

The cover features a dark purple background with several concentric circles of varying shades of purple and white. A horizontal line is drawn across the middle of the page, passing through the center of the circles. The text is centered within these circles.

CONNECTING THE CIRCLE

A GENDER-BASED STRATEGY TO END
HOMELESSNESS IN WINNIPEG

FINAL REPORT

GENEROUSLY FUNDED BY:

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
STATUS OF WOMEN / WOMEN AND
GENDER EQUALITY

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INTRODUCTION

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“Why are we homeless in our own homeland?”

—FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

This research was conducted on Treaty 1 territory, the original lands of Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe), Iniwé (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and homeland of the Métis Nation. This land sustains Indigenous Peoples and cultures, and now the majority of homeless people on this land are Indigenous.¹ The roots of this tragic reality lie in the historic and ongoing colonization of Turtle Island.² It is time to decolonize and share this land and its resources as the treaties intended.

BACKGROUND

It’s time to end homelessness, and it’s time to recognize the unique experiences of women, transgender (trans³), Two-Spirit⁴, and gender non-conforming⁵ people in these efforts. Homelessness for these populations can look very different than for men, usually in ways that makes their experiences less visible and understood. Therefore, most responses to homelessness tend to inadequately address their unique needs. This report is intended to complement End Homeless Winnipeg’s *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg* by providing an intersectional gender-based analysis (IGBA) to homelessness in Winnipeg. This analysis is the first of its kind to be done locally and it is essential to ensuring no one is left out of our work to end homelessness in Winnipeg. While the recommendations presented in this report do not capture the full scope of what needs to be done, their timely implementation by all levels of government, organizations, and stakeholders will have a significant impact. We have no time to lose. It’s time to end homelessness for all.

In 2016, community-based women’s organizations in Winnipeg recognized that there was a lack of an IGBA in local homelessness research and initiatives. West Central Women’s Resource Centre (WCWRC) obtained a grant from the federal government’s

Department for Women and Gender Equality (formerly Status of Women Canada) to lead the development of a strategy to end gender-based homelessness by addressing the unique needs of diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who experience homelessness in Winnipeg. Our strategy offers recommendations for action that prevent and address homelessness specifically for these populations. These actions are designed to enhance collaboration and cooperation across key stakeholders to close system gaps that create gender-based paths into homelessness and take down gender-based barriers to exiting homelessness. We cannot end homelessness if we do not end gender-based homelessness.

We hope our report will serve as a resource for all who are working to understand and end homelessness. Many other local efforts are underway and forthcoming, including End Homelessness Winnipeg’s *Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg* and *Here and Now: Winnipeg’s Plan to End Youth Homelessness*. Our intention is to complement these efforts by providing a focused action plan geared toward ending gender-based homelessness while assisting others in applying an IGBA to their efforts.

The vision for this strategy is that its implementation will be promoted and guided by a table of community and government stakeholders whose work includes serving women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.

WHY WE NEED A STRATEGY TO END GENDER-BASED HOMELESSNESS

A woman is more likely to stay with her abusive partner because she has nowhere else to go. A single mother who can no longer afford her apartment when her income changes after her children are apprehended is more likely to end up couch surfing at friends’ houses. A trans person who is rejected by their family because of their gender identity often ends up living on the street. A Two-Spirit person who feels unsafe in shelters often opts to sleep outside in the

cold. A gender non-conforming person experiences barriers to accessing gender-based violence shelters because they don't identify as a woman. These examples of homelessness, where a person's gender has a significant impact on how they experience homelessness, illustrate why an IGBA analysis of homelessness is important.

Mainstream services and programs that address homelessness are largely based around the experiences of men.⁶ In reality, people experiencing homelessness are a diverse demographic with diverse needs. When we look at all people experiencing homelessness as a homogenous group, we fail to understand how gender shapes an experience of homelessness. We also develop solutions that fail to address the unique needs of a diversity of genders. There is no such thing as an effective one-size-fits-all plan for ending homelessness. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experience unique paths to homelessness. While these unique experiences are often overlooked, they are the focus of this report.

An IGBA approach to studying homelessness allows for a more nuanced understanding of how homelessness occurs and is experienced, in this case, across genders. In the past, a gender-based analysis was often centred on a binary definition of gender and was synonymous with "women's issues."⁷ A more inclusive approach to gender-based analysis —IGBA—is to analyze impacts along the *spectrum* of gender with male at one end, female at the other end, and lots of variation in between.

Furthermore, to focus solely on gender without considering other dimensions of identity will not result in better policies and programs for all because "people's experiences are influenced by a multitude of factors, including but not limited to gender, and the interaction of these factors can lead to experiences of discrimination and disadvantages."⁸ By using an IGBA, decision makers can assess the impacts of policies and programs on marginalized peoples across the gender spectrum, and ensure decisions do not risk further oppression, but rather benefit all.

"Women and other marginalized people in society are more vulnerable to homelessness and when homeless, more vulnerable."

—COMMUNITY AGENCY SURVEY RESPONDENT

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTERSECTIONAL GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

The concept of intersectionality acknowledges that a person can simultaneously experience many sources of discrimination and oppression such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and classism. Intersectional oppression has a multiplying effect; the more sources of inequity a person experiences, the deeper and often more invisible their exclusion becomes.

When applied to situations of homelessness, the concept of intersectionality allows us to see how challenges and barriers are compounded. If a woman is living in poverty and is looking to quickly exit her housing due to domestic violence, her housing options will be limited by her access to financial resources, the potential for sexism or sexual harassment, her need for safe housing, and the urgency of her need. However, if that woman is also Indigenous, she may face racism in her search for housing. If she is trans, she faces the risk of transphobia and may have no family supports. If she is living with a physical disability, her housing search may be further limited by accessibility needs. If she is experiencing all of these barriers at the same time, her ability to secure the housing she needs will be exponentially complicated.

To further complicate these barriers, it is difficult for society to recognize people with intersecting marginalized identities as part of our community, as they don't fit in to our dominant cultural narrative. This is called intersectional invisibility⁹. We must consciously choose to center and value the experiences and perspectives of multiply marginalized individuals in order to create social structures where they have equitable access to resources, choices and opportunities.

An IGBA, referred to by the Department for Women and Gender Equality as Gender-based Analysis Plus or GBA+, is an analytical tool used to consider how multiple identity factors (including sex, gender, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, age, and

ability) impact people's experiences.¹⁰ It is used to consider the experience of diverse groups of men, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. It enables people in organizations and systems to evaluate the structure, design, and implementation of programs, practices, and policies to best meet the holistic needs of the people impacted by those initiatives.

Understanding intersectionality and how to use an IGBA is important to ending gender-based homelessness. Much like what happens when solutions are developed around a man's experience of homelessness, if solutions focus on any specific gender as a homogeneous group and neglect the complex and intersecting identities of the individuals within that group, they too will create gaps that people experiencing oppression will fall into. Failure to use an IGBA increases the risk that policies and initiatives will inadvertently further increase inequalities.¹¹

It is important to note that using an IGBA is not just for women's organizations or organizations doing gender-focused work. It is a tool that we call on everyone to learn about and use in developing solutions that better meet the unique needs of each person accessing services. For it to be effective, organizations that use an IGBA must be open to an ongoing learning process through which they are constantly working to better understand the unique needs of diverse populations and continually adapting and evolving to meet those needs.

A MORE INCLUSIVE DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

"Homelessness does not end simply by virtue of having four walls and a roof over your head."¹²

How we define homelessness shapes our understanding of homelessness, which in turn shapes the solutions that are offered. It is important that definitions of homelessness explicitly capture diverse experiences of homelessness, especially when those definitions are used to determine who is eligible for services and who is not. For example, the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* was the federal government's primary initiative for addressing homelessness across

Canada between April 2014 and March 2019. The definitions of homelessness it has used to determine eligibility for one of its major homelessness intervention programs prioritize shelter users and people living in inhabitable locations. But these are not the most common experiences of homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. These demographics commonly experience hidden homelessness (such as being provisionally accommodated) and because the definition does not explicitly include hidden homelessness, eligibility for program participation is left up to interpretation.¹³ As a result, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are at greater risk of being excluded from programs.

In addition, while *Canada's National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home* uses a GBA+ and is allocating 25 percent of its resources to housing for women, it has also set a target of reducing chronic homelessness by 50 percent. However, this type of homelessness is more commonly experienced by men than by women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. Targeting homelessness intervention initiatives at people experiencing chronic homelessness will leave many women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people behind.¹⁴ All homelessness prevention and intervention initiatives should be based on a more inclusive definition of homelessness.

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are more likely to experience hidden homelessness, which can describe situations of homelessness that tend to be less visible to the eye and, in turn, less likely to appear in homelessness data. Hidden homelessness can take many forms and can be just as, if not more, dangerous than other types of homelessness. For women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people it can be more likely to take the form of staying with someone in exchange for services like babysitting, cleaning, or sex. Or it can take the form of staying with an abusive partner out of fear of being in a homeless shelter with men or because there are not enough affordable and accessible housing options for people living with physical disabilities. Caregivers¹⁵ of children are at greater risk of hidden homelessness that takes the form of staying with a stranger to avoid accessing a

“HOMELESSNESS
IS NOT RESOLVED
FOR WOMEN BY
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OVER HER HEAD
UNLESS THIS ROOF
IS ACCOMPANIED
BY A SENSE OF
SAFETY AND
SECURITY.”

—NOVAC, FAMILY VIOLENCE
AND HOMELESSNESS

shelter out of fear that Child and Family Services (CFS) will apprehend their child(ren).¹⁶ Definitions of homelessness must explicitly include these experiences of hidden homelessness to ensure that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are included in solutions.

Input provided during consultations on the federal government's *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* called for the inclusion of an expanded definition of homelessness in the forthcoming national strategy, *Reaching Home: Canada's New Homelessness Strategy*, which replaced the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* on April 1, 2019.¹⁷ We hope that an expanded definition will be more inclusive of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people and their families, ensuring all those with diverse experiences of homelessness have access to funds and programs.¹⁸ This includes a definition that captures the diverse experiences of homelessness among Indigenous Peoples.

DEFINING INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

"[T]he concept of 'home' is not universal and ... homelessness may not simply refer to the state of being without shelter. This is particularly true for Aboriginal Peoples."¹⁹

In Winnipeg, the vast majority of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness are Indigenous.²⁰ Therefore, it is essential that definitions of homelessness include Indigenous homelessness.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) outlines 12 dimensions of Indigenous homelessness based on consultations with Indigenous Peoples across Canada. This definition of homelessness has been endorsed by the federal government's Advisory Committee on Homelessness.²¹

Moving beyond definitions related to access to housing, Indigenous homelessness has its roots in the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples "from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors and stories."²² Indeed, the COH definition of Indigenous homelessness acknowledges that Indigenous

Peoples do not choose homelessness. The definition includes historic displacement homelessness and contemporary geographic separation homelessness.²³ The latter, for example, was seen in the flooding in 2011 that displaced 1,400 members of the Lake St. Martin community, many of whom are still experiencing displacement. Another common example is displacement from major public projects, such as Hydro infrastructure.²⁴

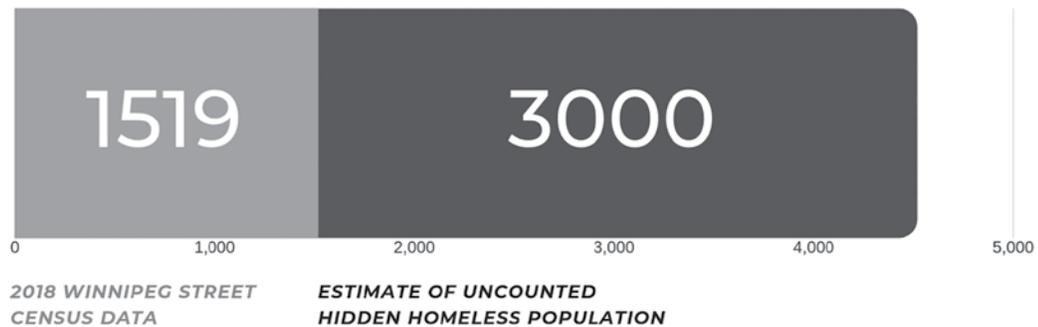
Indigenous homelessness can also take the form of emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental disconnection from culture, home community, the Creator, and land. Overcrowding and high rates of mobility are also dimensions of Indigenous homelessness. Winnipeg, as the largest city in Manitoba, sees high rates of relocation and mobility through rural-urban migration.²⁵ Further dimensions include experiences of having nowhere to go, escaping or evading harm, and homelessness due to emergency crises and climate change.²⁶

DATA ON WOMEN, TRANS, TWO-SPIRIT, AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN WINNIPEG

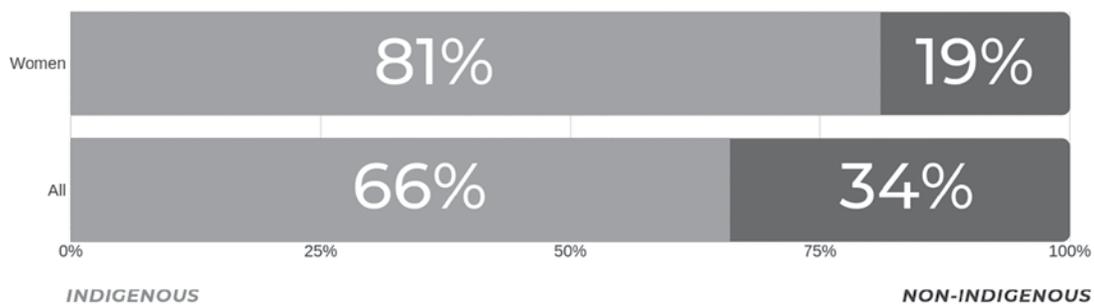
Due to the typically hidden nature of homelessness experienced by women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, there is very little data on people experiencing it. The *Winnipeg Street Census 2018* noted that the women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people surveyed were less likely than men to be staying in a homeless shelter. Non-binary²⁷ people were most likely to be staying at someone's place. While the *Winnipeg Street Census 2018* made concerted efforts to better capture experiences of hidden homelessness, it notes that this population is still significantly undercounted: "Researchers conservatively estimate that for every person experiencing absolute homelessness, another three people are in hidden homelessness. If this ratio held true in Winnipeg, we have undercounted the hidden homeless population by at least 3,000 people."²⁸

The *Winnipeg Street Census 2018* provides some insight into the number and characteristics of women, trans,

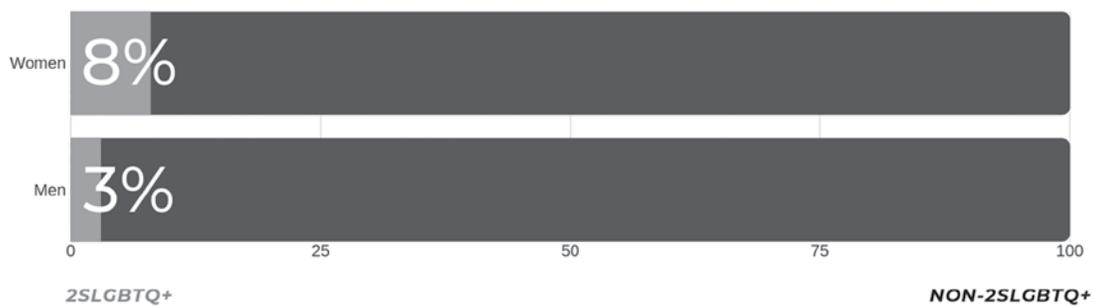
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN WINNIPEG, INCLUDING HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS



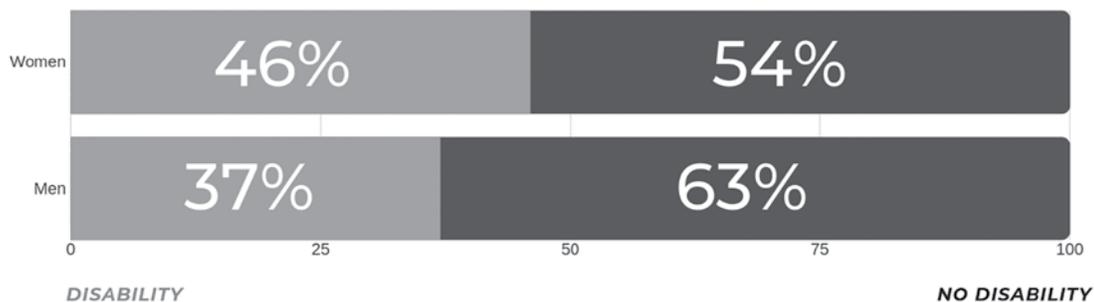
INDIGENEITY OF 2018 WINNIPEG STREET CENSUS RESPONDENTS



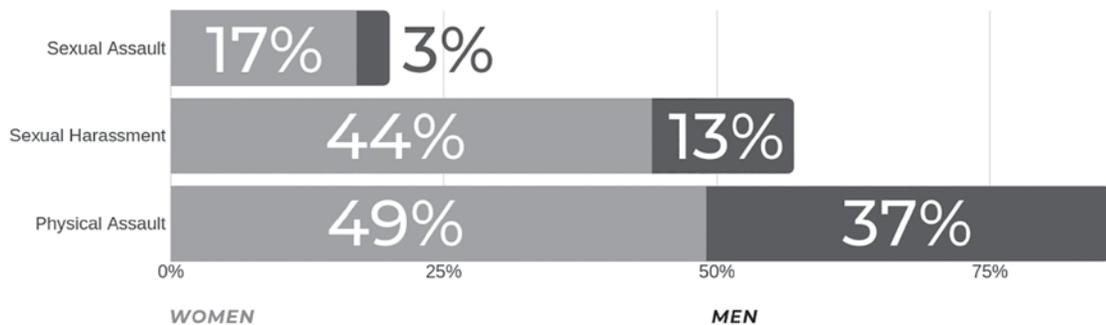
2SLGBTQ+ BY WOMEN AND MEN IN 2018 WINNIPEG STREET CENSUS



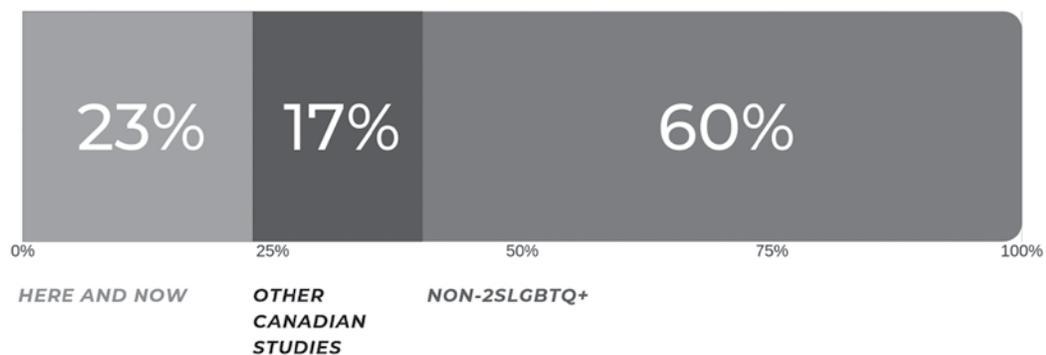
DISABILITY BY WOMEN AND MEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA



ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT FOR WOMEN AND MEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN 2018 WINNIPEG STREET HEALTH SURVEY



PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WHO ARE 2SLGBTQ+



Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg. The census notes that 32.5 percent of people experiencing homelessness (474 people out of 1,519 surveyed) were women. Of these women, 81 percent were also Indigenous, compared to 66 percent of all those experiencing homelessness.²⁹ This confirms the importance of considering how being an Indigenous woman shapes a person's experience of homelessness, and suggests that women who are homeless are also vulnerable to being victims of racism.

Of those surveyed in the *Street Census*, 3 percent of men and 8 percent of women identified as 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual orientations and gender identities). This suggests that more women than men experiencing homelessness are at risk of also experiencing homophobia and transphobia, indicating a need to consider how these forms of oppression impact people's experiences of homelessness.³⁰ Additionally, 2 percent (31 people) identified as non-binary, which included transgender, Two-Spirit, and genderqueer.³¹

While we were unable to find local data about the intersections between gender and disability, across Canada women who have experienced homelessness are more likely than men to also have a disability (46 percent of women versus 37 percent of men experiencing homelessness).³² This suggests the importance of considering the intersection of gender and disability when addressing homelessness.

The *2018 Winnipeg Street Health Survey Report* noted that 49.1 percent of 474 women surveyed had been physically assaulted in the year prior to the census (compared to 46.7 percent of men), 43.6 percent of women had been sexually harassed (compared to 12.5 percent of men), and 16.7 percent of women had been sexually assaulted or raped (compared to 3.1 percent of men).³³ These numbers demonstrate the increased risk of sexual violence experienced by women when homeless, which we found is also the case for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.

This data demonstrates the multiple identities (such as gender, sexual orientation, Indigeneity, and ability) impact experiences of homelessness in Winnipeg. Applying an IGBA to ending homelessness is critical given what we have learned about the women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg. Most are Indigenous and at risk of intergenerational trauma and the impacts of ongoing colonialism; many will have experienced trauma rooted in violence, including transphobia or homophobia; and many will also be living with a visible or invisible disability.

It is important to note the major gap in homelessness research and data regarding trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people not only in Winnipeg but across Canada. The *Here and Now* report found that 23 percent of youth experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg were 2SLGBTQ+,³⁴ but there is reason to believe that the percentages are actually much larger. Some Canadian studies found that closer to 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness are 2SLGBTQ+.³⁵ It is hard to get a comprehensive picture of 2SLGBTQ+ homelessness because most research on this community only examines youth. Additionally, many from the 2SLGBTQ+ community avoid surveys due to safety issues and the stigma around gender identities. Lastly, it can be difficult to reach 2SLGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness due in part because they avoid services and shelters for fear of encountering homophobia and transphobia.³⁶

M E T H O D O L O G Y

After receiving a grant from the federal government's Department for Women and Gender Equality to develop a strategy to end gender-based homelessness, we established a Steering Committee and a First Voice Advisory Committee in the fall of 2017 to guide the research and overall strategy development.

The Steering Committee included two representatives from the First Voice Advisory Committee and 32 leaders from community-based organizations across Winnipeg and government departments who are involved with providing services and supports to women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. The Steering Committee also struck a Research Sub-Committee to support and streamline problem solving related to research, and a Communications Sub-Committee to create and implement a communications plan for the strategy.

For our strategy to be meaningful and effective, people with lived experience were included as leaders from the very start. The First Voice Advisory Committee was populated through a call for applications for diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with lived experience of homelessness and housing insecurity. Their knowledge and personal experiences guided the decisions of the Steering Committee and helped ensure that our report was rooted in and reflective of the vision, priorities, and strengths of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. They retained veto power over all Steering Committee decisions throughout the process.

In the spirit of reconciliation, it was important to ensure that Indigenous voices helped guide the work through their participation on the Steering Committee and First Voice Advisory Committee. Article 23 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) acknowledges Indigenous Peoples' right to be actively involved in developing and having control over their own housing. Approximately 20 percent of our Steering Committee members are Indigenous. All of our First Voice Advisory Committee members identify as Indigenous women, one of which

is trans. We were intentional about inviting key Indigenous organizations to our Steering Committee and were open to add new members to foster an inclusive approach to the project.

