When a **HOUSE** is Not a **HOME**

Investigating Spiritual Homelessness in Indigenous Populations of Calgary

Research Question: How might community and industry work together to foster belonging in housing for Indigenous families?

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Preface

Housing and culture are intrinsically linked. In order to create a home out of a house, one must have a sense of belonging, agency, safety and security. For those who have suffered under the effects of the Indian Act, this lack of cultural identity can impact how they relate to themselves, their homes, and others. There is a glaring need for home developers and other housing organisations to create more culturally diverse programming and foster greater un–derstanding within their organisation. To understand how the past can affect the present, it is vital for stakeholders to gain a broad understanding of the needs of Indigenous communities and residents, especially if they are coming from an unhoused background.

The journey map answers some of the these key questions that arose over course of research:

- What is holding the system in place?
- What is hidden?
- Where are the branches?
- Where and how do we lose people?

Key Insights

Emotions that people may feel about their lack of connection:
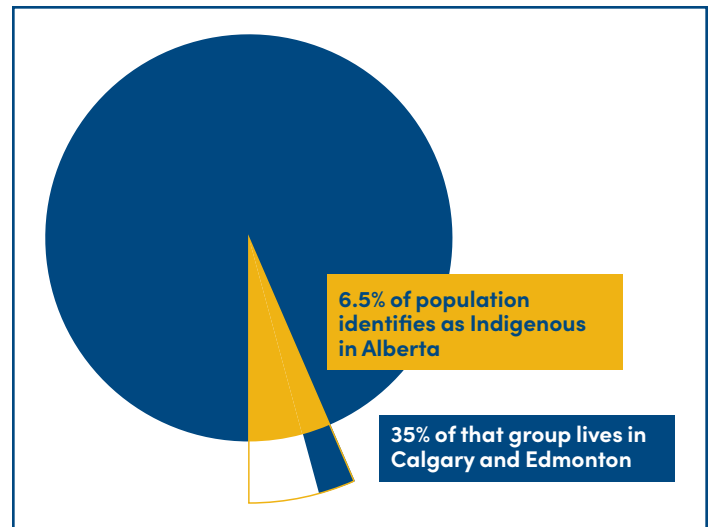
Shame   Fear   Anger   Frustration   Despair

Spiritual Homelessness

A state arising from: (a) separation from traditional land, (b) separation from family and kinship networks, or (c) crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused.

(Memmott and Chambers, 2008)

- Indigenous People are **8 times more likely** to be homeless than the general population (Thistle, 2017)

6.5% of population identifies as Indigenous in Alberta

35% of that group lives in Calgary and Edmonton

2.1 Identifying Stakeholders

There were four key stakeholders identified in the discussion of housing, all of whom are connected. The strengths of these connections vary, but are all important in some way when it comes to how housing is administered and used. They are:

- **Residents -** those who live in housing. It includes not only Indigenous residents but also those who share space in the same place. THis category includes renters in additional to individual homeowners.

- **Landlords and property managers** - those who manage the housing which indigenous residents live in. Landlords are more likely to live off-site, while property managers usually live on-site or nearby, and are more likely to handle day-to-day operations such as rent collection, leasing, and property maintenance.

- **Developers/Owners -** those who own the housing stock. This includes housing organisations and companies along a spectrum from residential to commercial, such as Calgary Housing and Brookfield Residential. This category encompasses a broad range, including organizations that develop property and those who covert it for other uses, as well as their management staff.

- **Government -** Overseeing entities, such as municipal, provincial and federal entities. This can include various departments within the City of Calgary, Province of Alberta, or Government of Canada.

- **Nonprofits and other organisations -** This can include organisations that promote cultural events such as the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary, and those that help residents find long-term housing such as the Calgary Homeless Foundation, Trellis, Metis Family Services, and campus-based Indigenous housing.

Landlords & Property Managers

Developers /Owners

Government

Housing

Nonprofits + other organizatons

Residents

Levers of Change

- Organisational change - creating opportunities within organisations to consider the voices of Indigenous residents in order to create better programming.

- Focused hiring strategies to create more diverse perspectives when creating homes and communities

- Targeted pilot projects in underserved communities to understand how spiritual needs can be met.

References

Indian Act, RSC 1985, c. I–5

Memmott, P. & Chambers, C. (2008). Homelessness amongst Aboriginal people in inner Sydney. Presented at *2nd Australasian Housing Researchers' Conference*. University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Thistle, J. (2017.) Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.