

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD
CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE
ON HOMELESSNESS

Canada

This project was funded by the Government of Canada's
Homelessness Partnering Strategy program.

"House of the Northern Lights"

The front cover painting by Chipewyan artist Michael Fatt from Lutselk'e, NWT
is entitled "House of the Northern Lights". Michael's inspiration for the painting
comes from his experiences growing up in the North and his time living in
Yellowknife.

The skyline represents the Northern Lights Yellowknife is famous for, as well as
the tree line characteristic of the region. The Medicine Wheel honors the concept
of Indigenous wellness carried throughout the Plan's approach, and the call for
Reconciliation. The bearpaw in which the Medicine Wheel is placed symbolizes
protection, life, courage and strength.

The painting is being gifted by the artist for the sole purposes of supporting the
work of the **Plan to End Homelessness in Yellowknife**; as someone with lived
experience on the streets of Yellowknife, Michael is a testament to the spirit of this
Plan and the symbolism in this painting.

If you wish to know more about Michael and his work, see this link:
https://colouritforward.myshopify.com/collections/all/michael-fatt

Nocturnal Works, 403.903.0117

EVERYONE IS HOME