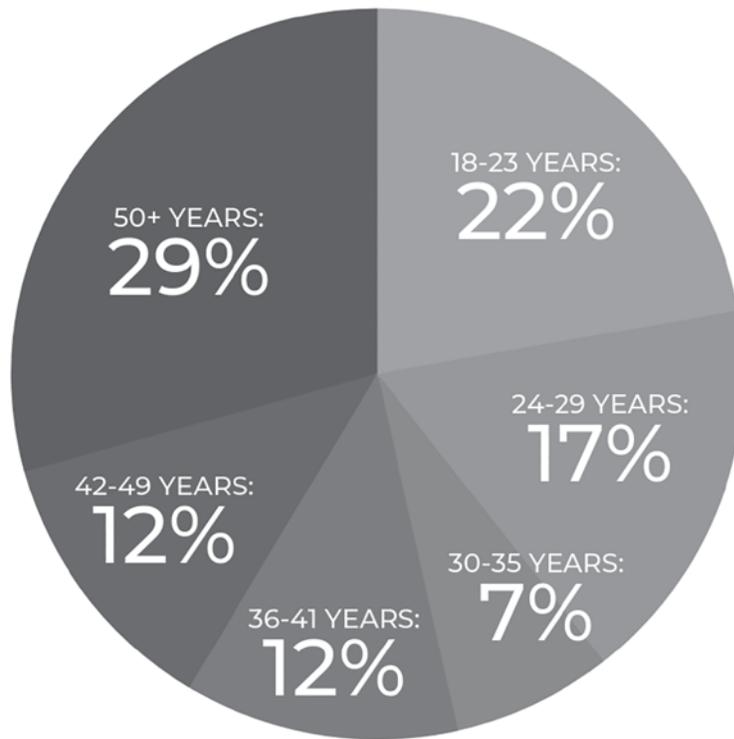
We hired a student from the University of Winnipeg to conduct a review of the literature on gender-based homelessness between November 2017 and March 2018. This research helped us to identify key pathways into homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. It also helped us identify the people we needed to consult with to strengthen our understanding of what these pathways look like in our local context.

We conducted ten focus groups at various front-line organizations across Winnipeg³⁷ where we consulted a total of 57 women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have experienced homelessness and volunteered their participation. Seventy-three percent of focus group participants identified as Indigenous.³⁸ All participants had the opportunity to attend a focus group that offered childminding and were provided a \$25 honorarium and a snack, as well as bus tokens for their involvement. Most focus groups were attended by a member of the First Voice Advisory Committee to facilitate open dialogue, and an Elder was in attendance when possible. Nine focus group locations were fully accessible.

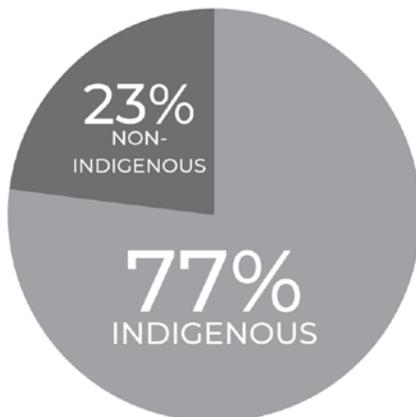
Guided by Steering and First Voice Advisory committee members, we decided that the primary outreach strategy for our focus groups would be to liaise with diverse, established community organizations who have strong connections with people who held some of the key identities that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness are likely to hold. This included Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, youth, the elderly, people with physical or cognitive disabilities, people with mental illness, caregivers, single people, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and caregivers with children in care, as well as people who have experience with gender-based violence, substance use, the sex trade, trafficking, and the justice system. Our secondary outreach strategy was to use email networks and

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

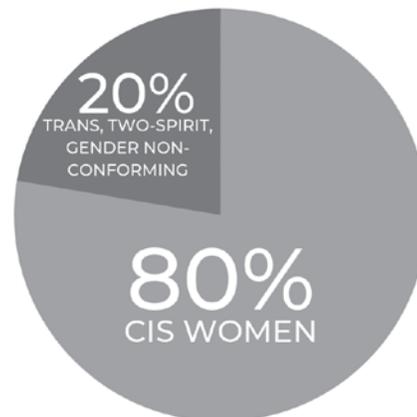
AGE OF PARTICIPANTS



CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS



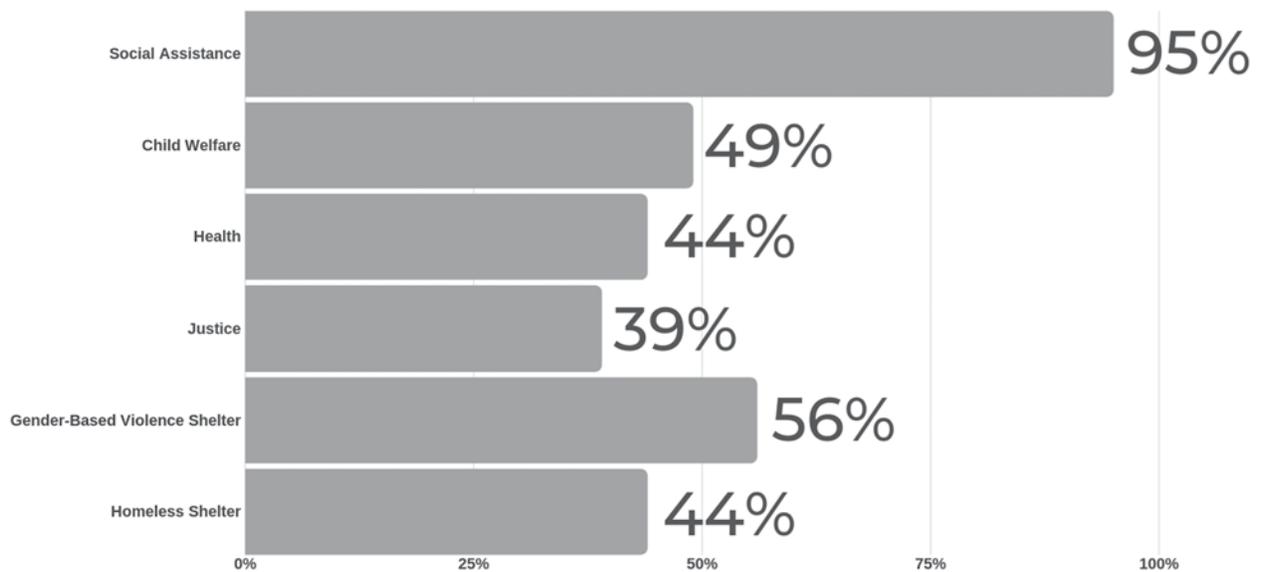
GENDER IDENTITY OF PARTICIPANTS



HOUSING STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS



PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT IN SYSTEMS



social media to connect with individuals who may not be connected to community organizations. We recognized that a lack of emotional safety in group spaces would be a significant barrier to participation. We asked community organizations with reputations of being safe places for key demographics to host focus groups so that we could have as safe an environment as possible. In general, people who have experienced homelessness held leadership roles in the facilitation of the focus groups, which also helped participants to feel safe in sharing their stories.

In addition to the focus groups, we also consulted with two property managers and 22 representatives from several provincial government departments and initiatives, including Housing, Health, Justice, Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), CFS, Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat, Family Violence Prevention Program, Correctional Services of Canada, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and Healthy Child Manitoba. We also consulted with 21 people from community-based organizations across the city, including gender-based violence shelters, homeless shelters, 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, Indigenous organizations, justice organizations, and mental health, community health, and addictions service providers.

Finally, we sent out an electronic survey to be completed by people working in community-based organizations who work with women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people affected by homelessness or housing insecurity and received 58 responses.

The information gathered through the literature review, focus groups, consultations, and surveys were reviewed, compiled, synthesized, and categorized to inform this report and its recommendations for action.

A DECOLONIZING AND ANTI-OPPRESSIVE APPROACH

We acknowledge that our work is situated within the historical and institutional discrimination and oppression of some groups of people based on identity factors such as gender identity, race, culture, sexual orientation, citizenship, and ability. Oppression works by creating and perpetuating beliefs and

rules in society that privilege certain groups and individuals and disadvantage others. Anti-oppression attempts to identify and mitigate the effects of oppression in our society, seeking to equalize the power imbalance in our communities.³⁹ A meaningful, society-wide commitment to this work is needed to end homelessness for all.

One of the major systems of oppression framing the reality of homelessness in Winnipeg is historical and ongoing colonialism, which is the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.⁴⁰ Based on the presumption that European values and beliefs were universal and could be imposed on a people,⁴¹ for over 500 years settlers colonized what is now known as Canada through assimilation, dislocation, oppression, and often extermination of Indigenous Peoples and their culture.⁴² The Indian Act is an example of ongoing colonial structures in Canadian government.

It was critical for us to apply a decolonization lens throughout our work together. Decolonization is “a process of acknowledging the history of colonialism; working to undo the ongoing effects of colonialism; striving to unlearn habits, attitudes, and behaviours that continue to perpetuate colonialism; and challenging and transforming institutional manifestations of colonialism.”⁴³ We recognize that it is nearly impossible for us to fully decolonize our work, given that we live within a structure of ongoing colonialism. This is our attempt to further the decolonization movement within Winnipeg’s specific context of — and need for — reconciliation.

In our work, this meant true sharing of influence and power. The voices of people who have experienced homelessness are often not valued. Through our focus groups and First Voice Advisory Committee, people who have experienced homelessness had power over the direction and content of the plan. We listened to what those with lived experience had to say, in whatever way they chose to say it, and honoured what they said by working to capture it in this report.

We also valued the time of those with lived experience by being up front about the commitment and compensation, offering an honorarium, providing

transportation to meetings, and providing supports when needed. We understood that First Voice leaders would be likely to experience challenges or unforeseen emergencies because they and their families are still living with the traumatic effects of colonialism.

We worked to remove barriers to participation wherever and however possible. This meant building relationships and getting to know one another. It meant ensuring our timeline, communication tools, and meeting agendas were created and distributed in accessible ways. It also meant creating safety before and during meetings. Working as a First Voice leader is spiritual and emotional work because people are talking about their life and the lives of their loved ones.

All of us working to end homelessness must continually learn how to decolonize our processes and systems. We will continue to apply a decolonization and anti-oppression lens as we move forward in the implementation of our recommendations.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

It's important to note that despite our best efforts to use an IGBA, some experiences will continue to be invisible and we must continuously work to be inclusive of and responsive to marginalized identities and experiences. Our literature review and consultations with our Steering and First Voice Advisory committees helped us identify some of the key identities of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness. While our focus groups included most of the demographics we had identified, we did not reach as many as we would have liked. As far as we know, we did not speak with many newcomers, people with physical or cognitive disabilities, or people currently incarcerated, and it appears that the 2SLGBTQ+ representation was limited.

We reached out to these demographics through community organizations and email networks and social media. However, people experiencing homelessness do not always access community organizations or the internet, which would have limited our ability to reach some of the key demographics we identified. Participation in focus groups may have been limited by barriers we were unable to remove,

despite our best efforts. For example, some potential participants wanted to come to focus groups but didn't have the means of transportation, even though we would have reimbursed their bus fare. Other individuals expressed a preference for one-to-one interviews due to the triggering nature of the focus group experience, which we were unable to accommodate because of limited staff and time resources. Through feedback and ongoing work on this strategy, we will continue to learn more about how to reduce barriers to participation in research.

While we attempted to engage more trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness in our work, most of the people involved were cis-women.⁴⁴ We consulted with community organizations that serve these demographics to learn about the best way to reach them and consult with them. We also made an effort to hold focus groups at locations where trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people access services and could be supported by staff who have positive relationships with them. Some of the trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people we spoke with during our outreach chose not to participate because they felt discouraged about research in general and did not expect the project to result in positive outcomes. Also, some felt they needed more compensation than we were able to provide in order to feel more valued and to make up for the challenging experience of sharing their stories with us. Some individuals who did not identify as women were unclear how their experiences would benefit a strategy spearheaded by a women's organization.

We intended to include the voices of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who also identify as newcomers. The newcomer-serving organizations we reached did not find any newcomers who felt comfortable sharing perspectives that would be seen as critical of government. This discomfort is not necessarily shared by all newcomer people. Since the scope of our research did not allow us to do a comprehensive review of the literature on newcomer experiences of homelessness, we attempted to close this gap by having people who could represent the newcomer perspective on our Steering Committee.

WHILE WINNIPEG'S
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
SHELTERS REFER TO
THEMSELVES AS FAMILY-
VIOLENCE SHELTERS UNDER
THE EXISTING PROVINCIAL
MANDATE TO WORK WITH
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING FAMILY
VIOLENCE, OUR REPORT
REFERS TO THESE SHELTERS
AS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
SHELTERS TO REFLECT A
DESIRED EXPANDED MANDATE
THAT INCLUDES WORKING WITH
ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCING
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

Further work is needed to learn about and respond to the unique experiences of newcomers.

We also intended to include people in Manitoba's Women's Correctional Centre, but we were not granted permission to conduct a focus group in the facility without having correctional staff present, which conflicted with our approved research ethics guidelines. Involvement in the justice system was identified as a key pathway into homelessness and we wanted to better understand the experiences of people involved in the justice system. While over 44 percent of lived-experience focus group participants self-identified as having experience in the justice system, the voices of presently incarcerated individuals are important to better understand the impact of incarceration on housing stability and the type of supports that are needed while incarcerated to prevent homelessness upon release. Further work is needed to incorporate presently incarcerated experiences into efforts to end homelessness.

We would have liked to consult with more women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with physical and cognitive disabilities. We worked to ensure our meetings took place in accessible spaces and at flexible times. We also provided extra transportation funds to accommodate mobility needs. However, our outreach tools may have created barriers to participation for people with cognitive disabilities. People with physical and cognitive disabilities may have faced additional barriers that we did not have the means to mitigate, including lack of accessible transportation options and inflexible medical appointments that conflicted with our meeting times.

While we consulted with Indigenous Peoples and organizations and our work has been guided and approved by a First Voice Advisory Committee consisting of primarily Indigenous voices, it is important to note that only one of our project staff is Indigenous and has lived experience of homelessness. The project researchers, managers, and writers are non-Indigenous and do not have lived experience of homelessness. This means that the gathering and interpretation of the data, what was chosen for analysis, the analysis itself, and the writing came from a

predominantly white, privileged viewpoint that could lead to a colonial bias. This is significant because Indigenous Peoples are most impacted by homelessness and a colonial approach has been a primary cause of homelessness. Due to the complex lives of those on our First Voice Advisory Committee, it was a challenge to remove all barriers that would enable their participation at every meeting. Given these challenges, we are especially grateful to our Indigenous staff and agency partners who brought their perspectives and helped us decolonize our thought processes while compiling this report.

We collected limited data on the identities of our focus group participants. Through consultation with the First Voice Advisory Committee and the Research Sub-Committee, we made a decision to not be too invasive with the demographics form that people voluntarily filled out in our focus groups. Marginalized people often feel over-scrutinized, researched using unethical practices, and fed up with filling out forms from system involvement.⁴⁵ We did not want to risk alienating people from the start with an exhaustive list of identities to check off. We focused on gathering basic information on age, cultural background, and pronouns, as well as on some social services that people may have been involved with. We had hoped this would help create safety in the focus group, and that other identities would come out voluntarily through group discussion. This created an unintended outcome of not having concrete data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the demographics of our focus group participants. In future work we would consult with people who have experienced homelessness as well as other researchers to guide us in how to best develop and use demographics forms.

We faced significant barriers to collecting local statistics that would help us better understand gender-based experiences in systems such as EIA, CFS, Justice, Health, and Housing. While we had difficulty reaching some people who may have had access to this information, other departments would have been willing to share data but simply had not tracked anything related to gender-based homelessness. There was a consensus among community-based organizations that information specific to gender-based experiences is not being collected, especially around trans,

“ [Y]OU KNOW THAT’S WHY OUR WOMEN AREN’T GETTING BETTER AND AREN’T ADVANCING IS BECAUSE WE’RE NOT USING OUR GIFTS AND OUR STRENGTHS AND OUR TEACHING THAT WE WERE ACTUALLY INHERITED FROM OUR ANCESTORS... IT’S ALL COLONIAL, IN A COLONIAL SETTING.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. There is a need for better data collection on women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people to get a more accurate picture of gender-based experiences in systems that are associated with pathways into homelessness. We also had difficulty locating research on women with disabilities experiencing homelessness.⁴⁶

Partway through the research phase of this strategy, unexpected circumstances forced our project

manager to take an extended leave of absence. We were able to put together a team to take over the remaining research and report writing in her absence, but this upheaval created a gap in knowledge transfer that significantly impacted our process. As a result, each of the writers of this report held only partial knowledge of all the information gathered. We have worked hard to mitigate this limitation by communicating closely during the writing of this report and referencing our consultation transcripts constantly.

AMANDA'S STORY: A CASE STUDY

"All I wanna say is, don't give up ... share your stories, share your stories."

—FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

It is easy to see why an IGBA strategy is needed to end homelessness when we hear real-life experiences of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are navigating homelessness. We have drawn from common stories and identities that were shared through our research to create a fictional story illustrating this need. In real life, each individual situation is full of more specific details that further shape the impact that systemic policies and practices have on the person at the centre of the experience. However, policies are often implemented to screen for eligibility rather than to create choice or facilitate solutions in people's lives. Focus group participants with lived experience of homelessness wanted their stories to be heard and understood as a whole, based on what means the most to them. Allow yourself to hear and see Amanda in the following example, listening for what is important to her.

Amanda is a young trans Indigenous mother of two children, one boy and one girl who has a physical disability. Due to repeated incidents of domestic violence from her partner, both of her children are in the care of CFS. As a result of the apprehension, Amanda lost her child-related EIA and Canada Child Benefit income support, which helped to pay for her housing. She also struggles with the deep trauma of losing her children. When she called gender-based violence shelters to get away from her abuser, she was turned away because the intake workers believed her to be a man over the phone. She has been evicted for non-payment of rent and is staying with friends.

Amanda has met all requirements CFS has imposed upon her in order to be reunited with her children but is unable to secure safe housing large enough to accommodate her family. This is because the EIA she receives as a single individual does not provide enough funds for her to afford a multi-bedroom apartment. While she has a reunification date from CFS, EIA has not yet increased her shelter benefits to the family rate. Even if they do, it will still be very

difficult to find an affordable apartment in the private market without the re-instated Canada Child Benefit. The waitlist for Manitoba Housing is around two years.

Amanda feels hopeless and just wants to give up. Her dreams of a good life and going back to school are lost. Her current situation, along with her history with domestic violence, is negatively impacting her mental health and she does not have the resources to access long-term supports.

POLICY VS. PRACTICE

Amanda's story is based on real-life experiences of homelessness. Some of the challenges she has faced were rooted in policies that have changed in recent years. For example, there has been a shift in policy within the General Child and Family Services Authority and Child and Family All Nations Coordinated Response Network (ANCR) to "Safe and Together," a new approach that aims to keep children with domestic violence survivors.⁴⁷ Our consultations with front-line community organizations and people who have experienced homelessness revealed that, despite the policy change, caregivers still have their children apprehended based on exposure to domestic violence being considered neglect. Further, while gender-based violence shelters have in the past had a narrow definition of women, it is now their policy to accept all women, including trans women. However, we heard from community partners that trans and Two-Spirit women continue to be turned away over the phone because of the sound of their voice.

These are just a few examples of many where we identified discrepancies between what government and/or community organizations say is policy and what people experiencing homelessness say happens in practice. We tried to acknowledge these divides throughout this report. While policy change is important, more critical is the need to ensure policies are consistently and fairly implemented in practice, along with accessible and supported grievance procedures, and not left to the discretion of individual staff.

Figure 1

AMANDA'S STORY: CURRENT REALITY

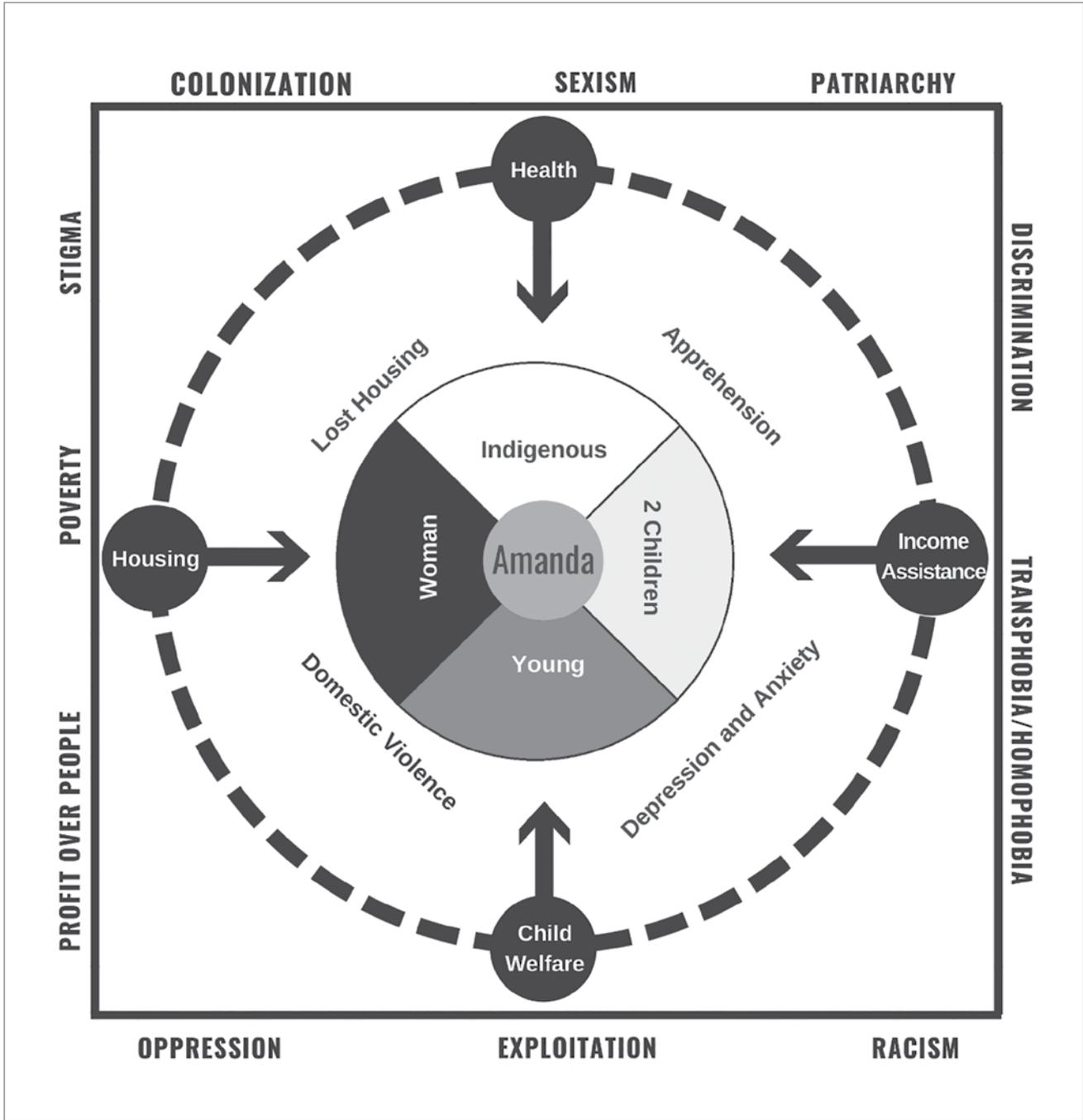
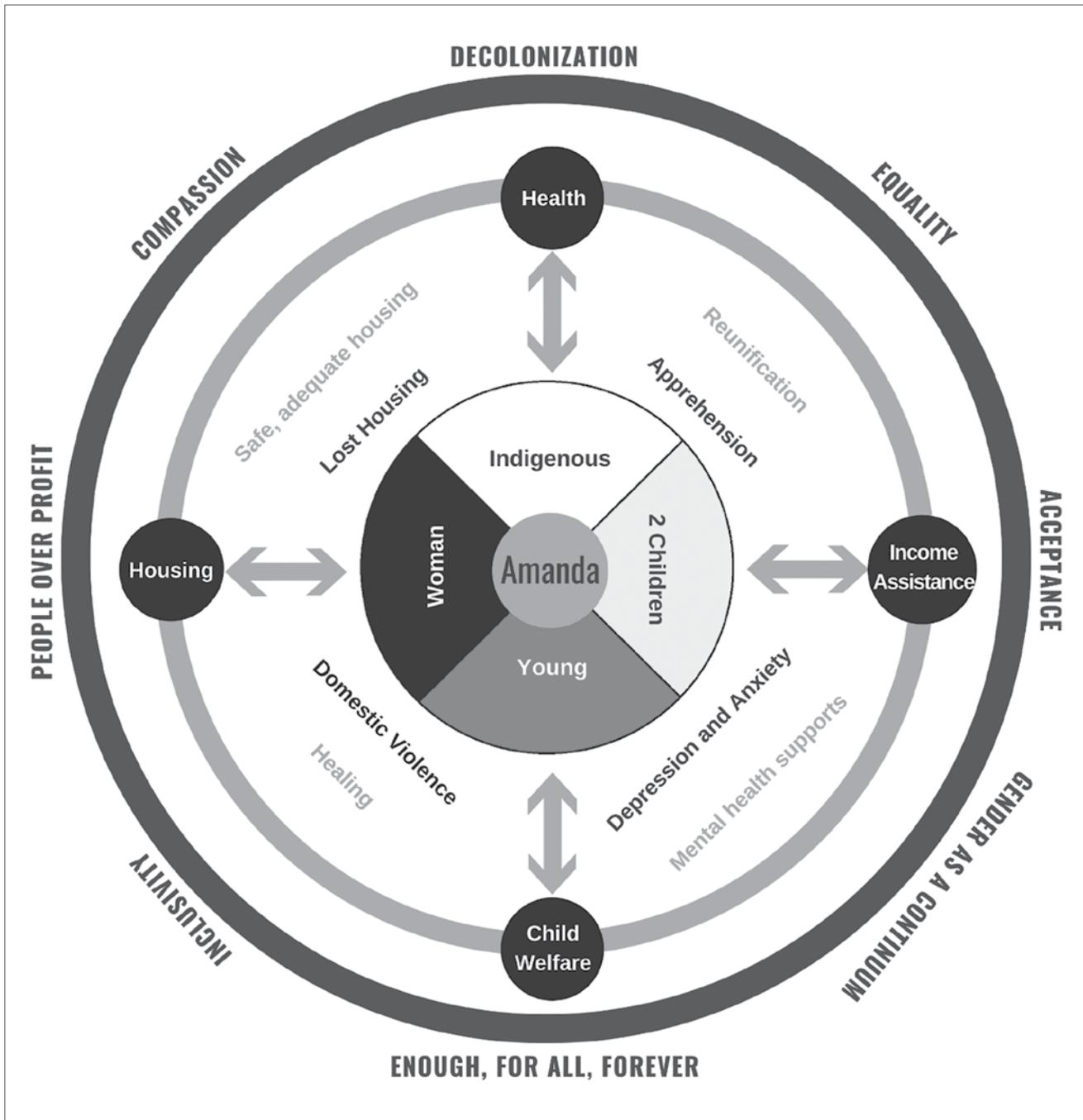


Figure 2
 AMANDA'S STORY: A MORE EFFECTIVE PATH



The Medicine Wheel in Figure 1 represents Amanda's identity, which includes being a young, Indigenous trans woman with two children. Here we use an Anishinaabeg understanding of the pan-Indigenous Medicine Wheel teachings. Each colour represents a direction, an element of existence, and a stage of life:⁴⁸

- Yellow in the East represents physical health and infancy;
- Red in the South represents mental health and youth;
- Black in the West represents emotional health and adults;
- White in the North represents spiritual health and the elderly.

Physical health involves meeting your most basic needs and is essential for connecting with others. *Mental health* involves feeling safe and requires having your spiritual and physical needs met. Positive mental health allows *emotional health* to thrive. *Spiritual health* involves having the freedom to express your culture and the right to nurture your spiritual needs in a safe way. In order to be healthy, one must simultaneously care for each element of existence at all stages of life from being an infant to being an Elder. While this example uses an Anishinaabeg concept, this holistic and balanced approach is important for the well-being of all people.

Amanda's key experiences are identified just outside of the Medicine Wheel: domestic violence; apprehension; lost housing; and depression and anxiety. The government systems that Amanda interacts with as a result of these experiences are represented in the black circles. The arrows point only one way to demonstrate that systems are often not people centred or designed to meet individual needs. There is no reciprocity. The perforated line between government systems represents inadequate collaboration between systems and the gaps that Amanda falls through as a result. These gaps create and perpetuate pathways into homelessness.

The surrounding square represents the historical and social context within which Amanda's experiences happen. The influences listed around the square are the systems of oppression that separate us and keep

us from working collectively. Each of them describes a specific system of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that perpetuate inequality. This inequality is so embedded in our collective ways of thinking that we may not even recognize it. The policies and practices of the government systems around the perforated circle have been created and shaped in the context of the beliefs around the square, which is why they so often fail to address the realities of people experiencing these oppressions. Amanda's experience is shaped by multiple oppressions; each one widens her pathway to homelessness and renders her experiences more and more invisible.

Figure 2 depicts a shift in society's foundational beliefs. It also shows an ideal of the government systems working together (shown with a seamless blue line) to ensure Amanda doesn't fall through the gaps. The arrows point both ways to demonstrate reciprocity and people-centred services. This approach better facilitates appropriate responses to Amanda's experiences, which are included in blue text: mental health supports; reunification; healing; and safe, adequate housing.

PATHWAYS TO HOMELESSNESS FOR WOMEN, TRANS, TWO-SPIRIT AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE

Diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people in Winnipeg have unique experiences based on their gender, including gender-based oppression, that can lead to homelessness, perpetuate homelessness, and prevent exits from homelessness. Our literature review, our focus groups with people who have experienced homelessness, and our consultations with representatives from government and community organizations helped us to identify these unique experiences, or pathways. Each pathway provides an example of gender-based oppression.

Many of the pathways to homelessness we identified in our work were consistent with those identified in End Homelessness Winnipeg's plan to end homelessness and our local plan to end youth homelessness. Our research allowed us to identify ways in which those paths look different for diverse women,

trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. These differences are due to overarching experiences of gender-based oppression, where gender norms shape our social systems to privilege a male reality, creating disadvantages for other genders.⁴⁹ Each of the following pathways are concrete examples of gender-based oppression at play in our context. Our consultations pointed to a lack of programs and services for people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg that were created using an IGBA, which means programs and services used to end homelessness have difficulty recognizing or addressing intersectional gender-based oppression experienced by women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. With this understanding, we made recommendations so that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people aren't forced into pathways to homelessness and can avoid or escape homelessness once on those pathways.

PATHWAYS

- General lack of trauma-informed services (see recommendations 1.1 and 1.2)
 - Isolation from supportive relationships and lack of responsive social networks (see Program/Policy Design and Delivery section)
 - Gender-based violence (see Gender-Based Violence section)
 - Lack of safe spaces, especially for people fleeing family conflict (see 1.9 and Shelter System section)
 - Lack of safe, affordable housing for individuals and families (see Social and Affordable Housing in Complete Communities section)
 - Over-representation in low income (see Income Security section)
- Lack of gender-responsive⁵⁰ addictions services (see Addictions section)
 - Lack of gender-responsive justice system services (see Justice section)
 - Child and Family Services involvement (see Child Welfare section)
 - High rates of trauma and lack of mental health services (see Continuum of Health section)

A NOTE ON PREVENTION

The scope of our work did not allow us to develop comprehensive recommendations for preventing women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people from being exposed to pathways to homelessness. However, it is critical to note that ending homelessness will not be possible if we don't address the root causes of homelessness and limit exposure to the pathways that we have identified. This requires comprehensive action to prevent women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people from experiencing gender-based violence, poverty, trauma, child apprehension, addictions, and incarceration. For example, the most effective way of ensuring that caregivers don't become homeless as a result of CFS involvement is by preventing child apprehensions from occurring in the first place through comprehensive actions that support caregivers and their families to stay together.

THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are divided into themes that capture the key pathways into and out of homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people that were identified in our research. They are designed to help ensure that experiences in these areas no longer perpetuate or create pathways to homelessness. They are rooted in what we learned through our review of the literature on homelessness, as well as in what we heard from representatives of government and community organizations and most importantly women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have experienced housing insecurity and homelessness. We applied an IGBA to our recommendations with a focus on gender, Indigeneity, and ability.

Although involvement in the pathways is presented separately in this report, we have tried to reflect the fact that poverty, gender-based violence, addictions, mental health issues, involvement in child welfare or the justice system, and barriers to housing are not usually experienced neatly or separately but rather simultaneously. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people involved with multiple systems run by government and community organizations can fall through the cracks when those organizations fail to collaborate and coordinate.⁵¹ These gaps can lead to homelessness and trap people in homelessness. As demonstrated in Amanda's story, collaboration to share information and advocate for a person results in better outcomes. Throughout our consultations we heard many positive stories about people-centred partnerships. For example, CFS and Manitoba Housing work together to help caregivers of children access larger units of housing when a reunification plan is in place; EIA has workers designated as liaisons with many community-based organizations; and the three homeless shelters in Winnipeg meet together bi-weekly to ensure services are coordinated. The implementation of many of the recommendations below would result in greater collaboration and coordination between some of the key players who can close gaps and address the pathways to homelessness we have identified for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.

1. PROGRAM/POLICY DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who experience housing insecurity and homelessness are more likely to be left behind when government and community organizations fail to intentionally design and deliver their services in a way that meets their unique needs. Some of the more common government systems that interact with people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness include: EIA, Manitoba Housing, Residential Tenancies Branch, Police Services, CFS, Mental Health and Addictions, and Justice. Common community resources include food banks, homeless shelters, gender-based violence shelters and supports, and various resource centres.

Organizations can prevent women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people from falling through the cracks by using an IGBA. This analytical tool can be used to consider how people's experiences are shaped by multiple identity factors (including gender, sex, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, age, ability, and parental status).⁵² It can help organizations consider how diverse groups of men, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people will be impacted by the design and delivery of their services. This can also be determined by meaningfully engaging women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness in service design and delivery. The goal is to help organizations provide services that meet the unique and comprehensive needs of each person that walks through the door.

1.1. Government and community organizations must:

- 1.1.1. Use an intersectional gender-based analysis in the design, delivery, and evaluation of all initiatives (such as policies, legislation, and programs) that relate to housing insecurity and homelessness;

WE ALIGN WITH END HOMELESSNESS WINNIPEG IN RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTING DATA ABOUT HOMELESSNESS THROUGH A COORDINATED SYSTEM TO HELP EVALUATE AND PLAN FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY, AND TO MEASURE PROGRESS. WE ENCOURAGE ALL ORGANIZATIONS WHO DELIVER SERVICES TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS TO BE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS COORDINATED DATA SYSTEM. WE ALSO CALL FOR SUPPORTS TO THESE ORGANIZATIONS IN RECOGNITION OF THE TIME AND RESOURCES REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE.

WE ALSO SUPPORT END HOMELESSNESS WINNIPEG'S PROPOSAL FOR ONGOING RESEARCH TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF WINNIPEG'S HOMELESS POPULATION. WE FOUND VERY LITTLE DATA ON TRANS PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WHO DO NOT IDENTIFY WITH THE GENDER BINARY. WE HEARD STRONG CALLS FOR MORE INCLUSIVE DATA COLLECTION METHODS THAT TELL US ABOUT THE UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES OF TRANS, TWO-SPIRIT, AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS SO WE CAN DEVELOP RESPONSES THAT BETTER MEET THEIR NEEDS.

- 1.1.2. Meaningfully engage diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness in the design and delivery of those initiatives.

It is important to build the capacity for all organizations to use an IGBA. It is not just a tool for organizations that primarily serve women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. Government and community organizations can build their capacity to use an IGBA through training. This can include training that facilitates the use of practices like trauma-informed care, harm reduction, empowerment, and anti-oppression (that is, dismantling individual and organizational oppression and exclusion based on people's identities including gender, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, age, and ability).

Government and community organizations can also build their capacity to use an IGBA by building a more diverse staff team when it comes to gender, sex, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, age, ability, and parental status. A diverse staff with diverse experiences can help put an organization in a better position to consider and meet the unique needs of diverse women, trans, Two-spirit, and gender non-conforming people when designing and delivering services. Many of the people we spoke with who have experienced housing insecurity and homelessness said service delivery is enhanced when staff are representative of the populations being served. Participants feel like service providers are less likely to be judgmental and more likely to understand what they are going through when they have had common experiences. This can open up doors to services that would otherwise not be accessed by women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, and help to build trust and stronger working relationships between service providers and participants.

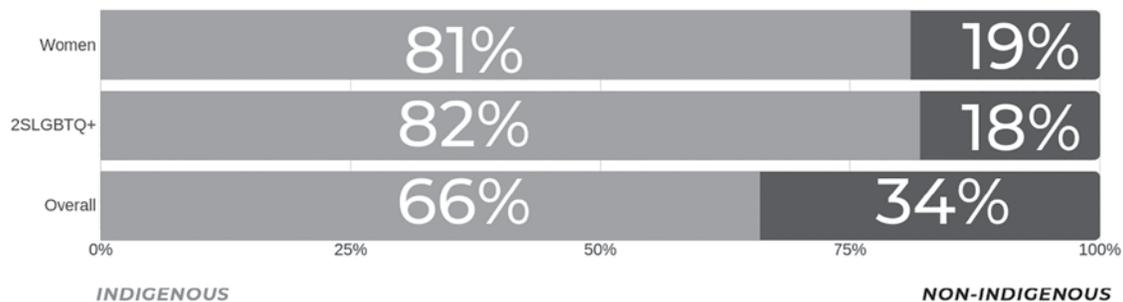
1.2. Government and community organizations must develop front-line capacity to use an IGBA by:

- 1.2.1 Providing mandatory training for staff in community and government organizations that serve diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity;
- 1.2.2 Enhancing human resource policies and building capacity in government and community organizations that serve people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness so they can recruit and hire more diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, including people who have experienced housing insecurity and homelessness.

Most women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness in Winnipeg also identify as Indigenous: of the people experiencing homelessness in the *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*, 81 percent of the 474 women surveyed and 82 percent of the 103 2SLGBTQ+ people surveyed were Indigenous.⁵³ This puts them at greater risk of experiencing additional forms of discrimination and oppression, such as racism, which deepens their exclusion.

Staff working in government and community organizations can better serve Indigenous Peoples by learning more about how Indigenous women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are uniquely impacted by past and present colonialism and oppression. Staff should be trained on how to effectively work with people who are experiencing impacts such as involvement with CFS, intergenerational trauma, and ongoing violence that results in the staggering number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG). Non-Indigenous staff in particular should also learn about and understand their role in truth and reconciliation and in implementing the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*,⁵⁴ and then strive to work with Indigenous Peoples through a decolonizing and anti-oppressive approach.

INDIGENITY OF 2018 WINNIPEG STREET CENSUS RESPONDENTS



1.3. All community and government organizations that support diverse Indigenous women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness must:

- 1.3.1 Learn about and understand truth and reconciliation as well as the impacts of colonialism and oppression;
- 1.3.2 Develop, deliver, and evaluate services for Indigenous women, trans, Two-Spirit, gender non-conforming people through a decolonizing and anti-oppressive approach.

The policies and practices of government and community organizations sometimes act as barriers that prevent women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people from accessing the services they need to address housing insecurity and homelessness. For example, most services are only available during the day, which creates a barrier for caregivers of children who may need to access services in the evenings when people in their life are more available to care for their young children.

Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people often report not feeling welcome in spaces that are perceived to separate services based on a gender binary. This perception can come from language used in public communications (such as staff interactions, websites, brochures, and signage) that refers only to women and/or men. When other gender identities

are not explicitly included in public communications, they risk being perceived as excluded, and they may not access services as a result.⁵⁵

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are victims of gender-based violence may not feel safe being out in the community or accessing services of any kind. High rates of violence and trauma among these demographics suggest a need for more trauma-informed services, such as gender-specific spaces, to help provide safe options to women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are looking to access services. A trauma-informed approach is rooted in the three principles of safety and trust, choice and voice, and strengths and resilience.⁵⁶ This requires that community supports, government or systems workers stay open and accepting, paying attention to how the story makes sense in the context of the person's life history. The helper must let people choose what happens to them, or choose their own pacing for how to move forward. They must also validate them and be curious about acknowledging the strengths inherent in the person's story.⁵⁷

Another example is found in eligibility criteria that prevent access to services, such as the eligibility criteria for Housing First⁵⁸ programs across Canada that are funded through the federal government's major initiative to prevent and reduce homelessness. These programs do not always screen in women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people

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US THAT ARE DAMAGED
AND BROKEN.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

because program eligibility rules, which are mandated by the federal government, do not explicitly include their experiences of hidden homelessness.

Eliminating service barriers requires policies and practices to be designed using a person-centred approach — where services are designed to meet the needs of the people who are using them, rather than starting with an exclusionary approach that may push a person to fit into narrow criteria. This might be reflected in whether childminding is offered, how service hours are set, or how eligibility criteria are developed (such as using an inclusive definition of women). It might be reflected in steps to enhance the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and the 2SLGBTQ+ community. It might also be reflected in conducting accessibility audits to provide services that are accessible for people with disabilities, including those who are Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing, while promoting the accessibility of the space and services in multiple places (such as at the front door, on the website, on promotional material). Accessibility audits need to be designed and delivered with attention paid to unique barriers that exist for people with invisible disabilities, supporting service providers to avoid making assumptions about someone's accessibility needs through a visual assessment alone.

1.4. Eliminate barriers rooted in service design and delivery (such as hours of operation, eligibility criteria, accessibility, and availability of childcare) that prevent diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people from accessing the supports they need to gain stable housing.

1.5. Ensure eligibility criteria for homelessness services include hidden homelessness and Indigenous homelessness.

Some women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity require more intensive supports and flexible service delivery. This can include sexually exploited women, people with co-occurring mental health issues and addiction, and trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. For example, EIA has piloted an online application system. It would be useful to evaluate if this makes it easier for margin-

alized people who can't easily attend scheduled appointments to access income support.

Government service providers can also reduce service barriers by creating positions that offer flexible service delivery to people who are falling through the cracks. For example, EIA has a worker whose job includes working with women, including trans women, who are affiliated with Sage House and New Direction's Transition, Education and Resources for Females (TERF) program — organizations that work with people who are or have been exploited through the sex trade. The worker assists them to access and resolve issues around EIA's income and shelter benefits, policies, and additional resources. Those who are involved with Sage House can receive a one-on-one intake session with this worker, alleviating wait times for the standard group pre-intake orientation. They can also access the worker's services on a drop-in basis when needed, rather than requiring an appointment. This worker attends Sage House regularly as well, for those who are not comfortable going to the office location.

1.6. Provide targeted outreach and delivery of government services (such as EIA, housing, and CFS) to marginalized women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness in community-based organizations where they are already accessing services.

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people migrating to Winnipeg require gender-responsive settlement services. This includes people coming from other countries, Indigenous communities, and other rural communities. Indigenous Peoples migrating from reserve communities to an urban setting must navigate complex federal and provincial jurisdictional funding issues. Our consultations with people who have experienced homelessness referred to not knowing where to access resources, safe spaces, and housing options when they moved to Winnipeg. Gender-responsive settlement services are essential to provide nuanced information and referrals specifically for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. Settlement services should be able to connect people

to appropriate resources, including those related to sexual health, pre- and post-natal care, childcare and parenting supports, safety, cultural practices, trauma counselling, mental health and addictions, and opportunities for building social connections. While all those migrating to urban centres require supports, it is crucial to build capacity within settlement services to meet the unique needs of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.

1.7. Expand the ability of government and community-based organizations, with priority to organizations led by and serving newcomer, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ people, to offer transition services to diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people migrating to Winnipeg so they can better connect people experiencing homelessness to the resources that meet their unique needs.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

Winnipeg has a rich network of community organizations that offer low-barrier services⁵⁹ to support people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. In our consultations, most organizations spoke of wanting greater ability to meet the needs of the people who access their services. This included the ability to better compensate front-line staff with a goal to minimize turnover and strengthen organizational capacity.

Many government representatives also spoke to the need for strong community-based services because of the expertise they hold and because they may be easier for people to trust. People experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness often seek out services in nearby community-based organizations where they feel less intimidated and have established trusting relationships with staff. We must work together across sectors to build a well-rounded spectrum of low-barrier, housing-related services and options for wrap-around supports that are created and delivered with an IGBA. Intensive models such as Housing First programs need to be easily accessible to those who need it most, with transitional and perma-

nent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and eviction prevention supports completing the spectrum.

Organizations that use an IGBA can be more accessible to women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people because they intentionally design services to maximize their safety and meet their unique needs. These services are built on values such as anti-oppression, harm reduction, trauma-informed care, peer mentorship, and empowerment. They also must have a foundational trust that each person is an expert in their own life and deserves to make their own choices. The ultimate goal is for all organizations to build their capacity to use an IGBA in order to enhance the choice of services throughout the city. Until then, it is important to support organizations who are actively using this tool. This includes providing resources for outreach and promotion in the community to ensure women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are aware of the services that are available to them.

Many community-based organizations have developed capacity and expertise to support women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people to access housing with wrap-around supports. This includes assisting with navigating the complex government and housing systems people are involved with while using a strengths-based approach to help build the skills and knowledge people need to advocate for themselves. However, these services are in short supply, leaving many individuals underserved. Community organizations should be supported to build their capacity to do this work while government systems simultaneously take steps to become easier to navigate.

Community-based organizations that specifically serve the 2SLGBTQ+ community are not funded to offer housing-related services. As a result, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people in Winnipeg often use robust informal networks and groups, such as private Facebook groups, to access peer-to-peer housing-related supports. These informal networks also reduce isolation and the safety and privacy concerns that trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people have when accessing services at community-based organizations. Organizations who

offer targeted supports to trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people should be aided in their efforts to provide housing supports for those who wish to access services from community-based organizations. They should also be bolstered to enhance the reach and visibility of informal peer-to-peer support networks to trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. People migrating to the city from rural areas or those not connected to these networks, for example, may face additional challenges navigating services and finding housing.

Given that a majority of those experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg are Indigenous, it is critical to ensure that Indigenous-led, community-based organizations providing low-barrier housing and homelessness supports receive resources to meet the demand for services offered through an Indigenous philosophy and worldview. This should include services for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming Indigenous Peoples delivered in partnership with 2SLGBTQ+ organizations. This is also consistent with Article 23 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which acknowledges Indigenous Peoples' right to administer housing programs that affect them through their own institutions.⁶⁰

1.8. Support community-based organizations that use an IGBA in the design and delivery of a full continuum of low-barrier housing-related services with wrap-around supports including Housing First programs, transitional and permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and eviction prevention supports, so they can expand and improve services and outreach efforts to better meet the needs of diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Priority should be given to organizations that are led by or serve 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous Peoples.

Offering more flexible service hours like being open in the evening will help better meet the needs of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. But this is not enough. Safe spaces that are inclusive of Indigenous Peoples, the 2SLGBTQ+ commu-

nity, and people with disabilities should be available for those who need them at any given time. 2SLGBTQ+ people have a unique risk of homelessness due to family rejection rooted in transphobia and homophobia. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people do not have access to a safe space 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is a critical gap because they are less likely to access existing homeless shelters that are open overnight. They often have nowhere else to go that they consider to be safe. Those who are using shelters overnight may not have anywhere safe to go during the day.

1.9. Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness have access to a low-barrier safe space 24 hours a day. Support those spaces to use an intersectional gender-based analysis in the design and delivery of services that meet basic needs and connect to resources that address homelessness.

2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence refers to violence directed at a person because of their gender, or violence that disproportionately affects a gender group.⁶¹ Across Canada, women are at a 20 percent higher risk of violent victimization than men, and Manitoba has the second highest rate of gender-based violence among the provinces.⁶² Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are more likely to experience violence because of misogynist, transphobic, and homophobic beliefs that result in their bodies being devalued, sexualized, commodified, and exploited.⁶³ Gender-based violence is also rooted in patriarchal and colonial power imbalances that result in gender inequality, systemic oppression and marginalization of identities, and culture-related gender norms where men are socialized based on harmful ideas of masculinity founded in control and violence.⁶⁴ While men can experience gender-based violence, it is almost exclusively committed by men against people of a different gender.⁶⁵ For example, 80 percent of intimate partner violence is perpetrated by men against women.⁶⁶

While gender-based violence can be perpetrated by anyone, including relatives, friends, strangers, care-

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— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“AS A TRANS INDIGENOUS
WOMAN... WE’RE LOOKED
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FETISH AND A SEXUAL
FANTASY.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

givers of people with disabilities, and exploiters like pimps and traffickers,⁶⁷ one of the most common perpetrators is intimate partners.⁶⁸ Manitoba has the second highest rate of intimate-partner violence across the provinces.⁶⁹ Trans women are twice as likely as cis-gender⁷⁰ women to experience intimate partner violence, a risk that increases if they are also people of colour, Indigenous, and/or youth.⁷¹ Immigrant and refugee women are also overrepresented among victims of intimate partner violence.⁷² It is widely recognized by social service providers that intimate partner violence is among the most common pathways into homelessness for women and girls, especially those with children.⁷³ The risk of homelessness due to violence increases for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are also living in poverty, Indigenous, living with a disability, and/or living in rural and remote areas.⁷⁴ While intimate partner violence is a common pathway into homelessness, women with adverse childhood experiences related to physical and sexual abuse are also at greater risk of experiencing homelessness.⁷⁵

Risk of violence increases for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with other marginalized identities such as Indigeneity, racialization, living in poverty, living with a disability, and non-heterosexual sexual orientation.⁷⁶ For example, Indigenous women in Canada are killed at six times the rate of non-Indigenous women.⁷⁷ Manitoba has among the highest rates of documented MMIWG in Canada.⁷⁸ Racialized women are often less likely than white women to report violence to law authorities due to lack of trust from actual and perceived experiences of racialized policing.⁷⁹ Immigrant and refugee women face additional barriers to addressing violence due to language barriers, limited access to supports based on their citizenship status, and fear of deportation.⁸⁰

Other risk factors for violence against women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people include involvement with the sex trade, trafficking, and the CFS system. Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are at increased risk of being forced into sex work to survive due to discrimination by mainstream employers.⁸¹ Indigenous girls in care are at risk of being exploited, trafficked, and possibly murdered,⁸² and girls who run away from care facilities

or foster homes are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.⁸³ Furthermore, most women at gender-based violence shelters were in care as children.⁸⁴

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who experience violence may, along with their children if applicable, need to access an emergency shelter with gender-based violence supports. It is important that this be in a location where they are unable to be located by their abuser, especially considering violence from the abuser can escalate after leaving.⁸⁵ Those who are unable to access a secure gender-based violence shelter may be forced to return to their abuser or stay in another location where they feel unsafe, such as a homeless shelter. In the past, gender-based violence shelters in Winnipeg generally only accepted women escaping violence from an intimate partner. Women escaping violence from other perpetrators, including other family members, strangers, acquaintances, and friends, were generally unable to access these shelters. In 2012, the Manitoba government expanded the mandate of the Family Violence Prevention Program, which funds gender-based violence shelters, to include abuse by family members who are not intimate partners.⁸⁶ Gender-based violence shelters in Winnipeg told us that their interpretation of family is not necessarily limited to blood relatives and can include violence from anyone you are living with or who has access to your home, such as a roommate, pimp, or trafficker.⁸⁷

Our consultations revealed that many in the community were not aware of this shift in mandate and interpretation, suggesting a need for this to be better communicated both to service providers who make frequent referrals to gender-based violence shelters and to women who are seeking shelter services. We also heard of instances where the new mandate and interpretation were not being applied in practice. It's important to note that the new mandate of family violence leaves out women who experience violence while couch surfing, staying at homeless shelters, or living on the street. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people should be able to access emergency shelters with gender-based violence supports regardless of who perpetrates the violence and where it takes place. While Winnipeg's shelters refer to themselves as family-violence shel-

ters under the existing mandate, our report refers to them as gender-based violence shelters to reflect the desired expanded mandate.

2.1 Expand the mandate of the Family Violence Prevention Program to include all forms of gender-based violence so that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have experienced violence can access a securely-located and gender-specific emergency shelter that offers gender-based violence supports regardless of who perpetrated the violence or where the violence took place.

Enhancing access to gender-based violence shelters can help prevent more women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people from becoming homeless from their experience of violence. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are at a heightened risk of violence while experiencing homelessness, which can further entrench them in homelessness.⁸⁸ According to the 2011 *Winnipeg Street Health Report*, one in five women experiencing homelessness had been sexually assaulted in the previous year, and most of these women experienced multiple sexual assaults.⁸⁹ Indigenous women experiencing homelessness face an increased risk of sexual assault, disappearances, and murder.⁹⁰ The trauma from these experiences often forces them into coping strategies, such as substance use, sex work, and gang involvement, that further increase their vulnerability to violence and homelessness.⁹¹ People from the 2SLGBTQ+ community who are experiencing homelessness also face high rates of social stigma and homophobic and transphobic violence.⁹²

Local, national, and international research affirms the link between gender-based violence and homelessness.⁹³ Women leaving abusive situations often face challenges finding housing because of an increased risk of income insecurity combined with the lack of safe and affordable housing options. Other factors include being discriminated against by landlords who worry that abusers will come and cause disruptions on their property.⁹⁴ Indigenous women face increased barriers to accessing housing when leaving unsafe relationships because of the discrimination practiced by many landlords. Divorce tends to lead to

increased poverty for women, not men.⁹⁵ Women who leave their partner and raise children on their own are over five times more likely to live in poverty than if they remained with their partner.⁹⁶ Those who were dependent on their partner's income must turn to social assistance. If a woman moves to Canada after marrying a Canadian citizen and then experiences a marriage breakdown, she loses access to the supports and social connections she was connected to through her spouse. She may not speak English, and she is not eligible for EIA if this happens during her first year in the country. Those who were employed and unable to continue employment because of the impact of violence may be forced to turn to income assistance or accumulate debt and carry poor credit records.⁹⁷ Women escaping intimate partner violence might also have limited social and economic resources to assist them because their abuser restricted their relationships with friends and family, and/or prevented them from working outside the home.⁹⁸

The trauma resulting from violence can also harm a person's physical, sexual, and/or psychological well-being,⁹⁹ and lead to coping strategies like substance use, which can make it harder to navigate systems and advocate for oneself. Without adequate mental health and addictions supports, women experiencing gender-based violence are at greater risk of homelessness.

Gender-based violence shelters should provide people who have experienced violence with a safe space where they can recover and stabilize from immediate trauma, get connected to wrap-around services, and transition into safe, permanent housing. Caregivers of children should also be offered supports to meet their parenting needs. Currently, EIA will provide funding for stays in a gender-based violence shelter for up to 30 days. Upon the shelter's request, EIA can extend a stay if the individual is not in a stable condition, a safe living arrangement has not been found, or there is an outstanding safety concern.¹⁰⁰ Gender-based violence shelters have noticed that there are an increasing number of people with more complex needs who require longer stays. Requests to EIA for extensions of stay are often due to limited availability of affordable, safe housing. They are also made to accommodate more time being needed to recover from trauma and to get connected to wrap-around services that

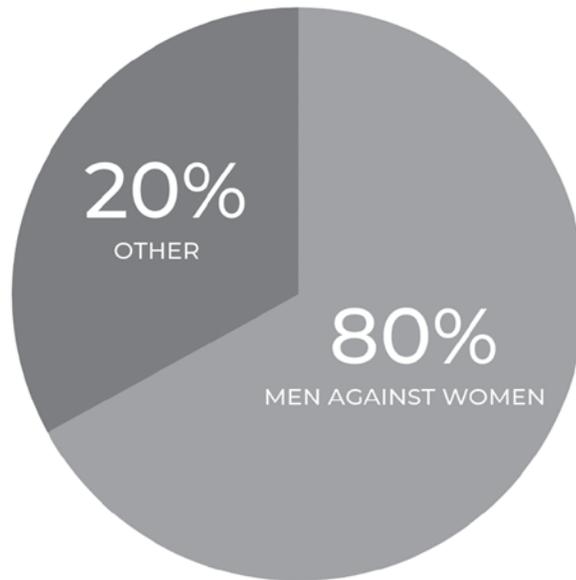
“I FELT I HAD TO STAY
WITH SOMEBODY IN
ORDER TO GET OFF THE
STREETS. I STAYED IN
A HOTEL WHERE I WAS
TAKEN ADVANTAGE
OF SEXUALLY.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“28 DAYS ISN'T
ENOUGH TIME TO DO
NEARLY ANYTHING...
ESPECIALLY IF
YOU'RE COMING
FROM A LIFETIME OF
EXPERIENCING
TRAUMA.”

— COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION INTERVIEWEE

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE PERPETRATION



can support more independent living in the community. Increasing the established shelter stay in the EIA Administrative Manual would reduce the administrative burden for shelter staff and, most importantly, reduce the risk of people exiting the shelter into homelessness. It is important to note that the manual retains the directive around considering requests for extensions of stay for those who may require more than 90 days. It is also important to note that longer stays could impact the availability of beds, which may require building capacity to ensure all those experiencing gender-based violence can access emergency shelters along with the supports they need to be safe and to transition to more stable housing.

2.2 Extend shelter stays outlined in the EIA Administrative Manual from 30 days to 90 days to better ensure housing with wrap-around supports can be secured before leaving the shelter.

Gender-based violence shelters are only part of the response for addressing the link between gender-based violence and homelessness. It also requires comprehensive and accessible mental health, addictions, and healing supports for victims. These supports should

be available to anyone who needs them, including those staying in gender-based violence shelters and later transitioning into permanent housing. There are several low-barrier, community-based organizations that offer counselling and other services to women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have experienced violence. However, most of these programs have waiting lists and/or are precariously funded.¹⁰¹ There is a need to build capacity in community-based programs to better meet the demand for services, especially for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, and people living with disabilities. All gender-based violence programs should also work to offer culturally responsive services, which includes offering resources in different languages.

Cycles of gender-based violence will never cease without the participation and healing of the abusers who perpetrate violence. Many of these men are likely to be victims of violence themselves and thus trapped in the cycle. By providing opportunities for abusers to do their own healing, the root causes of gender-based violence can be addressed.¹⁰²

2.3 Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are victims of violence have access to community-based mental health and healing services, and ensure perpetrators of violence have access to programs that aim to stop the cycle of violence.

There is a lot we don't understand about gender-based violence because it too often goes unreported to the police. While the #MeToo movement has sparked an increase in awareness and reporting of sexual assault, many gender-based violence incidents are not immediately reported, or not reported at all, especially by young women and when the offender is a family member.¹⁰³ Reasons for underreporting include shame, fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, fear of getting the perpetrator in trouble, risk of being re-traumatized through the justice process, and fear of not being believed, as well as a lack of confidence in the police or the criminal justice system, especially for Indigenous, racialized, and 2SLGBTQ+ people who fear discrimination.¹⁰⁴

Reducing barriers to reporting gender-based violence can help put a stop to abuse and allow victims to get better connected to supports and services, including supports to ensure victims don't become homeless from their experience. It would also help provide more robust data on gender-based violence to better inform responses and prevention efforts. But reporting will not increase until we address the root causes of not reporting. This would include reducing stigma and therefore shame around gender-based violence through public education and awareness campaigns. It would also include measures to help people feel safer reporting, like providing trauma-informed and victim-centred training for law enforcement and justice personnel, starting with judges and moving throughout all staff, as well as offering third-party reporting options.¹⁰⁵ For instance, the Winnipeg Police Service partners with a few community-based organizations where victims can go to anonymously report.¹⁰⁶

2.4 Support innovative solutions to ending gender-based violence, including public education and third-party reporting options, as well as trauma-informed and victim-centred training for law enforcement and justice personnel.

3. SHELTER SYSTEM

Emergency shelters (gender-based violence and homeless shelters) must never be confused with permanent housing. Preventing homelessness requires ensuring everyone can be connected to housing that meets their unique needs. Until this can be achieved, the emergency shelter system will continue to play an important role within the broader system of organizations that work with people experiencing homelessness. We must ensure the shelter system feels and is inclusive for everyone who needs to access it, including men, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. This will help prevent them from being forced into vulnerable situations, such as couch surfing with strangers, staying with an abusive partner, or being on the street.

Shelters, particularly homeless shelters, are often unsafe, perceived as unsafe, or not inclusive for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.¹⁰⁷ In the *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*, 36 percent of women identified a fear for safety as a reason for not staying at a homeless shelter.¹⁰⁸ Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who had experienced homelessness also reported feeling unsafe in shelters.¹⁰⁹

Our consultations with women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people clarified that their safety concerns were directly linked to sharing spaces with men due to the perceived and actual risk of gender-based violence. They identified a need for shelters to offer separate and secure spaces for women as well as separate and secure spaces for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. They also identified a critical service gap that exists between family violence and homeless shelters. On one hand, homeless shelters require very little intake or screening to access, which makes them easy to access, however safety is compromised. Family violence shelters offer more safety and supports, but they require more diligent screening to qualify for intake. Since the violence experienced by women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people while living in homelessness often does not fall into the family violence category, or any clear category for that matter, this resource is not available to many who need immediate protection. We heard clearly through multiple focus groups

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— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“THERE’S ALSO TRANS
SINGLE PARENTS THAT
HAVE A HARD TIME
GETTING HOUSING AND
DAY CARE.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

that there is a desperate need for gendered, safe overnight spaces where any woman, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming person can go without needing to complete eligibility screening, but instead can receive individualized support after having a few good nights' sleep, no questions asked, and stabilizing themselves in a safe environment.

While Winnipeg's three homeless shelters all have separate spaces for women, they are accessed by passing through common areas and can be accessed by men. Main Street Project and Siloam Mission are expanding and we hope this will include separate and secure spaces for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.¹¹⁰ Men are unable to access Winnipeg's gender-based violence shelters and are referred instead to the Men's Resource Centre, and the shelters endeavour to keep their location hidden in general to protect the safety of people accessing services. There are no separate and secure spaces for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people in gender-based violence shelters. The Salvation Army is the only shelter offering a separate space for LGBT people (with 15 beds), but it can also be accessed by anyone.¹¹¹ The Salvation Army's SonRise shelter is the only homeless shelter in Winnipeg for families and we were told it is at capacity all the time.¹¹² Community partners who serve refugee families shared that when refugee claimant families stay at SonRise, they struggle to access settlement services or look for housing because they have no access to childcare, which is a significant barrier to navigating complex resources. Other community partners shared that many families perceive its location as unsafe for children.¹¹³ National statistics reveal that occupancy rates and length of shelter stays for families are increasing.¹¹⁴

In addition to wanting the option of accessing separate and secure spaces, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people also indicated wanting greater choice between spaces that require sobriety and those that take a harm-reduction approach. They also indicated wanting the option to access homeless shelters in locations that are perceived to be safer and more tenable for someone trying to stay away from substance use and stay sober.¹¹⁵

3.1 Ensure gender-based violence and homeless shelters are supported to meet the demand for separate and secure gender-specific spaces as well as family spaces. Consideration should be given to providing options in terms of shelter location and services that take a harm reduction approach.

Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people said they had experienced homophobia or transphobia from men and women accessing and staffing homeless and gender-based violence shelters, despite all shelters having policies against homophobic or transphobic speech or actions.¹¹⁶ Gender-based violence shelters are often perceived by trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people to target only one gender (that is, women).¹¹⁷

We heard of instances of access being denied to trans and Two-Spirit women.¹¹⁸ It is now policy at all gender-based violence shelters in Winnipeg to accept trans and Two-Spirit women, and staff training is being provided to be more inclusive of all women (including trans and Two-Spirit women). However, it can take time for policy and training to be consistently reflected in practice and communications and for public perceptions to change. It should be noted that gender non-conforming people would be required to identify as either men or women to access gender-based violence shelters, otherwise they have the option to be placed in a safe hotel where they would have access to shelter services. Further, people who identify as women but appear to be men, are also offered a hotel stay by some women's shelters to ensure women who appear to be women don't feel unsafe by the presence of women who appear to be men. The communal structure of the women's shelters prevents the physical separation of people staying in the shelter.

The official policies of all three homeless shelters in Winnipeg are to be inclusive of all genders and sexual orientations.¹¹⁹ However, two of the three shelters are faith based, which has contributed to perceptions of them not being safe or welcoming to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. These shelters are aware that there is a stigma around being faith based and that they are working to break down that stigma.

3.2 Support homeless and gender-based violence shelters to strengthen policy, practice, and training around 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and implement outreach and communications strategies that explicitly demonstrate how services are inclusive.

Ongoing efforts should be made to ensure shelters are, and are perceived as, safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces for all people. This includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual safety. Until that goal is achieved, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people should have the choice of accessing separate and secure gender-specific shelter spaces. In the meantime, shelter providers should partner with organizations that primarily serve women and the 2SLGBTQ+ community to identify safety- and inclusion-related concerns and develop a robust plan to address them. This could involve enhancing inclusion for people with disabilities, people whose first language is not English, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

3.3 Conduct a safety and inclusion audit of gender-based violence and homeless shelters that includes diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people and then implement shelter standards, policies, and practices that address safety and inclusion concerns.

4. SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

One critical barrier to ending homelessness is the lack of social and affordable housing across Winnipeg. Affordable housing is based on median market rents. Social housing is the most affordable to people experiencing homelessness because rents are geared to household income, but there is not enough to meet the need. For example, in 2016, there were 2,050 families on the waiting list for social housing.¹²⁰ Making matters worse is the looming threat of reduction in the supply of social housing in Manitoba. In 2017, auditors conducting a fiscal review of government services advised the Province to sell public housing assets to private and community-based housing providers.¹²¹ As a result of long wait lists for social

housing, people often have no choice but to rent in the much more expensive private market. The Province of Manitoba provides the Rent Assist benefit to help cover the cost of rent in the private market. However, the maximum benefit is often too low to afford quality housing in safe locations, which can make women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people even more vulnerable to being exposed to unsafe situations. In 2011 (the most recent data available), 49 percent of Indigenous, women-led households in Winnipeg lived in housing that fell below national standards for adequacy (need for repairs), suitability (size), and affordability.¹²² Women-led households in Canada make up a majority of households in Core Housing Need¹²³ and in subsidized housing.¹²⁴ Housing challenges are exacerbated for people living with disabilities whose choice is further limited by the need to find accessible units or housing with caregiver supports.

There is a need to support the construction of new social and affordable housing units by the public, non-profit, and co-op sectors. It is also critical to ensure that public dollars are not used to support private housing developers without it also resulting in contributions to the stock of social and/or affordable housing. While more publicly owned social housing units are needed across all bedroom sizes, there is a need to prioritize units for larger families. Indigenous and newcomer families tend to be larger and require larger housing. Caregivers of multiple children are particularly at risk of experiencing homelessness because of the difficulty of finding affordable units with three or more bedrooms in the private market. Caregivers of children with physical disabilities are at greater risk of homelessness because of the need to find units that can accommodate families that are both accessible and affordable.

The built environment should also be constructed in a way that supports the decolonization of our communities, providing opportunities for families to gather in flexible ways and participate in cultural traditions and ceremonies in their own homes. For example, individuals in our community consultations identified that Indigenous families need spaces designed to allow for the burning of medicines during smudging or pipe ceremonies. Given the high rates of migration

between Winnipeg and rural Indigenous communities, housing can be built to accommodate out-of-town family visitors by having guest suites available for tenants to book. Units can be built in ways that allow flexibility for different family sizes, including intergenerational living, where suites can be opened up to each other when necessary to house larger families or create common spaces for relatives living in the same building.

The following recommendations for action should be implemented in partnership with local housing stakeholders including End Homelessness Winnipeg and the Right to Housing Coalition.

4.1 Increase the supply of adequate, accessible, and quality rent-geared-to-income housing units built with universal design by the public, non-profit, and co-op sectors with specific targets to meet the need for units with three or more bedrooms. Provide supports to the private sector to enable the development of rent-geared-to-income housing.

It is important to ensure new housing developments and existing structures are designed to maximize the safety of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. This might include building new developments in specific locations and with specific design features. Many affordable housing options, including rooming houses, are located in neighbourhoods or in buildings that are, or are perceived to be, relatively unsafe.¹²⁵ This can further reduce choice in housing for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. Choice can also be limited by the need to stay away from neighbourhoods in which an abuser lives.

4.2 Consult with diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with lived experience of homelessness to maximize safety and comfort in new and existing rent-geared-to-income housing developments across the housing spectrum.

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are housed after experiencing homelessness or upon exiting an institution may wish to access supports to help maintain their tenancy.

This might include housing workers who can assist with addressing safety concerns as well as with accessing parenting programs, programs that reduce social isolation, and CFS-mandated programs. Due to the high cost of public transit, caregivers of children benefit in particular from housing that is developed near these supports as well as other essential services like childcare and grocery stores. However, it is also important to provide people with choice in where they live by developing housing across neighbourhoods. In neighbourhoods where supports and services are relatively scarce, housing may need to be developed with services located on site. Developing housing across neighbourhoods may also require public education efforts where social housing developments are challenged by local residents.

4.3 Prioritize the construction of adequate, accessible, and quality, rent-geared-to-income housing in a variety of neighbourhoods that are located near essential services including childcare, schools, laundry and transportation services, and grocery stores. Ensure that supports for maintaining tenancy, delivered using an IGBA, are also available nearby or on site.

Increased social housing options are needed across the housing continuum, including transitional housing and permanent supportive housing. The latter provides a permanent housing option with 24/7 intensive supports for people with high needs, including those related to substance use and physical or mental health. Transitional housing provides temporary housing with wrap-around supports, typically for up to three years, with the intention of supporting an eventual transition to permanent housing.¹²⁶ This housing model can play a critical role in preventing homelessness among women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are exiting corrections, CFS, gender-based violence shelters, and detox or addictions treatment facilities. Transitional housing can also benefit caregivers of children who have lost their housing due to their children being apprehended.

End Homelessness Winnipeg has identified the need to prioritize an increase to the supply of transitional housing and permanent supportive housing as part of

“TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
SHOULD PROVIDE
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THEY’RE THE EXPERT IN
THEIR LIFE.”

— COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION INTERVIEWEE

a larger effort to ensure people experiencing homelessness have greater housing options along the housing continuum.¹²⁷ Local shelter providers who operate transitional housing facilities reinforced the need for greater capacity to house people who have accessed shelters¹²⁸

We did not learn of any transitional housing specifically for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. Existing options were not always perceived as inclusive of 2SLGBTQ+ and newcomer communities. While there are women's-only transitional housing options, we heard there is a need for more. We also heard that women have faced barriers to accessing and succeeding in transitional housing that are unrelated to bed capacity (such as requiring an experience of gender-based violence, women with children, sobriety).¹²⁹ More options that offer a trauma-informed and harm-reduction approach along with less restrictive eligibility criteria are needed to meet the unique needs of diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people exiting corrections, CFS, gender-based violence shelters, and detox or addictions treatment facilities. Less restrictive eligibility criteria would include ensuring people can go into transitional housing at any time within the first year of being released from incarceration. The current practice requires an immediate transition; however, this is not an appropriate option for everybody. Some may have thought they had secured appropriate housing upon release only to find that they need a more supportive and secure atmosphere to better reintegrate.

In addition to being able to access gender-specific housing, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are Indigenous should also be able to access transitional and permanent supportive housing provided by Indigenous-led organizations that offer services designed to meet the unique needs of Indigenous Peoples.

4.4 Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people can access low-barrier, gender-specific, and responsive transitional and permanent supportive housing options with wrap-around supports to meet their unique needs. Priority should be given to tran-

sitional housing models that meet the unique needs of 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous Peoples.

Our research and consultations identified how women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people face unique threats to their safety when it comes to housing. Experiences of discrimination, manipulation, sexual harassment, and abuse by landlords are common occurrences that can prevent access to housing or threaten an existing tenancy.

Caregivers of children on social assistance, particularly Indigenous women, reported being refused housing because of prejudiced beliefs that families living with low incomes are problematic tenants.¹³⁰ Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people reported being refused housing once the landlord meets them because of stigmatization and discrimination.¹³¹ We were also told that having a disability creates an additional barrier to accessing housing because of ableist beliefs or landlords not wanting to house someone with a service animal.

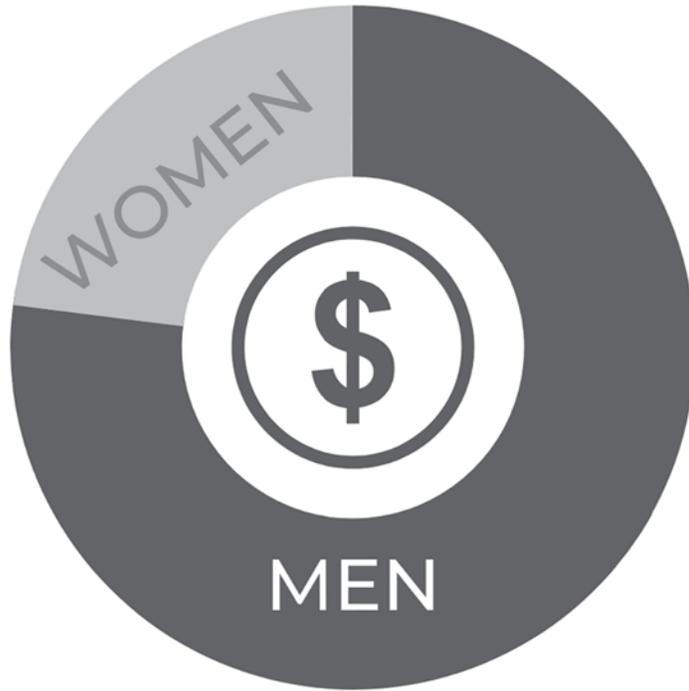
Once housed, some women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people we spoke with reported having landlords threaten to evict them for paying their rent late unless they performed sexual favours. Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people described being reported to police or evicted based on prejudiced suspicion of sex work.¹³²

4.5 Establish partnerships between community-based housing advocates, housing providers, Winnipeg Police Service, and the Residential Tenancies Branch to develop policies and practices that ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people don't face discrimination, abuse, or exploitation by housing providers.

5. INCOME SECURITY

Poverty is a significant pathway to homelessness, and women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are disproportionately at risk of poverty. Women in Winnipeg are more likely than men to be living below the low-income line,¹³³ and Indigenous women in Winnipeg experience nearly

WOMEN'S EARNINGS COMPARED TO MEN IN WINNIPEG



IMPACT OF DISABILITY ON WOMEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN MANITOBA



“AND BECAUSE
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KNOW WHAT I MEAN?”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

triple the poverty rate of non-Indigenous women (27.6 percent and 10.3 percent respectively).¹³⁴ Women may be at increased risk of living in poverty in part because they are more likely to be in low-wage jobs.¹³⁵ In 2016, women in Winnipeg earned 77.1 percent of men's wages.¹³⁶ Indigenous, immigrant, and racialized women earn less than men across Canada.¹³⁷ Women are also more likely to limit their participation in the labour market to care for children.¹³⁸ This reality is exacerbated by the lack of affordable childcare options in Winnipeg. Up to 48 percent of female-led, lone-parent households in Winnipeg are living in poverty.¹³⁹ Women are also more likely than men to experience increased income insecurity in their senior years.¹⁴⁰

Our consultations with New Journey Housing, a resource centre for newcomer housing in Manitoba, described unique income security risk factors for newcomers that multiply vulnerability to homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people. Former refugees may need to apply for EIA if they don't have enough supports once their first year of government funding expires. Privately sponsored newcomers are sometimes sponsored by family members who don't have enough money to support them for their full first year in Canada. If the sponsorship breaks down, these newcomers are not likely to apply for EIA until after the sponsorship period ends, as EIA would sue the sponsor to recoup benefits provided.¹⁴¹ They are at high risk of homelessness. Due to the complex nature of our refugee and immigration system, it is often the case that newcomers experiencing homelessness have been in Canada for a long time before their first experience of homelessness and may have lost access to specialized newcomer supports. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming newcomers are further isolated by increased family or childcare responsibilities, which limit their access to English as an Additional Language (EAL) programming. Learning English is critical for people to access pathways out of poverty.

Our research demonstrated that the definition of common-law relationships used by EIA to assess benefit eligibility causes income insecurity for some women. This definition applies common-law status to couples with children, or where a partner stays

with the EIA recipient for three months in a six-month period, which differs from the definition set out in the Manitoba Common Law Partners Property Act where common-law status is reached after three years of cohabitation or one year with a child. Through our community consultations, we found that women were often the subjects of enhanced supervision and investigation by EIA workers in situations where their partner would stay with them overnight for just one or two nights a week. If the common law status is applied to the EIA file, housing benefits and financial autonomy are reduced in one of two ways. Firstly, if the partner is also on EIA, the benefits get disbursed only in one partner's name unless requested by the recipients.¹⁴² None of the individuals consulted were advised of this option at the time, so the benefits were automatically disbursed to the male partner in heterosexual couples. This presumes that women must be economically dependent on men and don't need access to their own income source.¹⁴³ Secondly, if the partner is a non-EIA recipient, the EIA recipient's benefits are only disbursed depending on the non-EIA recipient complying with EIA's requirement to submit monthly income declarations. If there are any challenges in this process, their benefits may not be disbursed at all. This scrutiny particularly impacts women and is rarely applied to men.¹⁴⁴ The risk of facing a reduction in benefits or losing financial autonomy completely as soon as a partner starts staying the night is stressful. If found to be in a common-law relationship, some couples are forced to separate, accept a reduction in benefits, or make a premature decision for the man to take primary financial responsibility for the family. Community partners reported seeing women lose their housing and fall into homelessness as a result of losing income through this process.

There is limited local or national low-income data for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people and women with disabilities.¹⁴⁵ However, we know they are particularly at risk of, and impacted by, poverty. For example, women with disabilities in Manitoba experience higher unemployment rates compared to women without disabilities: 8.2 percent compared to 4.9 percent.¹⁴⁶ We also heard that people with disabilities are at greater risk of financial exploitation.¹⁴⁷ Trans people are at increased risk of

experiencing employment discrimination, which may contribute to their high levels of underemployment and unemployment.¹⁴⁸

Ending poverty, through government-led comprehensive poverty-reduction plans with targets and timelines should be at the forefront of efforts to eliminate gender-based homelessness. There have been numerous calls for all levels of government to implement comprehensive strategies that address the causes and consequences of poverty, including lack of access to social and affordable housing, income security, childcare, education, transportation, food security, and health and mental health services.

5.1 Invest in reducing rates of poverty and social exclusion among diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people by using an IGBA in the development and implementation of comprehensive poverty-reduction plans with targets and timelines.

Among those living in the deepest poverty and most at risk of homelessness are people who rely on government benefits as their main source of income. In Manitoba, over half of those on EIA are women (EIA cannot provide statistics on trans, Two-Spirit, or gender non-conforming people because there are only two choices for gender in their intake system).¹⁴⁹ Rent Assist, which helps people on EIA pay for shelter costs, is not high enough to provide housing security in the private market, and social housing is in short supply. People often pull from their EIA basic needs budget to cover the difference. Caregivers of children who access the Canada Child Benefit to help further supplement their income often put it toward the cost of rent. After rent is paid, many families are left with few resources in their budgets to care for their children and meet basic household needs like food and clothing. This can be a very precarious situation for low-income households where one unexpected cost can threaten their ability to pay rent and maintain their housing.

In addition to the benefits noted above, there are many other individual income support programs offered by different levels of government depending on unique circumstances. The result is an income security system where individuals must apply to

different programs — each with their own eligibility requirements, rules, and administrative processes — to try to piece together enough money to survive. A more sustainable and dignified solution would be to move toward the development of a guaranteed annual income that would replace the multitude of existing income support programs and eliminate the existence of low income as a pathway into homelessness.

5.2 Enhance the Rent Assist benefit so that caregivers of children aren't forced to use other budgets such as the Canada Child Benefit to pay their rent, and move toward replacing one-off, income-related benefits with a guaranteed annual income that will eliminate poverty for caregivers and their families.

Our research identified a major risk of losing funds to sustain housing when household size changes due to experiences such as children going into care or incarceration.¹⁵⁰ Our income security system can play a key role in exacerbating or mitigating that risk. First of all, the caregiver no longer receives the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). This benefit is often used by caregivers of children living in low income or on EIA to help pay rent because shelter benefits are generally not high enough to cover the cost of rent in the private housing market. Secondly, the caregiver's provincial shelter and basic needs benefits are reduced.¹⁵¹ Therefore, a non-disabled single mother with a child under age six receives \$1,832 in federal and provincial benefits. If her child goes into care, that amount can be cut by over 50 percent to \$891 as soon as the next pay period.¹⁵² This is because the household size has been reduced and the CCB, along with the children's portions of EIA benefits and Rent Assist, are removed. A caregiver may be forced to quickly find cheaper housing, which can be difficult, or else face eviction and potentially homelessness. They are also at a very high risk of deserting their unit and not retrieving their damage deposit. To improve home stability and support reunification, caregivers living in Manitoba Housing may be able to stay in their housing if there is an agency plan to reunify with their children within two years.¹⁵³

The EIA director can allow a caregiver to maintain the same family shelter rate (Rent Assist) for three

months “to allow the parent opportunity to focus on CFS Re-unification Plan activities, or to seek more affordable accommodations.”¹⁵⁴ If a reunification plan is underway and return date is set, the director may approve up to six months at the family shelter rate until that date so that the caregiver does not have to move. A three-month extension may not be sufficient to address the risk of homelessness. With the removal of the CCB and the reduction in the provincial basic needs benefits, the extended family shelter rate is rarely enough income to maintain housing. Until shelter benefits are enhanced to a rate that actually covers the cost of renting in the private market, EIA should have the ability to provide additional funds through an emergency rent fund to be used in exceptional circumstances, including child apprehension, where a person is at imminent risk of homelessness.

Furthermore, a three-month extension does not provide enough time for caregivers to complete a reunification plan or search for new housing. This is due to long waitlists for programs and services, as well as the traumatic impact of apprehension on their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Immediately after an apprehension, caregivers experience grief similar to experiencing the death of a child.¹⁵⁵ This may include foggy or racing thoughts, physical pain, temporary memory loss, inability to concentrate, disturbances in sleeping and eating patterns, severe disturbances in mood, and suicidal ideation. It is unrealistic to expect caregivers in this stage to have capacity for a housing search, manage income changes, or start complying with reunification plan conditions such as attending programs. Most of these caregivers demonstrate resilience and strength and are able to complete these tasks over time. It is more beneficial for families and cost-effective to support caregivers during this time, to ensure they have stable and safe housing in order to more quickly find healing and regain the abilities needed to work towards reunification. Given these challenges, caregivers are more likely to maintain housing and reunify with their children with an extended family shelter rate that lasts longer than three months.

Once there is a reunification date, EIA may approve the family shelter rate for three months prior to allow the caregiver to afford a space that suits their

reunified family.¹⁵⁶ The family shelter rate is often not enough to afford suitable housing in the private market so most families also need to use the CCB to pay for rent. However, caregivers cannot re-apply for the CCB until their children are back in their custody, and the first payment takes between six weeks and three months to arrive, depending on how timely the CFS agency supplies the necessary paperwork to the federal government. While provincial CFS standards do not require it, some caregivers reported that their reunification plan required them to find housing with one room per child of different genders, which is even more difficult to achieve with limited income¹⁵⁷ and there is a lack of social housing with three or more bedrooms. The search for affordable housing is even more challenging for those seeking accessible family homes.

These EIA policies are designed to facilitate reunification as opposed to preventing homelessness when the focus needs to be on both. Therefore, rather than requiring the approval of the EIA director, maintaining the family shelter rate for six months once children go into care should be automatic for caregivers, regardless of reunification status. This will not only reduce risks of homelessness but also increase reunification by providing stability for the caregiver to work on meeting the requirements of CFS. When needed, emergency rent funds should be granted to avoid loss of housing. In addition, the family rate should be automatically available to all caregivers needing a larger home three months prior to reunification, rather than granted at the discretion of the EIA director. To support the reunification of families, Manitoba Housing has a policy that enables caregivers to be allocated an appropriately sized unit for their family as long as there is a plan in place to reunify with their children within two years.¹⁵⁸ While we did not find data to illustrate the impact of this policy, it is a significant support for families involved with CFS who live in Manitoba Housing.

Community-based organizations play an important role in supporting caregivers to navigate CFS and EIA. Caregivers may feel more comfortable working with a community-based support worker than a government worker if they feel the former will advocate for them. Community support workers with a reasonable

caseload can support a woman, trans, Two-Spirit, or gender non-conforming caregiver to navigate income and CFS by taking the time to explain how systems work together and advocate for them with their workers if these relationships are strained or intimidating.

5.3 Ensure all provincial policies have a reunification focus by extending family shelter benefits and granting emergency rent funds when necessary without the need for EIA director approval. Provide these same shelter benefits and emergency rent funds when necessary for three months prior to a reunification date.

5.4 Bring EIA, CFS, and community-based organizations together to align policy and work in collaboration to ensure no caregiver loses their housing when children are placed in care or experience other income insecurity related to changes in family size. Create and implement a province-wide plan to align all provincial departments and portfolios with the current Manitoba Housing policy that ensures secure housing for two years after an apprehension or family size change.

6. SUBSTANCE USE

Substance use and homelessness are often intertwined. If substance use progresses into addiction, it can lead to barriers to employment, lack of income, child apprehension, and many other challenges that increase the risks of housing insecurity and homelessness. Homelessness can increase the likelihood of using substances to cope, and addiction can make it very difficult to escape homelessness. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness often use drugs as a tool for survival. For example, certain drugs, like crystal methamphetamine, are used to help stay up all night when a person has nowhere to go and is afraid to stay in shelters with men or sleep on the street.¹⁵⁹ Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are also more likely to use drugs as a way to numb themselves from the trauma and intergenerational trauma associated with increased exposure to homophobia, transphobia, sexual exploitation, being forced into

sex work to survive, violence, and having children apprehended by CFS. The risk of substance use further increases for those who are also Indigenous, because of the added ongoing trauma of colonization, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care.¹⁶⁰ This suggests the need for addictions treatment services with trauma-related supports for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.

Meth use has significantly increased in Winnipeg, and women are the main users. At Main Street Project, 71 percent of women who access detox services are meth users, compared to 56 percent of men.¹⁶¹ Even more striking is that among youth, 81 percent of young women reported using meth, compared to 19 percent of young men.¹⁶² In our focus groups, women who use meth disclosed that it helped them stay warm through the night, alert for safety, and eliminated hunger in order to mitigate expensive food costs.

Publicly funded addictions treatment services available to people in Winnipeg are separated by gender (that is, there are services for men and services for women). Our consultations identified a need for free facilities and services based in harm reduction specifically for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people that are developed in partnership with the community.¹⁶³ These individuals may not feel welcome in men- or women-only facilities, especially faith-based facilities. They have also reported commonly experiencing issues related to their physical and emotional safety within existing addictions facilities.¹⁶⁴

A 2018 report on mental health and addictions services in Manitoba identified significantly longer wait times for women compared to men when it comes to residential/in-patient treatment services, and a need to enhance capacity for women's services.¹⁶⁵ For example, women wait 168 days to access the Addiction Foundation of Manitoba's residential treatment program in Winnipeg, while men wait 27 days. This is after an average 36-day wait for an intake and assessment for women compared to 11 days for men.¹⁶⁶ Women may also be excluded from treatment if they have violence on their criminal record or they are taking medication to address mental health issues.¹⁶⁷

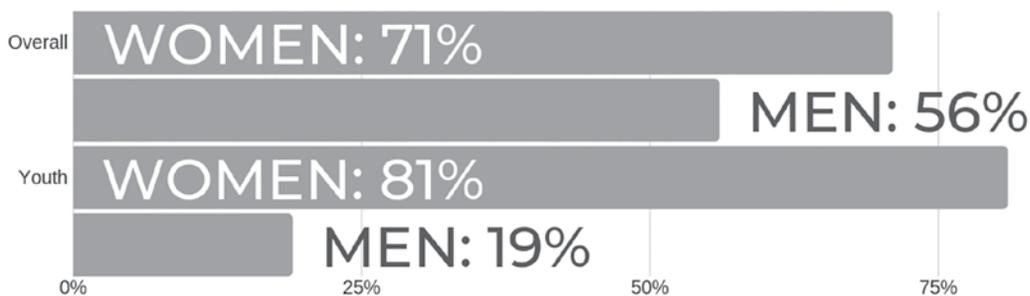
“I WOULD BE SEXUALLY
ABUSED MULTIPLE TIMES
JUST TO FEEL SAFE AND TO
LIVE IN A PLACE OR TO STAY
WITH SOMEBODY. SO THOSE
WERE HORRIBLE, HORRIFIC
EXPERIENCES THAT LED TO
WHERE I EVEN WANTED TO
COMMIT SUICIDE BECAUSE
I FELT SO DIRTY AND
DEGRADED”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“IF I WANTED TO HEAL
[FROM ADDICTIONS]
WITH WOMEN, I WOULD
GET SHUNNED AWAY...
THE PATRIARCHY HATES
US. THE BIGGEST
ENEMY IS A MAN WHO
SAYS HE’S NOT A MAN.
I THINK IT’S REALLY
UNDERREPRESENTED.”

— TWO-SPIRIT, GENDER NON-CONFORMING, FOCUS
GROUP PARTICIPANT

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AND MEN METH USERS IN MAIN STREET PROJECT DETOX BY AGE



Winnipeg's addictions treatment sector appears to be organized around a binary definition of gender, making it difficult for Two-Spirit, trans, and gender non-conforming people to know where to access services. The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch Manitoba Region provides Indigenous-led addictions treatment services; in our consultations we heard that Two-Spirit Manitoba has requested them to change their binary definition of gender in order to include Two-Spirit, trans, and gender non-conforming people in their services.

People need access to services as soon as they are ready to seek treatment, or the moment may pass. Service providers also may have no way to contact waitlisted people experiencing homelessness when a bed becomes available. Longer wait times for detox services or between detox and addictions treatment services can push women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are experiencing homelessness back into exploitative situations.

The inability to access timely programs can also be the difference between life and death. Since 2016, there has been an increase in suspected overdose cases at Winnipeg health care facilities, and most were women and girls.¹⁶⁸ Women and girls experiencing opioid poisoning hospitalizations has been on the rise since 2008 and they now account for 60 percent of cases.¹⁶⁹

People experiencing poverty, Indigenous women, and trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people may have a greater risk of overdose because they are more likely to experience addiction and have more severe substance abuse issues.¹⁷⁰ They are also less likely to be connected to supports.

In addition to the need for more timely access to detox and addictions treatment services, our consultations identified a need for more publicly funded residential programs for women that last longer than 28 days, with suggested time frames ranging from six months to more than two years. We also heard calls for more detox and treatment options that allow caregivers of children better access, including day programs, programs with childcare, pre- and post-natal care, and family-based treatment facilities.¹⁷¹ It is crucial for treatment to be trauma-informed, include Indigenous cultural supports, and offer harm-reduction options.¹⁷² We applaud the Province of Manitoba for its July 2019 announcement of funding for an additional 16 addictions treatment beds for women. The policies and practices used in the implementation of these expanded services will impact how successful they are at facilitating access to services and closing pathways to gender-based homelessness.

“ [A] LOT OF PEOPLE
THAT EXPERIENCE
HOMELESSNESS DO WANT
TO GET HELP, BUT WHEN
THEY ARE GOING TO GET
THE HELP, THERE’S NOT A
BED AVAILABLE SO THEY’RE
TOLD TO GO BACK OUT AND
COME BACK. BUT THEN
THAT GOING BACK OUT
COULD LEAD TO DYING.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY
ARE CRUCIAL TO
RECOVERY. CRUCIAL.”

— COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION INTERVIEWEE

6.1 Provide publicly funded, gender-specific, and responsive detox and addictions treatment options and beds, including evidence-based day programs and residential programs that last beyond 28 days as needed to ensure immediate entry into detox and a seamless transition from detox into treatment services.

6.2 Consult with diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people to ensure they have access to a continuum of detox and addictions treatment services that are designed to meet their unique needs (such as childcare, harm reduction, trauma supports, and criminal records).

Indigenous women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people should have the option to access treatment facilities that meet their needs to practice traditional healing and wellness. Racism, both external and internalized, along with other impacts of historical and ongoing colonialism, such as higher rates of personal and intergenerational trauma related to gender-based violence and family separation, are linked to increased substance use among Indigenous populations.¹⁷³ Traditional healing and wellness practices can provide opportunities to learn about colonization and its contribution to the social inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples. This learning can help Indigenous Peoples to better understand the systemic causes of personal experiences, making room for healing.¹⁷⁴ With this understanding, Indigenous Peoples may become open to reclaiming their culture by learning about Indigenous history, culture, and traditions, including ceremonies. In doing so, Indigenous Peoples are provided opportunities to address intergenerational trauma. Traditional healing and wellness practices also involve holistic approaches that include community, family, land, and culture, which are key to healing from substance use.¹⁷⁵

6.3 Ensure gender-specific and responsive detox and addictions treatment facilities can offer community-based, Indigenous-led healing and wellness practices that provide access to education and cultural reclamation, and that address gender-based and intergenerational trauma.

7. JUSTICE

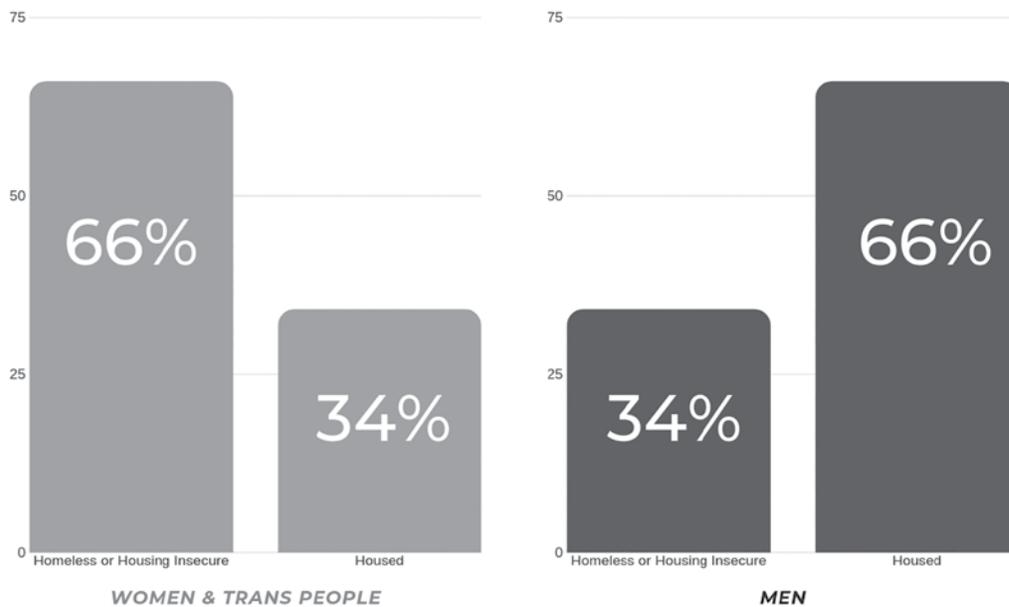
Involvement in the justice system is a pathway into homelessness and there are unique trends for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. Incarceration usually means being cut off from government income supports, loss of housing, loss of children, and/or debt accumulation due to being unable to keep up with various bill payments.¹⁷⁶ As a result, people exiting incarceration face a multitude of challenges that increase the risk of homelessness.¹⁷⁷ In Canada, correctional sentences of two years or more are served in federal correctional institutions under Correctional Service Canada (CSC), while sentences of two years less a day are served in provincial institutions. Our lived experience and government consultations highlighted significant differences between federal and provincial jurisdictions regarding the resources and programs available to inmates. A federally sentenced inmate knows their release date well ahead of time and has access to programs and services while incarcerated, including discharge planning. A remanded or provincially sentenced inmate often does not know their release date, and their access to program and discharge planning resources is limited. These differences significantly impact the risk of homelessness upon release. Without a discharge plan created in advance, provincial inmates are more likely to be without an address or source of income upon release. They are also less likely to have the resources needed to comply with bail or probation conditions, such as avoiding certain areas or associates, if they are released to homelessness and must rely on people or situations from prior to their incarceration in order to meet their basic needs of food and shelter. Due to these increased risks of homelessness for provincially sentenced people, we are focusing our recommendations to improve supports for women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender-nonconforming people involved with Manitoba Justice.

While we were unable to find statistics broken down by gender or for Winnipeg, we know that, in Canada, approximately 30 percent of all individuals incarcerated are released into homelessness.¹⁷⁸ Women (especially those involved in sex work or exploitation), Indigenous Peoples, trans people, youth who have been in foster care, racialized groups, and refugees

“YOU KNOW, PEOPLE
TEND TO HAVE THAT
OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF
MIND WHEN YOU GO TO
JAIL. NO SUPPORT, NO
ENCOURAGEMENT, NO
NOTHING. I JUST THINK
THAT THAT SYSTEM IS
SET UP FOR PEOPLE
TO FAIL AND TO KEEP
COMING BACK.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

HOUSING STATUS 2 YEARS AFTER RELEASE FROM INCARCERATION IN CANADA ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL RESEARCH



are disproportionately vulnerable to post-incarceration homelessness.¹⁷⁹ While locally there is ample anecdotal data on the link between incarceration and homelessness for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, a major study of the impact of social exclusion and discrimination on trans people in Ontario reported that almost half of trans people interviewed who were previously incarcerated were homeless or unstably housed.¹⁸⁰ A recent Canadian study found that almost twice as many men reported being housed compared with women and trans people (66 percent compared to 34 percent) two years after incarceration.¹⁸¹

Women risk homelessness even when in remand, where an accused person is held for an undisclosed period of time without bail while awaiting their court hearing. Many may exit without a secure place to live, even if they are acquitted of charges.¹⁸² Manitoba has among the highest remand rates in Canada: 66 percent of incarcerated people are in remand.¹⁸³ When in remand, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people living in poverty are likely to lose their jobs and struggle to pay rent, potentially losing their housing and/or children. Unlike other

countries, Canada has not taken measures to keep families together by not remanding pregnant people, as well as primary caregivers of young children or people with disabilities.¹⁸⁴ Women may stay in remand for months and even years, and are more likely than men to plead guilty “just to get it over with.”¹⁸⁵

An increased investment in programs that help people who do not pose a threat to public safety meet bail conditions and complete bail successfully or be under house arrest instead of remand would help reduce the number of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people in remand custody and at risk of losing their housing.¹⁸⁶ Supportive bail programs can also keep them from having to plead guilty and receiving a sentence simply due to pressure while in remand. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba offers bail programs to this population, but they are underfunded and have limited capacity to meet the need.¹⁸⁷ Many are in remand custody only because they lack the financial resources, address, or social ties needed to meet bail conditions. If bail is not possible, supports could be offered to help maintain someone’s housing and children in their care while in remand.

7.1 With priority given to Indigenous-led and serving organizations that use an IBGA to support diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, invest in:

- 7.1.1 Gender-specific and responsive bail support programs with housing supports;
- 7.1.2 Organizations that offer supports in remand to prevent the loss of homes and children.

In 2016/17, 20 percent of admissions to adult correctional services (federal and provincial) in Manitoba were women.¹⁸⁸ Among youth admitted to custody in Manitoba, 35 percent are female compared to 24 percent nationally.¹⁸⁹ The rate of incarcerated women in Canada is increasing faster than the rate of incarcerated men.¹⁹⁰ Manitoba is seeing the largest increases in Canada: ¹⁹¹ the number of women in provincial custody grew significantly from 78 in 2003 to 260 in 2012, representing a 233 percent increase.¹⁹²

There is a lack of robust data for Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people in the justice system, but some research indicates that 2SLGBTQ+ people face an increased risk of incarceration, especially if they are Indigenous, racialized, living in poverty, engaging in sex work, and/or using drugs frequently.¹⁹³

Indigenous women are over-represented in penitentiaries.¹⁹⁴ While Indigenous women represent 4 percent of the total female population,¹⁹⁵ 63 percent of incarcerated women in Canada are Indigenous.¹⁹⁶ For youth in Manitoba, 82 percent of female inmates are Indigenous.¹⁹⁷ Indigenous women are also the fastest growing group of incarcerated women: the rate of federally sentenced Indigenous women increased by 60 percent from 2007 to 2017, whereas the rate of women overall increased by nearly 30 percent.¹⁹⁸ The number of federally incarcerated Black women in Canada is also rising and they are disproportionately denied bail.¹⁹⁹

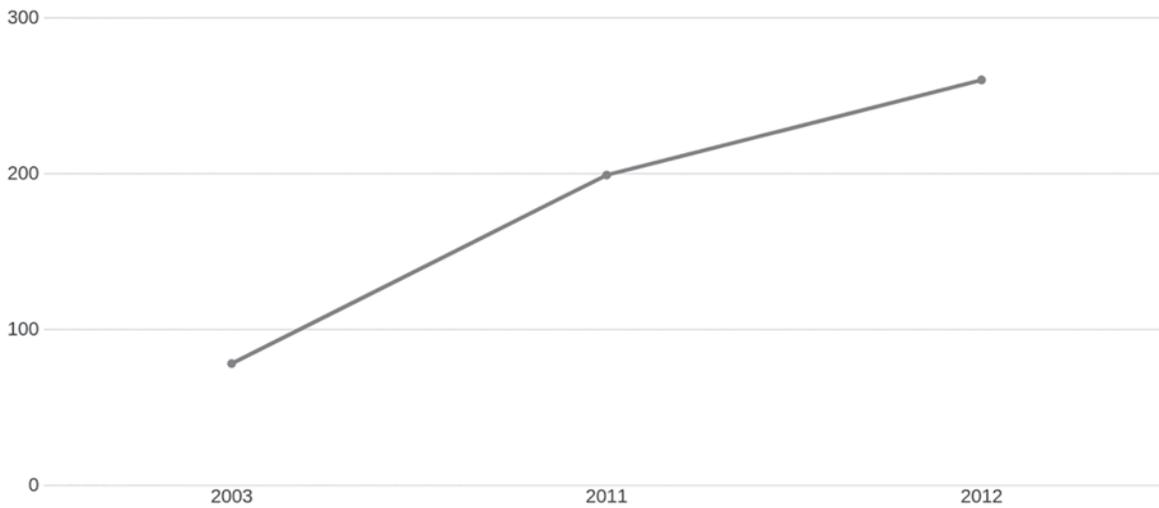
As stated throughout this report, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experience disproportionate trauma, especially if they are also Indigenous.²⁰⁰ Incarcerated people have high rates of trauma, with women offenders having higher rates of trauma and other mental health issues than

men.²⁰¹ This trauma can be exacerbated for inmates who lose connection to family and community while incarcerated, which makes motivation and reintegration more difficult.²⁰² Women's Correctional Centre (WCC) is not accessible by public transit and federally sentenced women are sent out of the province, making visits and phone calls difficult and costly²⁰³ and further disconnecting inmates from their community supports.

Section 81 in the Canada's Corrections and Conditional Release Act states, "The Minister, or a person authorized by the Minister, may enter into an agreement with an aboriginal community for the provision of correctional services to aboriginal offenders and for payment by the Minister, or by a person authorized by the Minister, in respect of the provision of those services."²⁰⁴ This legislation allows for the possibility for federally sentenced inmates to remain close to their family, community, and cultural connections during their incarceration. There are five Section 81 Healing Lodges run by Indigenous communities in Canada and only one, in Alberta, is for women.²⁰⁵ Indigenous Women's Healing Centre is currently in negotiations with CSC for consideration of a Section 81 facility for women in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Should this partnership be successful, it would allow federally sentenced women and their families from Manitoba the ability to retain these connections and participate in community-based reintegration programs, which are protective factors against recidivism upon the completion of their sentence.²⁰⁶ It would be beneficial to explore what this type of model could look like in the provincial context, keeping in mind the different needs of provincially sentenced women, with attention to the location of facilities and partnerships with key Indigenous and community-based organizations.

Violent convictions are linked to traumatic histories of being victims of physical and sexual abuse, as well as exposure to domestic and other forms of violence.²⁰⁷ Incarcerated women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people often have experienced childhood abuse and/or gender-based violence.²⁰⁸ Approximately 80 percent of federal female inmates in Canada reported physical abuse and over 50 percent reported sexual abuse in their past.²⁰⁹ Early exposure to violence increases the likelihood of perpetrating

WOMEN IN PROVINCIAL CUSTODY



violence later in life.²¹⁰ Further, women are often arrested as a result of assaulting an abusive partner when attempting to leave a relationship or warding off violence.²¹¹ Indigenous women are disproportionately incarcerated in part due to the increased victimization they experience, which has its roots in colonization.²¹²

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are also more likely to be criminalized for being at greater risk of experiencing poverty and having mental health issues like trauma. This is seen by those incarcerated for actions taken while using substances to cope with trauma, or for actions taken to ensure their and/or their children's survival such as petty theft, sex work, and selling drugs.²¹³

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba sees the criminal justice system as the end result for women when all other safety nets have failed.²¹⁴ The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies links increases in women's incarceration to cuts to community supports for people experiencing poverty. Our research and consultations revealed that some women who use substances get arrested so they can get clean in jail;²¹⁵

this would likely not be their option if addictions treatment was more accessible.²¹⁶

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people should be supported while incarcerated to take the steps they need to successfully reintegrate in the community with stable housing. The societal expectation for inmates to improve themselves while incarcerated without supports is unrealistic and unfair. Supports must include access to trauma-informed programs that address mental health issues and addictions,²¹⁷ as well as programs to help address other root causes of poverty. WCC offers supports in these areas directly or through external organizations. WCC also provides programs around spirituality, culture, education, parenting, and anger management. However, their programs are limited and the institution is often overcrowded, which results in many inmates reporting being on wait lists for months.²¹⁸ Furthermore, inmates at WCC can spend up to 21 hours in lock-up, which limits their access to programs.²¹⁹

Access to programs that use an IGBA to meet the unique needs of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and

gender non-conforming inmates must be improved. Indigenous-led programs should be prioritized given the over-representation of Indigenous women among the inmate population. 2SLGBTQ+ program options are also necessary to meet the unique needs of this community.²²⁰ Programs delivered by community-based organizations are advantageous for their ability to develop trust with inmates and provide ongoing supports after their release. Better access to programming while incarcerated can reduce the risk of homelessness and recidivism post release.²²¹

7.2 Invest in programs and supports provided by Manitoba Corrections and community-based organizations that meet the unique needs of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender-conforming people in WCC. Priority should be given to programs and supports led by Indigenous Peoples and the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

8. CHILD WELFARE

Involvement with CFS is a common pathway into homelessness, both for those who have been in care²²² and caregivers whose children are taken into care. Caregiving and involvement in CFS are largely gendered issues. Women are much more likely than men to be caring for a son or daughter (65 percent compared to 35 percent) and 28 percent of caregivers experience financial difficulties due to these caregiving responsibilities.²²³ Most children are not living with their fathers at the time of going into care²²⁴ and at least 50 percent of fathers of children in care were not present.²²⁵

Many caregivers who experience challenges such as poverty, gender-based violence, addictions, mental health issues, and housing insecurity avoid accessing support out of fear that it will result in child welfare involvement and ultimately having their children apprehended.²²⁶ When unaddressed, these challenges can place families at increased risk of homelessness. The fear of CFS involvement and apprehension is a major contributor to the hidden nature of homelessness for caregivers.²²⁷ Manitoba's Child and Family Service Act has been recently amended to strengthen the directive that no child can be apprehended solely due to the effects of poverty. This is an

important step toward keeping families together, yet we know it must be followed by changes in practice at all levels of the CFS system in order to make a difference for families needing this support.

Caregivers should feel they have the option to access detox and addictions treatment services and mental health services, as well as housing and income security supports, without fear that their children will be apprehended. Caregivers should be confident that they will be supported to meet their parenting needs while addressing other challenges, and not fear being penalized for seeking help. Supports to meet parenting needs will vary depending on the situation, but could include providing caregivers with childcare, pre- or post-natal care, and parenting supports and programs.²²⁸ It could also include supports related to transportation, food, clothing, and shelter, schooling for children, and even navigating the justice system such as meeting court, bail or probation requirements.

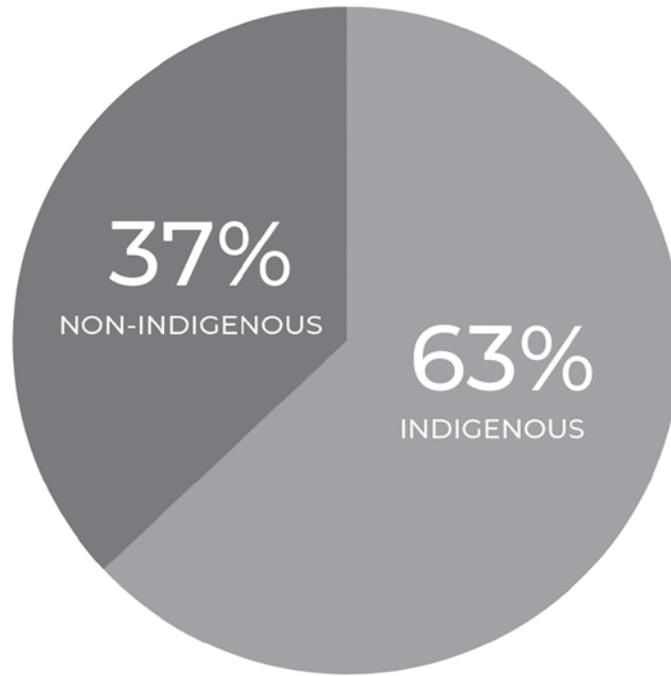
8.1 Ensure caregivers are supported to meet their parenting needs, keeping children at home wherever possible, while they work to address challenges that increase their risk of experiencing homelessness.

Canada has one of the highest rates of children placed in out-of-home care, and these rates are highest in Manitoba.²²⁹ The highest rates of child apprehension in Manitoba are seen among Indigenous mothers living in poor urban areas.²³⁰ Nearly 90 percent of children apprehended in Manitoba are Indigenous.²³¹ Due to colonization, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the Indian Act, Indigenous families have been repeatedly torn apart, which breaks the intergenerational passing of knowledge and mentorship on parenting and instead creates intergenerational trauma. This, along with the persistence of racism²³² in our society and high rates of poverty for Indigenous families, has led to unacceptable rates of Indigenous children in care.²³³ A national study in the United States that looked at nine years of child welfare data across the country found that increases to the minimum wage result in a decline in cases of child neglect.²³⁴ Other conditions of poverty that can increase the risk of one's child(ren) going into care are mental health issues, substance abuse, gender-based

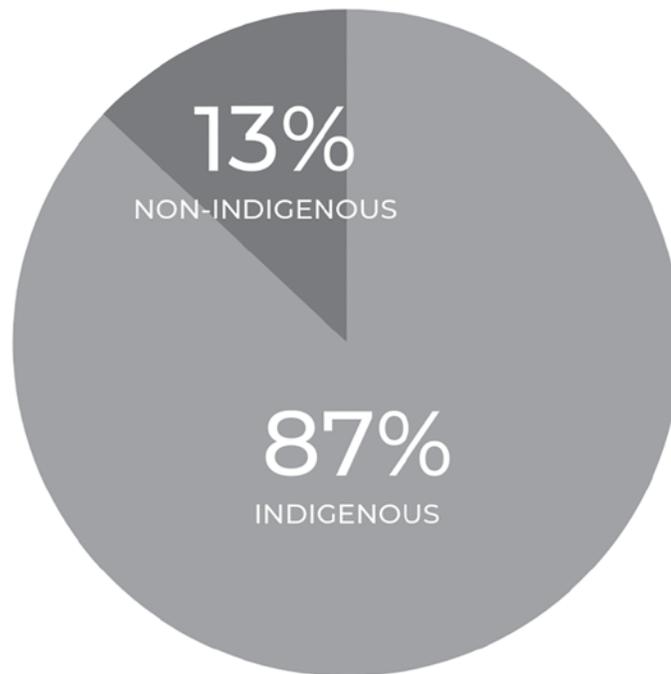
“I HAVE A KID AND I
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— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

INDIGENEITY OF WOMEN INCARCERATED IN CANADA



INDIGENEITY OF CHILDREN IN CARE IN MANITOBA



violence, and homelessness.²³⁵ Perceived race, class, and gender also tend to have an impact on whether a family is scrutinized by CFS.²³⁶

Manitoba CFS cannot provide statistics on how many caregivers of children in care are trans, Two-Spirit, or gender non-conforming people because there are only two choices for gender in their intake system.²³⁷ While there is a lack of data on trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming caregivers with children in care, US research points to discrimination in the child welfare system and indicates that parents who are in the process of transitioning are particularly vulnerable in family court, including child custody proceedings.²³⁸

Caregivers whose children are or have been in care are more likely to experience homelessness.²³⁹ Of the 43 individuals in the *Winnipeg Street Census 2018* who listed having their children taken away by CFS as the cause of either their first or most recent experience of homelessness, 31 were women. Caregivers frequently turn to coping mechanisms such as drugs and alcohol to deal with the often severe mental, emotional, and financial distress of losing their children, which can reduce their ability to navigate systems and advocate for themselves.²⁴⁰ This, accompanied by the loss of child-related income benefits, results in instability and often homelessness.²⁴¹ While some caregivers manage to find housing their new incomes can accommodate, others become homeless. Caregivers would benefit from having immediate access to a support team when their children are apprehended so they can care for themselves and work toward reunification.²⁴² Supports could include those related to housing, income security, and mental health. The composition of these support teams would vary based on the needs of the caregiver and could include representation from child welfare agencies and the healthcare sector, as well as housing and income security advocates. Given that the majority of families involved with CFS are Indigenous, caregivers should have the option to access supports that are responsive to their cultural and spiritual needs.

8.2 Ensure caregivers have access to a culturally responsive support team when involved with CFS, assisting the caregiver to meet their individual needs, avoiding apprehension, or working toward reunification as necessary, including the prevention of housing insecurity and homelessness.

It is important for children and youth to be placed in foster families or group homes that can help them understand and explore their gender and/or sexual identity within a culturally responsive setting.²⁴³ This may reduce the risk of experiencing trauma-inducing transphobia/homophobia for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming children and youth while in care, improve the transference of life skills, and increase the feeling of connection and acceptance. Young women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have access to supportive and representative care are more likely to have better outcomes when exiting care, and therefore less likely to exit into homelessness.²⁴⁴ Offering more supportive and representative foster parents and group homes may also decrease the number of runaways from CFS, which would help prevent youth from leaving without an exit plan or supports. This is significant from a gender-based perspective because most missing persons are female, at risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking, and were last housed by CFS.²⁴⁵

8.3 Develop and implement an intersectional strategy in the CFS system to better support and nurture Two-Spirit, trans, and gender non-conforming youth in care. This includes gathering appropriate demographic data to know the extent of the need and supporting existing and potential foster families and group homes.

9. CONTINUUM OF HEALTH

The Medicine Wheel, as described earlier with Amanda's Story, teaches about the pan-Indigenous concept of holistic health, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Each part must be cared for and nurtured but is also inextricably connected to the whole. Focus group respondents described the difficulty of living in homelessness while navigating a modern health system that treats each part as completely separate; waiting years or finding themselves at dead ends for referrals to clinics and programs treating various health needs. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada reminds us that "Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing, determining, and administering health programs that affect them" and calls for "the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients."²⁴⁶

Healthcare is a challenge for all people experiencing homelessness. As we were researching the unique pathways into homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, it became clear that trauma and mental health concerns are at the root of a gendered experience of the health system as it relates to homelessness. Trauma is when someone has experienced "an out of control, frightening experience that has disconnected us from all sense of resourcefulness or safety or coping or love."²⁴⁷ Jolene Wilson, our First Voice Advisory Chair, describes how the Medicine Wheel teachings allow us to recognize how trauma is an injury to the spiritual health dimension, which is where we experience connection with self, others, land, and Creator. Many of those with experiences of homelessness that were linked to poverty, mental health, addiction, incarceration, child apprehension, and/or gender-based violence also had experienced unaddressed trauma. Despite this, healthcare responses have often failed to address trauma or take a trauma-informed approach for a variety of reasons. This can mean failing to address the underlying causes of the challenges people are experiencing, and can risk re-traumatizing people, which can further entrench a person in homelessness.²⁴⁸

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are disproportionately at risk of trauma in part because of several factors they are more likely to experience than men: the stress of caregiving, fear of and actual apprehension of children, postpartum depression, higher rates of poverty, childhood abuse, and gender-based violence.²⁴⁹ Trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people face a heightened risk of trauma caused by lifelong discrimination, difficulty accessing health care services, and suicidal ideation.²⁵⁰ Indigenous women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are also likely to experience systemic and intergenerational trauma, as well as the fear of being targeted and becoming another of Canada's MMIWG.²⁵¹ Also, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with a mental illness face a heightened risk of trauma from victimization due to being more likely to experience social isolation, homelessness, being hospitalized, and substance use.²⁵² Senior women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people may experience age-related health complications that cause increased dependency on others to meet their basic needs of food and shelter, increasing their risk of financial exploitation or abuse. If experiencing the additional barrier of mobility challenges, individuals are further isolated from the ability to access supports needed to maintain their health. Lesbian and bisexual women report experiences of discrimination when accessing healthcare, creating an additional barrier.²⁵³ In addition to higher rates of trauma compared to men, women are also more likely to have anxiety, depression, traumatic brain injury or hearing loss from gender-based violence, suicidal ideation, and postpartum mental health challenges.²⁵⁴ Experiences of homelessness can have a negative impact on mental health and people experiencing mental health issues are at increased risk of experiencing and staying trapped in homelessness.²⁵⁵ Mental health prevention and intervention services must consider and account for the ways that gender and other identity factors influence mental health.²⁵⁶ For women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, this could include provisions for childcare and other parenting-related supports, pre- and post-natal care, trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices, and programs that address the impact of gender-based violence and stigma.



Our consultations with women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with lived experience of homelessness identified the importance of easily accessible mental health services in various settings (including in-patient, out-patient, and residential). We also learned about gender-related challenges they were more likely to face in accessing mental health services, including lack of access to childcare, lack of options to access community-based services, safety concerns around service locations, higher rates of poverty, perceived or actual discrimination by mental health service providers, and the burden of educating mental health care providers on gender identity.²⁵⁷ Psychiatry has historically considered trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming identities as mental illnesses and perpetuated discriminatory behaviours and perspectives.²⁵⁸ While the understanding of gender identities is evolving, health care professionals such as counsellors, therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists can be misinformed, prejudiced, and, at times, unethical in their treatment of gender and/or sexually diverse people.²⁵⁹

Not only does this negatively impact mental health, it creates barriers to appropriate and comprehensive mental health care.

An innovative health team of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) called Health Outreach and Community Support (HOCS) has been delivering supports to individuals experiencing homelessness through the provincial health system since 2012. This multidisciplinary team includes expertise in areas of psychiatry, psychology, clinical social work, trauma-informed care, occupational therapy, and nursing. Their goals include supporting better health outcomes by connecting individuals to appropriate health supports, social services and community agencies. Community partners have found that HOCS team members understand and use an IGBA lens in their work with people experiencing homelessness.²⁶⁰ HOCS is an example of a program design success, where a team operationalizes an IGBA lens to increase access to personalized health supports for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people

experiencing homelessness. While there are health service providers in Winnipeg that are designed meet the unique needs of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, they are under-resourced to meet the demand.²⁶¹

9.1 Invest in a range of better quality public and community-based mental health services that are inclusive of Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ communities and that meet the unique needs of diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people at all ages, and ensure services can be accessed as soon as needed. Priority should be given to services that address trauma and take a trauma-informed approach.

10. PREVENTING SYSTEM EXITS TO HOMELESSNESS

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people continue to be left behind because of a lack of coordination between government systems, between community organizations, and between government and community organizations. As identified in existing local plans to end homelessness, this collaboration is particularly important when people are going through significant periods of transition such as exiting corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, and mental health facilities, as well as detox and addictions treatment facilities.²⁶²

Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people exiting corrections may face reintegration challenges that are more prominent than those experienced by men.²⁶³ Similar challenges may be faced when exiting shelters and the child welfare system, as well as detox and addictions treatment facilities. For example, caregivers may need assistance accessing appropriate housing for themselves and their children, as well as childcare. This is an even greater challenge for people with physical disabilities who require accessible housing options. In addition to housing-related supports, women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people exiting systems, especially those living in poverty, often need an array of services. This can include supports to address their unique needs related to economic insecurity, life skills, cultural safety, parenting, mental/emotional distress,

trauma, gender-based violence, and addictions.²⁶⁴ Barriers to accessing needed supports and services may be amplified with the potential for discrimination in the form of transphobia, racism, and ableism.

People exiting systems may have little to no income for securing housing and other basic needs. Women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who lack income security and housing are at greater risk of sexual exploitation and returning to an abuser or other unsafe situations to meet their needs.²⁶⁵ It is critical that systems collaborate so those who need to depend on EIA can access funds immediately upon exiting corrections, shelters, the child welfare system and mental health facilities, as well as detox and addictions treatment facilities.

Corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, mental health facilities, and detox and addictions treatment facilities have limited capacity to support women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people to develop and implement exit plans. People who have exited these facilities told us that they have left with undeveloped plans or no plan at all. Our research and consultations with service providers suggests that these facilities are not resourced to adequately meet the need for exit planning.²⁶⁶ When systems work together with community-based organizations to support women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people during system exits, these transitions happen more smoothly with better coordination of resources. For example, Project Manitouwabi is a multi-stakeholder pilot project run by Indigenous Women's Healing Centre that connects provincially sentenced inmates to community-based housing support workers prior to their release. Together with program participants, these workers coordinate with Manitoba Justice, EIA, and landlords in order to secure income and housing as soon as possible after release. Such programs would benefit from partnerships with social housing providers such as Manitoba Housing to ensure every program participant has access to housing immediately upon exiting custody, instead of being at risk of homelessness.

We must ensure that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people can connect to sustainable and safe housing with wrap-around services

WE SUPPORT THE
RECOMMENDATIONS
OUTLINED BY END
HOMELESSNESS WINNIPEG
REGARDING THE NEED FOR
MORE COLLABORATION AND
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WITHIN THE SECTOR OF
ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING
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HOMELESSNESS.

“ I FEEL EVERY SINGLE PERSON THAT IS PUT IN CFS SHOULD HAVE GOT AS MUCH OPPORTUNITIES AS I HAD AND I STILL HAVE FACED HOMELESSNESS AFTER CFS... A LOT OF PEOPLE WHEN THEY AGE OUT, THEY’RE HOMELESS.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

when exiting corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, detox and addictions treatment, and mental health facilities. This can be facilitated by providing them with an on-site worker who can use an IGBA to help secure housing and wrap-around supports prior to exiting, and provide ongoing supports as needed after a transition to housing is made. They can also help identify and connect systems that can collaborate to efficiently support the individual. Success will depend largely on an adequate supply of safe and affordable housing and adequate capacity within wrap-around service providers to meet the needs of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. This can include services related to cultural supports, parenting supports, pre- and post-natal care, detox and addictions, and professional therapy services.

10.1 Ensure corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, mental health facilities, and detox and addictions treatment facilities partner with community-based organizations that use an IGBA to ensure no women, trans, Two-Spirit

and gender non-conforming people exits these services into homelessness.

10.2 Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people:

- 10.2.1 Have access to an on-site support worker that uses an intersectional gender-based analysis to connect them to housing and wrap-around services before, during, and after they exit corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, mental health facilities, and detox and addictions treatment facilities;
- 10.2.2 Receive EIA benefits prior to exiting corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, mental health facilities, and detox and addictions treatment facilities when needed to secure housing.

NEXT STEPS

This report is one step toward ending homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people. The next phase of our work will move toward implementing the recommendations we have put forward. We have established a flexible and responsive governance structure to oversee the implementation of this strategy and embed it in Winnipeg's collective efforts to end homelessness for all.

First Voice Advisory Committee is at the centre of the model, will be involved in all stages and have final approval on all actions.

Connecting the Circle Strategy will be the foundation of our action plan.

Steering Committee is responsible for making sure that the working groups are advancing the strategy and offers big picture direction. Membership includes community and government organizations representing relevant sectors, and First Voice Advisory representation.

Admin Team is responsible for managing the administration of the project, such as budgeting, HR, and daily operations. Members include the host organization, the Chair of the First Voice Advisory Committee, and the Project Coordinator.

Connecting the Circle Coordinator organizes and supports the work of the Steering Committee and Ad Hoc Working Groups.

Community Organizations include organizations that serve those experiencing gender-based homelessness. Representatives from these organizations will sit on Ad Hoc Working Groups related to their expertise.

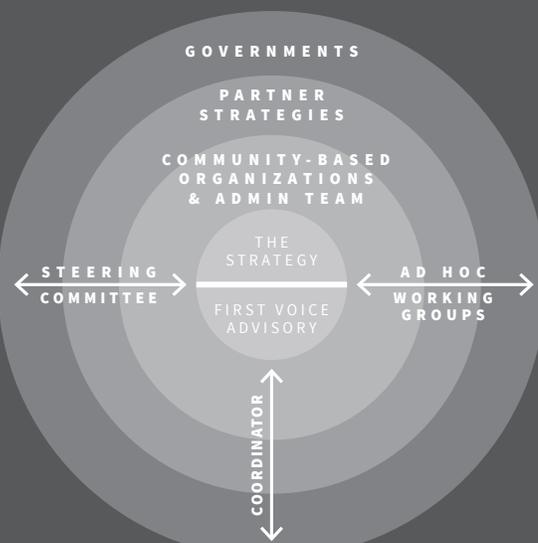
Governments include all levels of government (Indigenous, municipal, provincial, and federal). Representatives from these levels of government will be invited to sit on the Ad Hoc Working Groups.

Ad Hoc Working Groups will be organized around one or more pathways identified in the strategy (such as gender-based violence, justice or income security). They will be populated with stakeholders who have knowledge and expertise related to that pathway and members will work in partnership to move those recommendations forward.

Partner Strategies include the End Homelessness Winnipeg *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg* and *Here and Now: The Winnipeg Plan to End Youth Homelessness*, as well as any additional strategies that may be developed in the sector. The Project Coordinator will liaise with representatives of these strategies to ensure we are avoiding duplication of work and that we are working together in a coordinated fashion.

While it is our goal to see all of the recommendations in this report implemented, we will develop an implementation plan prioritizing three to five recommendations based on impact and opportunity to close gendered systemic gaps that lead to women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people becoming homeless. Good working relationships with community organizations and government bodies will be critical to ensuring we can identify opportunities for change and work together to close gaps in policy and practice. It's time for acceptance of all gender identities, a city-wide commitment to trauma-informed services, and an investment in the programs and strategies that work. It's time to work together to ensure people like Amanda can be safe and permanently housed in complete communities with unified families. It's time to reach our goals so that homelessness is a thing of the past for future generations of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people.

GOVERNANCE MODEL



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NOTES

- 1 Brandon et al., *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*.
- 2 “Turtle Island” is the Indigenous term for what is now commonly known as North America. (Chansonneuve, *Reclaiming Connections*, 11.)
- 3 “Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth” (American Psychological Association, “Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression Transgender”).
- 4 “‘Two-Spirit’ refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. As an umbrella term it may encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender variance, including people who might be described in Western culture as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, gender queer, cross-dressers or who have multiple gender identities.” (Re:searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health, “Two-Spirit Community.”)
- 5 “A person who does not conform to society’s expectations of gender expression based on the gender binary or expectations of masculinity and femininity.” (Veltman and Chaimowitz, “Mental Health Care for People Who Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and (or) Queer”). Our society tends to look at gender as a man/woman binary. Gender non-conforming refers to people who identify outside the binary and whose behaviour and/or appearance are along the continuum of gender. There are many terms people use to define their gender identity that does not conform with the gender binary. This report uses “gender non-conforming” as it was the term preferred by Rainbow Resource Centre, a local leader and project partner who works with gender-diverse people.
- 6 Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), *Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Homelessness on the Homelessness Partnering Strategy*.
- 7 Hankivsky, “The Lexicon of Mainstreaming Equality.”
- 8 *Ibid.*, 177.
- 9 Laboratory of Intergroup Relations and the Social Mind, “The Psychology of Invisibility.”
- 10 Status of Women Canada, “What is GBA+?”
- 11 Status of Women Canada, “Gender-Based Analysis Plus.”
- 12 Turner, Redman and Gaetz. *Defining and Measuring an End to Homelessness*, 5.
- 13 ESDC, *Final Report*.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 While most caregivers of children in care are women, we will use the term “caregivers” rather than “mothers” to be inclusive of trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming caregivers as well as other relatives caring for children such as aunts and grandmothers.
- 16 Drabble and McInnes, *Finding Her Home*, 3. It is important to note that Manitoba has the largest number of children in care in Canada and almost 90 percent of them are Indigenous.
- 17 ESDC, *Final Report*
- 18 Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, “Reaching Home.”
- 19 Patrick, *Aboriginal Homelessness In Canada*, 11
- 20 81 percent of women surveyed in the 2018 Winnipeg Street Census were Indigenous. (Personal communication with Josh Brandon of Social Planning Council of Winnipeg).
- 21 ESDC, *Final Report*.
- 22 Thistle, *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada*, 6.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 24 Laduke, “The Deadly Cost of Pipelines in Native Land.”
- 25 Brandon and Peters, *Moving to the City*.
- 26 Thistle, *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada*, 10-11.
- 27 “Non-binary” in the 2018 Street Census included Two-Spirit, genderqueer, transgender, transgender male, and transgender female people as well as other responses that were not categorized. (Brandon et al., *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*, 12).
- 28 Brandon et al., *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*, 9.
- 29 Personal communication with Josh Brandon of Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.
- 30 Brandon et al., *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*, 13.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 32 Cotter, *Violent Victimization of Women with Disabilities*.
- 33 Isaak et al., *2018 Winnipeg Street Health Survey*, 36.
- 34 Godoy and Maes Nino, *Here and Now*, 10.
- 35 Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S).”
- 36 *Ibid.*; Brandon et al., *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*.
- 37 West Central Women’s Resource Centre, North End Women’s Centre, Sunshine House, Resource Assistance for Youth, Mount Carmel Clinic — Sage House, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, EAGLE Urban Transition Centre, Wolseley Family Place, and Age & Opportunity.
- 38 Participants were asked an open-ended question regarding how they identify their cultural background. Those categorized as Indigenous responded in the following ways: Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nations, Native, Dakota, Sioux, Cree, Ojibwe, Mohawk, Inuit, and/or Métis.

- 39 The Anti-Oppression Network, “What is Anti-Oppression?”
- 40 Barker and Battell Lowman, *Settler Colonialism*.
- 41 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, 49.
- 42 Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewsky, *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing*.
- 43 Barndt and Reinsborough, *Decolonizing Art, Education, and Research*, 8.
- 44 The prefix ‘cis-’ refers to people whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth (Gender Spectrum, “The Language of Gender”).
- 45 Goodman et al., “‘We’ve Been Researched to Death’”; Clark, “‘We’re Over-Researched Here!’”
- 46 Rajan, *Women with Disabilities & Housing*.
- 47 General Child and Family Services Authority, “Innovative Domestic Violence Training Held at the GA.”
- 48 The Medicine Wheel is a teaching tool that has a rich history carried by Knowledge Keepers and Elders for over 4,000 years. There are many other elements associated with the colours and directions that are not listed here, as well there are many other Medicine Wheels in different traditions and locations.
- 49 Sociology Guide, “Gender oppression.”
- 50 A gender-responsive service is intended to respond to directly meet the unique needs of a specific gender. This is different from a gender-specific service, which is intended only for a specific gender but does not necessarily respond to the unique needs of that gender.
- 51 Turner et al., “Defining and Imagining an End to Homelessness,” 3; Rutman et al., *Emerging Best Practices*; Yerichuk et al., *Housing and Homelessness Policy Recommendations for Indigenous Women Affected by Domestic Violence*; Nichols et al., *Child Welfare and Youth Homelessness in Canada*.
- 52 Status of Women Canada, “What is GBA+?”
- 53 Personal communication with Josh Brandon of Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.
- 54 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Calls to Action*.
- 55 Abramovich, “No Safe Place to Go LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in Canada”; Smith, “Stories of 0s.”
- 56 Enns, “3 Pillars & Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach.”
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 According to the Government of Canada, the Housing First approach involves moving individuals who are chronically or episodically homeless from the streets or homeless shelters directly into permanent housing. Permanent housing is complemented by the provision of services to assist clients in sustaining their housing and working towards recovery and reintegration into the community.
- This is in contrast to the more traditional approach that involves resolving the personal issues that contributed to an individual’s homelessness before moving that person into stable housing.
- 59 Low-barrier services are those where a minimum number of expectations are placed on people who wish to access them. The aim is to have as few barriers as possible to allow more people access to services.
- 60 United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
- 61 European Institute for Gender Equality, “Gender-Based Violence Against Women.”
- 62 Conroy, *Police-Reported Violence Against Girls and Young Women in Canada, 2017*; Perreault, *Criminal Victimization in Canada, 2014*.
- 63 Community consultations.
- 64 Minerson et al., *Issue Brief*; Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, *Presentation to Legal Aid Ontario*; Athersych, “Nancy Janovick, *No Place to Go*”; European Institute for Gender Equality, “Gender-Based Violence Against Women.”
- 65 Sinha, *Measuring Violence Against Women*.
- 66 Public Health Agency of Canada, “Snapshot of Family Violence in Canada.”
- 67 Community consultation; Shannon et al., “Prevalence and Structural Correlates of Gender Based Violence Among a Prospective Cohort of Female Sex Workers”; National Center for Transgender Equality, “Gender Based Violence Against Trans Women Claims more Lives.”
- 68 Sinha, *Measuring Violence Against Women*; Bucik et al., *Canada: Discrimination and Violence Against LGBTQI2S Persons with Disabilities*.
- 69 Burczycka, *Section 2*.
- 70 A cis-gender person is a person who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- 71 Public Health Agency of Canada, “Snapshot of Family Violence in Canada”; Egale, *Presentation to Legal Aid Ontario*; Taylor, *The Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2016*.
- 72 Tutty et al., “I Built my House of Hope.”
- 73 Van Berkum and Oudshoorn, *Best Practice Guideline for Ending Women’s and Girl’s Homelessness*, 1; Tutty et al., “I Built my House of Hope.”
- 74 Maki, *Women’s Shelters Canada*; Chartier et al., *Mental Illness Among Adult Manitobans*; Abramovich and Shelton, *Where Am I Going to Go?*; Gaetz et al., *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016*; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Interim Report*.
- 75 Noble, *Beyond Housing First*; Abramovich and Shelton, *Where am I Going to Go?*
- 76 Status of Women Canada, “Breaking the Silence”; DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada, *Factsheet*; Taylor, *The Chief*

- Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2016*; Bucik et al., *Canada*.
- 77 Canadian Women's Foundation, "The Facts About Gender-Based Violence."
- 78 Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), *What Their Stories Tell Us*, 2.
- 79 Barkaskas and Hunt, *Access to Justice for Indigenous Adult Victims of Sexual Assault*; Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being (CSHW), *A Dialogue on Family Violence in Culturally Diverse Communities*; community consultations, focus group consultation.
- 80 Tutty et al., "I Built My House of Hope"; Mattoo, *Race, Gendered Violence, and the Rights of Women with Precarious Immigration Status*; CSHW, *A Dialogue on Family Violence in Culturally Diverse Communities*.
- 81 Community consultation.
- 82 Bennett, *On the Edge Between Two Worlds*.
- 83 NWAC, *What Their Stories Tell Us*.
- 84 Community consultation.
- 85 Noble, *Beyond Housing First*.
- 86 Family Violence Prevention Program and Manitoba's Women's Shelters, *Manitoba Standards Manual for Women's Shelters*.
- 87 Community consultations.
- 88 Gessler and Maes, *The Winnipeg Street Health Report*; Tutty et al., "I Built My House of Hope"; United Nations General Assembly, *Human Rights Council*; ESDC, *Final Report*.
- 89 Gessler and Maes, *The Winnipeg Street Health Report*, 18.
- 90 United Nations General Assembly. "Human Rights Council."
- 91 NWAC, *What Their Stories Tell Us*, 13.
- 92 Abramovich and Shelton, *Where am I Going to Go?*, 4.
- 93 Baker et al., "Domestic Violence, Housing Instability and Homelessness"; NWAC, *What Their Stories Tell Us*; Tutty et al., "I Built My House of Hope"; Godoy and Nino, *Here and Now*; Maki, *Women's Shelters Canada*.
- 94 NWAC, *What Their Stories Tell Us*, 12; Yerichuk et al., *Housing and Homelessness Policy Recommendations for Indigenous Women Affected by Domestic Violence*; Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT), *Canada's Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing*; Community consultation.
- 95 Novac, *Family Violence and Homelessness Connections and Dynamics*.
- 96 Canadian Women's Foundation, "Fact Sheet."
- 97 WomanACT, *Canada's Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing*.
- 98 Noble, *Beyond Housing First*, 15.
- 99 Status of Women Canada. "Breaking the Silence"; United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*.
- 100 Family Violence Prevention Program & Manitoba's Women's Shelters, *Manitoba Standards Manual for Women's Shelters*; Manitoba Department of Families, *Section 9*.
- 101 Community consultation.
- 102 Gulliver-Garcia, *Putting an End to Child & Family Homelessness in Canada*.
- 103 Conroy, *Police-Reported Violence Against Girls and Young Women in Canada*.
- 104 *Ibid*; Gover, et al., "When Abuse Happens Again"; Bucik, *Canada*; Comack, *Racialized Policing*; Manitoba Human Rights Commission and University of Winnipeg, *The Racialized Communities and Police Services Project Interim Report*.
- 105 Tutty et al., "I Built My House of Hope"
- 106 Winnipeg Police Service, "Sex Crimes Unit."
- 107 Focus groups; Drabble and McInnes, *Finding Her Home*; ESDC, *Final Report*.
- 108 Brandon et al., *Winnipeg Street Census 2018*, 23
- 109 Focus group; Abramovich, *No Safe Place to Go*, 33; Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning and Two-Spirit."
- 110 Siloam Mission, "Make Room."
- 111 Grabish, "Salvation Army Opens New Space for Homeless LGBT People, Critics Raise Concerns."
- 112 Salvation Army, "Overview."
- 113 Community consultation.
- 114 ESDC, *Final Report*.
- 115 Community consultation.
- 116 Focus group.
- 117 Drabble and McInnes, *Finding Her Home*, 40.
- 118 Community consultations.
- 119 Salvation Army, *Overview*, 11; Community consultations.
- 120 Glowacki, "Province Should Take Steps to Get Out of Public Housing."
- 121 KPMG LLP, *Manitoba Fiscal Performance Review*.
- 122 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *The Housing Conditions of Female-Led Aboriginal Households*, 2.
- 123 "A household is said to be in 'core housing need' if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable" (Statistics Canada, "Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016").
- 124 Department of Families, Children, and Social Development, *Canada's National Housing Strategy*, 11.

- 125 Lottis et al., *Rooming Houses to Rooming Homes*, 12.
- 126 Kotyk, *Housing Models and Developmental Frameworks*.
- 127 *Ibid.*
- 128 Community consultation.
- 129 Community consultation.
- 130 Brandon and Silver, *Poor Housing*, 20; Focus groups.
- 131 Community consultation.
- 132 *Ibid.*
- 133 Statistics Canada, *Low Income Statistics by Age, Sex, and Economic Family Type*.
- 134 Statistics Canada, *Data Tables*.
- 135 MacEwen, "Who Earns Minimum Wage?"; Fox and Moyser, *Women in Canada*.
- 136 Scott, *The Best and Worst Places to be a Woman in Canada 2019*, 80.
- 137 Lambert and McInturff, *Making Women Count*, 6.
- 138 Fox and Moyser, *Women in Canada*.
- 139 Statistics Canada, *Low Income Statistics by Age, Sex and Economic Family Type*.
- 140 Statistics Canada, *Percentage of Persons in Low Income by Sex*.
- 141 Manitoba Department of Families, "Section 13."
- 142 Community consultation.
- 143 Savarese and Morton, *Women and Social Assistance Policy in Saskatchewan and Manitoba*.
- 144 Canada's Human Rights History, "Spouse in the House."
- 145 Ross and Khanna, *What Are the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ+) People that Should be Addressed by Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy?*; Women with disabilities have lower average personal income across Canada when compared to women without disabilities and men with or without disabilities. In 2011, Manitoba had the highest prevalence of disability among women (at 16.6 percent) in any Canadian region (Statistics Canada, "Women with Disabilities").
- 146 Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Status for Adults With and Without Disabilities*.
- 147 DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, *Factsheet*.
- 148 Ross and Khanna, *What Are the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ+) People that Should be Addressed by Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy?*
- 149 Community consultation.
- 150 Focus groups; community consultation; Drabble and McInnes, *Finding Her Home*.
- 151 Manitoba Department of Families, "Employment and Income Assistance: For Single Parents."
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APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY DOCUMENTS

GENDER-BASED STRATEGY TO END HOMELESSNESS

CONSULTATION PLAN

August 24, 2018

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purpose of this project is to create a Strategy to End Gender-Based Homelessness in Winnipeg, to be implemented within the *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg*. Women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people experience unique paths to homelessness due to gender-based experiences in communities and social systems. The Strategy will include targets and timelines for closing gendered, systemic gaps, including at minimum targeted recommendations to improve gender-based supports for those exiting Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters and correctional institutions. We will also have a clear plan on how the community of women- and trans-serving agencies will hold, implement, and evaluate outcomes. We envision the Strategy implementation as community owned and will look to the Steering and First Voice Advisory committees to develop a path forward.

CONSULTATION PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Consultation Plan outlines how we will organize local research to inform our Strategy development. The goal is to gather information to highlight key system gaps that create unique gendered paths to homelessness and barriers to exiting homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming individuals.

Stakeholder Groups

1. Individuals with lived experience of gendered homelessness
 - a. Characteristics to prioritize are as follows — income is overarching:
 - b. CFS involvement
 - c. Indigenous
 - d. Elderly
 - e. Youth
 - f. Incarcerated
 - g. Trans
 - h. Two-Spirit
 - i. 2SLGBTQ+
 - j. Newcomer
 - k. Family
 - l. Exploitation
 - m. Gang involved
 - n. Length of time homeless
2. Landlords
3. Community Agencies
4. Government/system representatives at all levels: service delivery, management, and policy
 - a. EIA
 - b. RTB
 - c. Justice
 - d. CFS
 - e. Health/WRHA

- f. Manitoba Department of Family Services
 - g. City of Winnipeg
- 5. Broader public
 - a. Agencies not targeted in #3 above
 - b. Tenants living with gendered experience of insecure housing

CONSULTATION PLAN

1. Individuals with lived experience of gendered homelessness:

We will use 10 community focus groups with 10 participants each, for a total of 100 participants, to gather information. We will ask seven key Winnipeg agencies that use a gender-based approach to host these focus groups. This will ensure the focus groups happen in comfortable community-based spaces that have built-in supports for participants should they need support afterwards. Once we collect key themes from the first seven groups, we can use the remaining three focus groups to fill in gaps in the research or ask more in-depth questions about key findings.

Potential host agencies as prioritized by Steering Committee members.

Final host locations to be confirmed based on availability:

- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
- Sunshine House
- Mount Carmel Clinic
- Sunrise Village (Salvation Army)
- Age & Opportunity
- North End Women's Centre
- Indigenous Women's Healing Centre
- Eagle Urban Transition Centre
- West Central Women's Resource Centre
- New Journey Housing
- Rainbow Resource Centre
- Resource Assistance for Youth

TIMELINE: May: Three focus groups to add detail and fill gaps in previous findings.

2. Landlords:

We hope to organize one small focus group of four to six people and an additional four to six individual interviews. Ongoing discussion at Research Sub-Committee: How to find opportunities for landlord education? For example: “What do you think homelessness looks like? How do landlords screen prospective tenants?”

Key Landlord Connection Points:

- Winnipeg Rental Network
- Winnipeg Housing
- MB Housing
- SAM Management
- Other?

TIMELINE: End of April/beginning of May

3. Community agencies:

Group discussion

Key community agencies:

- Ka Ni Kanichihk
- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
- Sunshine House
- Mount Carmel Clinic
- Dream Catchers (Klinik)
- West Broadway Seniors Resource Centre
- Age & Opportunity
- North End Women’s Centre
- North Point Douglas Women’s Centre
- Indigenous Women’s Healing Centre
- Eagle Urban Transition Centre
- Main Street Project
- West Central Women’s Resource Centre
- New Journey Housing
- Other?

4. Government/system representatives at all levels: service delivery, management, policy, and AMC. Steering Committee members to suggest key contacts in the following systems:

- EIA
- RTB
- Justice
- CFS
- Health/WRHA
- Manitoba Department of Family Services
- City of Winnipeg

TIMELINE: End of April/beginning of May

5. Broader public:

Gather consultation through online survey (survey to be written based on initial focus groups). Steering and First Voice Advisory committee members to assist with promotion of surveys via online sharing.

- Agencies not targeted in #3 above
- Tenants living with gendered experience of insecure housing

TIMELINE: May: Create survey(s) based on initial focus group themes. Apply for ethics approval.
June: Distribute publicly with our new name/logo

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Introduction (currently designed for lived experience focus groups):

Thank you for sharing your time and your knowledge with us. We acknowledge we are on Treaty 1 territory, Original Lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and Homeland of the Métis Nation. Before we start, we would like to go through our consent form. (Introduce everyone, including focus group participants.)

This is one of 10 focus groups we are hosting as part of creating a Strategy to End Gender-Based Homelessness in Winnipeg. Here are some key definitions that will help us work together on the same page:

- A strategy is a plan of action. It is a roadmap that will help us work step-by-step toward our goal of changing system policies and practices that lead to gendered homelessness. We want to do more than just create resources for people who are already living in homelessness—we want to change the things that caused that homelessness in the first place. So, we need a really clear roadmap.
- Gender refers to the different ways people identify; a spectrum with masculine at one end, feminine at the other end, and lots of variation in between. In our strategy, we recognize that most services and supports offered for people experiencing homelessness are created around a man's experience of homelessness. We want everyone to be included, so here we use the terms "gender-based" or "gendered" to describe experiences of homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming individuals.
- There are different types of homelessness. People have most often defined homelessness by someone sleeping outside or in a homelessness shelter. But we know that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are likely to experience different kinds of homelessness than men. Homelessness also includes couch surfing, staying with someone you barely know to avoid going to the shelter, staying at a Violence Against Women shelter, trading services for having a place to sleep (like free babysitting, cleaning, running drugs, or having sex with someone), or staying in a place where you experience abuse just so you have somewhere to sleep. It also includes losing your home due to a natural disaster like a fire or flood.
- Identity impacts experiences of oppression. Vignettes: anecdotal, intersectional experiences that highlights what we're trying to find out.

The goal of our Strategy is to close system gaps that create gendered paths into homelessness and/or barriers to exiting homelessness. We have three arms that are helping to create the strategy:

1. First Voice Advisory Committee guides the work through their lived experience of gendered homelessness;
2. Steering Committee is made up of 33 community-based agencies and government representatives;
3. Research, including a literature review, seeing what other provinces and cities are doing to end gendered homelessness, and local consultation (which you are a part of).

Today we have a few questions that will guide our conversation. We want to find out how your gendered experiences of homelessness are connected to the ways systems work. Feel free to share based on your own experiences or things you have noticed other people going through as well.

Group Agreements: we will be talking about personal experiences that might be painful to remember. We can make this space as safe as possible by:

- One person speaking at a time
- Turning ringers off
- Accepting differences. If you have a different experience, share it without judging the other view.
- Sharing the spotlight. Try to let everyone have a say. If someone is taking time that others need to be heard, we will gently interrupt to help them finish their thought so we can move on.
- Respecting confidentiality. After we're done you can tell people you were a part of this discussion, but don't talk about who else was here or what specific things they shared.
- Other...?

Part I: Lived Experience

How do you think gender affects experiences of homelessness?

- What are some things that lead to women's homelessness?
- What makes it hard for women to exit homelessness?

What makes it hard to keep or find housing?

- System hoops/gaps: CFS? EIA? Corrections? Health? Housing providers? Social expectations?
- What about income, transportation, identification, or tenant rights?
- What have you been told by community resources or landlords about how to get housing?
- What about eviction?
- What could have kept you from losing your housing?

What worked to help you exit homelessness?

What do you wish was available to help you exit homelessness?

- What kind of housing options would be best to help people exit homelessness? Gendered housing or spaces?
- Any ways systems could help you exit homelessness more easily? For example, a damage deposit guarantee letter from EIA for housing applications.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about gendered homelessness?

Part II: Landlords

What systemic barriers do landlords face that impact tenant stability?

- Barriers around property upkeep? Bylaw issues?

What are common reasons for eviction?

- What's different for women, trans, non-binary?

What works for eviction prevention?

- What do you wish existed to help you keep people housed?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about gendered homelessness?

Part III: Community Agencies

What are the most common gender-based reasons for eviction?

- System gaps, identification, transportation, income, violence?

What is different for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people when navigating homelessness or housing security?

- Systemic barriers?

What works for eviction prevention?

What should we include in a gender-based strategy to end homelessness?

- Short term, medium term, long term.
- Details on how we get to specific outcomes.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about gendered homelessness?

Part IV: Government

What policies in your department relate to gender and homelessness?

What programs and/or opportunities exist in your department to collaborate around homelessness? Specifically with a gender-based lens?

What process does your department use to navigate grey areas between policy and practice?

How do we collaborate with government to embed this Strategy to End Gender-Based Homelessness in government practice? What is the best way for us to influence changes in government practice?

What barriers do you experience (or anticipate) with multi-level collaboration? What needs to exist to allow your department to work together with the other governments on gender-based housing security?

Gender-Based Strategy to End Homelessness in Winnipeg

CONSENT FORM

Purpose and Explanation of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by the West Central Women's Resource Center (WCWRC) in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies. The co-investigators (CI) include Lisa Spring, Director of Community Engagement, who can be reached at 204-774-8975 ext. 209 or communityengagement@wcwrc.ca and Dr. Shauna MacKinnon, Associate Professor, University of Winnipeg Department of Urban and Inner City Studies, who can be reached at 204-988-7197 or st.mackinnon@uwinnipeg.ca.

The purpose of this research is to create a strategy to end gender-based homelessness for women, trans, two-spirit, and gender-non conforming individuals who experience paths to homelessness not always addressed by previous homelessness research and/or existing systems and supports. This gender-based strategy will be implemented in Winnipeg's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.

You are being invited to take part in this research study as a government employee/representative. Your participation will help to inform the project of government service delivery, management, and policy regarding gender-based homelessness and those at risk of gender-based homelessness. Your participation will help to raise awareness about the experiences that women, trans, two-spirit, and gender non-conforming individuals have with homelessness and systems such as CFS, Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), Corrections, Health, and Housing.

Methods

Interviews will be the means of gathering information. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Findings will be included in a final report. The interview will be conducted by either CI Lisa Spring, or researcher Rachel Antonia Dunsmore.

Anonymity & Confidentiality

You have the option to use your real name in the study or to choose a false name. Due to the small population of the communities in question, there remains a risk that a community member reading the final report could piece together your identity. However, for those who wish to remain anonymous, precautions shall be taken for confidentiality such as the removal or anonymization of identifying information in all materials linked to you. Every effort will be made to ensure that only the researcher conducting the interview will know your identity if you choose to remain anonymous. If you choose to, you can review your transcript and excerpts from your interview for accuracy. Upon completion of the study, you will be given a four-page summary of findings.

Gender-Based Strategy to End Homelessness in Winnipeg

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by the West Central Women's Resource Center (WCWRC) in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies. The co-investigators (CI) include Lisa Spring, Director of Community Engagement, who can be reached at 204-774-8975 ext. 209 or communityengagement@wcwrc.ca and Dr. Shauna MacKinnon, Associate Professor, University of Winnipeg Department of Urban and Inner City Studies, who can be reached at 204-988-7197 or st.mackinnon@uwinnipeg.ca.

The purpose of this research is to create a strategy to end gender-based homelessness for women, trans, two-spirit, and gender-non conforming individuals who experience paths to homelessness not always addressed by previous homelessness research and/or existing systems and supports. This gender-based strategy will be implemented in Winnipeg's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Participants will take part in a focus group lasting approximately ninety (90) minutes. These focus groups will be audio recorded for the purposes of accurately capturing what was said for the final report. The focus groups will be conducted by co-investigator Lisa Spring along with Jolene Wilson, Community Connector (WCWRC) and the researcher, Rachel Antonia Dunsmore.

Your participation will help to raise awareness about the experiences that women, trans, two-spirit, and gender non-conforming individuals have with homelessness and systems such as CFS, Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), Corrections, Health, and Housing.

Every effort will be made to ensure that only the co-investigators and the researcher conducting the focus groups will know your identity. If you choose to, you can review the focus group transcription and excerpts from the focus group for accuracy. Upon completion of the study, you will be given a four-page summary of findings.

Data will be stored in locked file cabinets and password protected computers for five years after completion of the study (unless you agree to let the CI retain materials) and will be disposed of by shredding paper files, deleting electronic files, and destroying memory cards.

Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality are of utmost importance to the researchers. By signing this form, you are confirming that you will respect the confidentiality of other participants in the focus group. Respecting confidentiality means after the focus group you can tell people you were part of this discussion, but you agree not to talk about who else was here or what specific things they shared. The co-investigators and study personnel will have no way of enforcing confidentiality beyond participation.

COMMUNITY AGENCY SURVEY

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by the West Central Women's Resource Center (WCWRC) in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies. The co-investigators (CI) include Lisa Spring, Director of Community Engagement, who can be reached at 204-774-8975 ext. 209 or communityengagement@wcwrc.ca and Dr. Shauna MacKinnon, Associate Professor, University of Winnipeg Department of Urban and Inner City Studies, who can be reached at 204-988-7197 or st.mackinnon@uwinnipeg.ca.

The purpose of this research is to create a strategy to end gender-based homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming individuals who experience pathways to homelessness not always addressed by previous homelessness research and/or existing systems and supports. This gender-based strategy will be implemented in the *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg*. This information will be compiled confidentially through Survey Monkey and will be used to inform our final gender-based strategy to end homelessness.

Here are some key definitions that will help us work together on the same page:

- A **strategy** is a plan of action. It is a roadmap that will help us work step-by-step toward our goal of changing system policies and practices that lead to gendered homelessness. We want to do more than just create resources for people who are already living in homelessness — we want to change the things that caused that homelessness in the first place.
- **Gender** refers to the different ways people identify; a spectrum with masculine at one end, feminine at the other end, and lots of variation in between. In our strategy, we recognize that most services and supports offered for people experiencing homelessness are created around a man's experience of homelessness. We want everyone to be included, so here we use the words 'Gender-Based' or 'gendered' to describe experiences of homelessness for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming individuals.
- **Types of homelessness:** People have most often defined homelessness by someone sleeping outside or in a homelessness shelter. We know that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people are likely to experience different kinds of homelessness than men. Homelessness also includes couch surfing, staying with someone you barely know to avoid going to the shelter, staying at a Violence Against Women shelter, trading services for having a place to sleep (like free babysitting, cleaning, running drugs, or having sex with someone), or staying in a place where you experience abuse just so you have somewhere to sleep. It includes losing your home due to a natural disaster like a fire or flood. It also includes living in an institution such as prison and having nowhere to go upon release.

The goal of our Strategy is to close system gaps that create gendered paths into homelessness and/or barriers to exiting homelessness. We have 3 arms that are helping to create the strategy:

1. First Voice Advisory Committee guides the work through their lived experience of gendered homelessness
2. Steering Committee is made up of 34 community-based agencies and government representatives
3. Research including a literature review, seeing what other provinces and cities are doing to end gendered homelessness, and local consultation (which you are a part of).

Please note that your participation is confidential and voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question(s) and are free to stop participating in the study any time.

Some community agency staff may have experienced homelessness. If this is your experience, please complete the survey for people with lived experience. For a copy of this survey contact Jolene Wilson, 204-775-8975 ext. 221, communityconnector@wcwrc.ca.

This survey will take less than 30 minutes to complete.

Section 1

Please circle Yes or No.

1. Are you a service provider at a community agency whose clients/participants include those affected by and/or at-risk of gender-based homelessness?

a) Yes

b) No

Section 2: Demographic Information – Community Agency Staff/Personnel

This information is used to help us understand the perspective of respondents. No one will be able to identify you through giving this information, but it will be used to report on our final statistics.

Personal Information:

- **Age:** _____
- **Pronouns** (ex. she/her, they/them, he/him): _____
- **Cultural background:** _____
- **Status? Non-status?:** _____

Sector Information:

- **What sector do you work in?** _____
- **How long have you been working in the sector?** _____

- **From your experience, what percentage of your clientele are affected by and/or are at risk of gender-based homelessness? _____**

Staff/Personnel

2. What are the most common gender-based reasons for eviction? Please check all that apply.

- Impacts of substance use
- Strict house rules (for example: no/limited guests, discrimination based on family size)
- Conflict in the family, including gender-based violence
- Rent increases and/or limited income
- Challenges navigating government systems. Please explain below.
- Gender bias (for example: related to gender identity, family size, etc.) – please explain.
- Discrimination (for example: race, sexuality, etc.) – please explain.
- Challenges navigating landlord-tenant roles and responsibilities
- Other:

Please explain:

3. What is different for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people when navigating homelessness or housing security? Please check all that apply.

- High risk of gender-based violence

- The criteria to access resources and/or supports is too narrow for all gendered experiences (for example: only counting sleeping on the street or in a homeless shelter, only women with children can access certain support, only single women can access certain supports, criteria for sobriety).
- High risk of exploitation
- For those with children, high risk of CFS involvement
- Gender bias (for example: related to gender identity, family size, etc.)
- Discrimination (for example: race, sexuality, etc.)
- I'm not sure
- Other

Please explain:

4. What works for eviction prevention? Please check all that apply.

- Housing options with supports (supports for health, system navigation, support with ongoing life stresses)
- More information about community resources
- Programs with flexible criteria; low-barrier programs
- Workers with lived experience
- Workers who understand poverty and/or housing insecurity
- Education for landlords and tenants about rights and responsibilities
- Compliance with the Residential Tenancies Branch (RTB) standards (rules and regulations) for landlord-tenant responsibilities.
- Other

Please explain:

5. The goal of our Strategy is to close system gaps that create gendered paths into homelessness and/or barriers to exiting homelessness. What should we include in a gender-based strategy to end homelessness? Please rate/prioritize the following themes:

- Accessible housing that meets diverse and changing needs
- Housing that integrates safe community spaces for women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming individuals
- People-centred system change
- Safe housing and community design
- Strategies to decolonize the ways we work together
- Education and community empowerment
- Working with others

Please explain:

6. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about gendered homelessness?

APPENDIX B:
ALIGNMENT WITH THE 10-YEAR PLAN
TO END HOMELESSNESS IN WINNIPEG

CTC Recommendations	EHW 10-YEAR PLAN PILLARS			
	1. Prevention	2. Person-Centred System of Care	3. Housing Supply	4. Measurement
1. Program/Policy Design and Delivery				
1.1				
1.2				
1.3				
1.4				
1.5				
1.6				
1.7				
1.8				
1.9				
2. Gender-Based Violence				
2.1				
2.2				
2.3				
2.4				
3. Shelter System				
3.1				
3.2				
3.3				
4. Social and Affordable Housing in Complete Communities				
4.1				
4.2				
4.3				
4.4				
4.5				
5. Income Security				
5.1				
5.2				
5.3				
5.4				
6. Addictions				
6.1				
6.2				
6.3				
7. Justice				
7.1				
7.2				
8. Child and Family Services				
8.1				
8.2				
8.3				
9. Continuum of Health				
9.1				
10. Preventing System Exits to Homelessness				
10.1				
10.2				

APPENDIX C: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PROGRAM / POLICY DESIGN AND DELIVERY

1.1 Government and community organizations must:

- 1.1.1 Use an intersectional gender-based analysis (IGBA) in the design, delivery, and evaluation of all initiatives (such as policies, legislation, and programs) that relate to housing insecurity and homelessness;
- 1.1.2 Meaningfully engage diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness in the design and delivery of those initiatives.

1.2 Government and community organizations must develop front-line capacity to use an IGBA by:

- 1.2.1 Providing mandatory training for staff in community and government organizations that serve diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity;
- 1.2.2 Enhancing human resource policies and building capacity in government and community organizations that serve people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness so they can recruit and hire and accommodate more diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, including people who have experienced housing insecurity and homelessness.

1.3 All community and government organizations that support diverse Indigenous women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness must:

- 1.3.1 Learn about and understand truth and reconciliation as well as the impacts of colonialism and oppression;
- 1.3.2 Develop, deliver, and evaluate services for Indigenous women, trans, Two-Spirit, gender non-conforming people through a decolonizing and anti-oppressive approach.

1.4 Eliminate barriers rooted in service design and delivery (such as hours of operation, eligibility criteria, accessibility, and availability of childcare) that prevent diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people from accessing the supports they need to gain stable housing.

1.5 Ensure eligibility criteria for homelessness services include hidden homelessness and Indigenous homelessness.

1.6 Provide targeted outreach and delivery of government services (such as Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), housing, Child and Family Services (CFS)) to marginalized women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness in community-based organizations where they are already accessing services.

1.7 Expand the ability of government and community-based organizations, with priority to organizations led by and serving newcomer, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ people, to offer transition services to diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people migrating to Winnipeg so they can better connect people experiencing homelessness to the resources that meet their unique needs.

- 1.8 Support community-based organizations that use an IGBA in the design and delivery of a full continuum of low-barrier housing-related services with wrap-around supports including Housing First programs, transitional and permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and eviction prevention supports, so they can expand and improve services and outreach efforts to better meet the needs of diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Priority should be given to organizations that are led by or serve 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous Peoples.
- 1.9 Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness have access to a low-barrier safe space 24 hours a day. Support those spaces to use an intersectional gender-based analysis in the design and delivery of services that meet basic needs and connect to resources that address homelessness.

2 . G E N D E R - B A S E D V I O L E N C E

- 2.1 Expand the mandate of the Family Violence Prevention Program to include all forms of gender-based violence so that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have experienced violence can access a securely located and gender-specific emergency shelter that offers gender-based violence supports regardless of who perpetrated the violence or where the violence took place.
- 2.2 Extend shelter stays outlined in the EIA Administrative Manual from 30 days to 90 days to better ensure housing with wrap-around supports can be secured before leaving the shelter.
- 2.3 Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who are victims of violence have access to community-based mental health and healing services, and ensure perpetrators of violence have access to programs that aim to stop the cycle of violence.
- 2.4 Support innovative solutions to ending gender-based violence, including public education and third-party reporting options, as well as trauma-informed and victim-centred training on working with victims' perspectives for law enforcement and justice personnel.

3 . S H E L T E R S Y S T E M

- 3.1 Ensure gender-based violence and homeless shelters are supported to meet the demand for separate and secure gender-specific spaces as well as family spaces. Consideration should be given to providing options in terms of shelter location and services that take a harm reduction approach.
- 3.2 Support homeless and gender-based family violence shelters to strengthen policy, practice, and training around 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and implement outreach and communications strategies that explicitly demonstrate how services are inclusive.

3.3 Conduct a safety and inclusion audit of gender-based violence and homeless shelters that includes diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people and then implement shelter standards, policies, and practices that address safety and inclusion concerns.

4. SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

- 4.1 Increase the supply of adequate, accessible, and quality rent-geared-to-income housing units built with universal design by the public, non-profit, and co-op sectors with specific targets to meet the need for units with three or more bedrooms. Provide supports to the private sector to enable the development of rent-geared-to-income housing.
- 4.2 Consult with diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people with lived experience of homelessness to maximize safety and comfort in new and existing rent-geared-to-income housing developments across the housing spectrum.
- 4.3 Prioritize the construction of adequate, accessible, and quality, rent-geared-to-income housing in a variety of neighbourhoods that are located near essential services including childcare, schools, laundry and transportation services, and grocery stores. Ensure that supports for maintaining tenancy, delivered using an IGBA, are also available nearby or on site.
- 4.4 Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people can access low-barrier, gender-specific, and responsive transitional and permanent supportive housing options with wrap-around supports to meet their unique needs. Priority should be given to transitional housing models that meet the unique needs of 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous Peoples.
- 4.5 Establish partnerships between community-based housing advocates, housing providers, Winnipeg Police Service, and the Residential Tenancies Branch to develop policies and practices that ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people don't face discrimination, abuse, or exploitation by housing providers.

5. INCOME SECURITY

- 5.1 Invest in reducing rates of poverty and social exclusion among diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people by using an IGBA in the development and implementation of comprehensive poverty reduction plans with targets and timelines.
- 5.2 Enhance the Rent Assist benefit so that caregivers of children aren't forced to use other budgets such as the Canada Child Benefit to pay their rent, and move toward replacing one-off, income related benefits with a guaranteed annual income that will eliminate poverty for caregivers and their families.

- 5.3 Ensure all provincial policies have a reunification focus by extending family shelter benefits and granting emergency rent funds when necessary without the need for EIA director approval. Provide these same shelter benefits and emergency rent funds when necessary for three months prior to a reunification date.
- 5.4 Bring EIA, CFS, and community-based organizations together to align policy and work in collaboration to ensure no caregiver loses their housing when children are placed in care or experience other income insecurity related to changes in family size. Create and implement a province-wide plan to align all provincial departments and portfolios with the current Manitoba Housing policy that ensures secure housing for two years after an apprehension or family size change.

6 . S U B S T A N C E U S E

- 6.1 Provide publicly funded, gender-specific, and responsive detox and addictions treatment options and beds, including evidence-based day programs and residential programs that last beyond 28 days as needed to ensure immediate entry into detox and a seamless transition from detox into treatment services.
- 6.2 Consult with diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people to ensure they have access to a continuum of detox and addictions treatment services that are designed to meet their unique needs (such as childcare, harm reduction, trauma supports, and criminal records).
- 6.3 Ensure gender-specific and responsive detox and addictions treatment facilities can offer community-based, Indigenous-led healing and wellness practices that provide access to education, cultural reclamation, and that address gender-based and intergenerational trauma.

7 . J U S T I C E

- 7.1 With priority given to Indigenous-led and serving organizations that use an IGBA to support diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people, invest in:
- 7.1.1 Gender-specific and responsive bail support programs with housing supports;
 - 7.1.2 Organizations that offer supports in remand to prevent the loss of homes and children.
- 7.2 Invest in programs and supports provided by Manitoba Corrections and community-based organizations that meet the unique needs of women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender-conforming people in Women's Correctional Centre (WCC). Priority should be given to programs and supports led by Indigenous Peoples and the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

8 . CHILD WELFARE

- 8.1 Ensure caregivers are supported to meet their parenting needs, keeping children at home wherever possible and avoid child apprehension while they work to address challenges that increase their risk of experiencing homelessness.
- 8.2 Ensure caregivers have access to a culturally responsive support team when involved with CFS, assisting the caregiver to meet their individual needs, avoiding apprehension or working toward reunification as necessary, including the prevention of housing insecurity and homelessness.
- 8.3 Develop and implement an intersectional strategy in the CFS system to better support and nurture Two-Spirit, trans, and gender non-conforming youth in care. This includes gathering appropriate demographic data to know the extent of the need and supporting existing and potential foster families and group homes.

9 . CONTINUUM OF HEALTH

- 9.1 Invest in a range of better quality public and community-based mental health services that are inclusive of Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ communities and that meet the unique needs of diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people at all ages, and ensure services can be accessed as soon as needed. Priority should be given to services that address trauma and take a trauma-informed approach.

10 . PREVENTING SYSTEM EXITS TO HOMELESSNESS

- 10.1 Ensure corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, mental health facilities, and detox and addictions treatment facilities partner with community-based organizations that use an IGBA to ensure no women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people exits these services into homelessness.
- 10.2 Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people:
 - 10.2.1 Have access to an on-site support worker that uses an IGBA to connect them to housing and wrap-around services before, during, and after they exit corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, mental health facilities, and detox and addictions treatment facilities;
 - 10.2.2 Receive EIA benefits prior to exiting corrections, shelters, the child welfare system, mental health facilities, and detox and addictions treatment facilities when needed to secure housing.

CONNECTING THE CIRCLE

A GENDER-BASED STRATEGY TO END
HOMELESSNESS IN WINNIPEG

WCWRC.CA/CONNECTING-THE-CIRCLE