



Chapter 4.5

Pan-Territorial Report: A Study of Women's Homelessness North of 60°

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Research about women's homelessness in the North is critical, since women have been identified as among the fastest-growing groups in the homeless and at-risk population. In the North, all women can be considered at risk of homelessness, because a small change in their circumstances can jeopardize the fragile structure of their lives that allows them to meet their basic needs.

Although everyone living in the Canada's three northern territories recognizes that housing is a "big problem," few understand the complex constellation of factors, many of which go well beyond the shortage of housing stock, that conspire to keep thousands of women and their children in a condition of absolute or hidden homelessness. Those who do not live in the North have even less awareness about the despair and day-to-day suffering of their fellow Canadians. The authors of this report are convinced that the story of women and homelessness in the North must be told in such a way that it will inspire political and social will for

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action. Research is one way to give voice to women whose experience has so far remained on the margins of society.

In 2005, a consortium consisting of Kaushee's Place and the Yukon Status of Women Council in Whitehorse, Yukon; Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council and Qimaavik Women's Shelter in Iqaluit, Nunavut; and the Yellowknife Women's Society and YWCA Yellowknife in Yellowknife, NWT received funding from the National Research Program of the National Homelessness Initiative to carry out a comprehensive study of women's homelessness in the North. Judie Bopp, Ph.D. of the Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning was asked by to serve as the study's principal researcher.

Research Purpose and Method

A Study of Women's Homelessness North of 60 was designed to address the following objectives:

1. to inform and improve the services provided by the partners of this Study related to the incidence and impact of homelessness among Northern women;
2. to influence the quality of service provided by other organizations and agencies across the North serving homeless women and those at risk of becoming homeless;
3. to inform public policy and territorial and regional program initiatives such that they are more effective at reducing homelessness and the negative impacts of homelessness among Northern women;
4. to stimulate community action aimed at reducing homelessness and the negative impacts of homelessness among Northern women.

A naturalistic research method that drew on feminist and grounded theory was chosen as most appropriate for this study. By adopting a grounded theory methodology that privileges the voices of Northern homeless women, the research process remained iterative, participatory, and action-oriented.

Data was generated through focus group discussions and interviews with homeless women and those at risk of becoming homeless, as well as the service providers in both the government and voluntary sectors that work most closely with them. The transcripts of these dialogues were coded according to themes that were generated from the data itself.

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Once all the data was coded, the material related to each theme was compiled. Theme anthologies were prepared from each of these theme compilations. These anthologies wove together the contributions from all the informants in a way that would present a coherent picture, while at the same time protecting the confidentiality of the participating women and service providers. The Nunavut Territorial Report is unique in that it also includes direct quotations from homeless women and service providers. Brief excerpts from these theme anthologies appear at the beginning of each of the sections that describe the determinants and impacts of homelessness for northern women, as well as the policy and service environment that either contribute to women's homelessness or strive to mitigate its impacts.

While this data gathering and analysis work was being done, a literature review was also conducted, which provided a useful point of comparison for the Study's findings and also added perspectives to enrich its contribution to the field.

Characteristics of the North that Contribute to Women's Homelessness

Canada's North has special characteristics that contribute to high rates of homelessness in general, as well as among women in particular. Although each territory has its own unique circumstances, they all share the following:

- remote geography;
- underdeveloped infrastructure;
- a harsh climate;
- a small population base;
- a high cost of living and limited employment opportunities;
- the lack of accessible and affordable transportation systems;
- inadequate access to appropriate social services;
- the high cost of labour and materials needed to increase housing stock;
- high rates of social issues such as addictions, domestic violence, and intergenerational dependency on income support.

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The Demographic Characteristics of Homeless Women in the North

The conduct of a homelessness count in Northern communities was well beyond the scope and means of this study. The following demographic and incidence data was compiled from the anecdotal data collected, as well as statistical information about user rates for certain types of services geared toward homeless women.

- All told, 205 women participated in interviews or focus group sessions (66 in the NWT, 66 in the Yukon and 73 in Nunavut).
- Of these women, 53 percent were Inuit, 30 percent First Nations, 10 percent Caucasian, 5 percent Inuvialuit, 1 percent Métis, and 1 percent immigrant.
- In the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, at least one-third of the homeless women had completed high school and at least half of those have some college or university education. In Nunavut, 87 percent had not finished high school, and many of these did not have functional literacy skills.
- At least 80 percent of the women in all three Territories have children; about half of these children these women are in someone else's care.
- Of the women interviewed in the Northwest Territories, 25 percent are working, but still cannot afford housing. Most of the women in Nunavut are on Income Support of some kind, since employment is very scarce. In the Yukon almost 60 percent are on income support.

The women were all homeless at the time of this study. Most were cycling through the different phases of homelessness. For example, they might be currently living in a shelter, but the following week they could be living rough on the streets, then they might spend a few days with relatives or friends, end up trading sex for shelter, then because of abuse, end up back in the shelter. Variations of this pattern were the norm for these women.

The study was unable to get accurate incidence figures, but informants from the Northwest Territories estimate that there are could be 500 homeless women in Yellowknife alone. The figure in Iqaluit is estimated at 300. These estimates point to a homelessness rate across of the

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North of well over 1,000 women. When their dependent children are factored in, the figure raises to well over 2,000.

The Determinants of Homelessness for Northern Women

The following thirteen themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups conducted for this study.

Every woman is vulnerable

Someone stole my rent money and I ended up living in my truck camper. The truck broke down and I couldn't get to work. It was winter and too cold to be living in the camper. I went to the Shelter, but they only let you stay there a month. I was lucky and found a house sit until the weather warmed up. I didn't mean for this to happen.

The stories of homeless women across the North describe the vulnerability and insecurity of women, of how easy it can be to slide into homelessness. The unexpected looms large and can be the final straw for women in precarious situations. Sudden illness, job loss, loss or thefts of rent money, immigration, addiction, or injury are unexpected hardships in women's lives, throwing them off-balance and into homelessness. These events trigger a domino effect, one loss leading to many. Loss of a job can lead to loss of a vehicle, which limits job search or access to town, which leads to the loss of other possessions and any savings, which in turn leads to the loss of a home. Many women work and continued to work while they are homeless, trying to keep it together, but finding it difficult, especially if they have children.

Abuse complicates the picture, taking away self-esteem as well as financial support. Women who have immigrated to find a better life in a country with a shining image can find themselves homeless and without resources. They find that Canada is not living up to its reputation or commitments to the United Nations on economic and social rights, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women who had previously led comfortable lives here and abroad and thought themselves safe in their homes say, "We are all hanging on the line."

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Women's security depends on their partners' behaviour and circumstances

We get called names and other kinds of verbal abuse. For a long time I thought my partner would change. Every time after he beat me, he would cry and say he was sorry. He would promise not to do it again. I believed him because I thought I still loved him. I guess I also believed him because I felt worthless and helpless. I didn't think I could make it on my own.

The security and well-being of women and children is closely linked with the behaviour and circumstances of their intimate partners. This determinant encompasses this complex web of relationships from the point of view of women who experience homelessness. Many homeless women experience physical, sexual, mental, and psychological abuse at the hands of their partners. Sometimes their children are also sexually and physically abused. Often they are trapped in the control patterns associated with that abuse. They describe themselves as slaves for their partners and without any control over financial resources. They are at the mercy of their partners, who can force them out of the home if they so choose. Sometimes partners threaten to separate women from their children as a way to control them.

Addictions are an inseparable part of the abuse pattern. When partners are addicted to alcohol, other drugs and gambling, they are more likely to be abusive. They also spend resources that should be used to secure shelter to feed their addictions. When housing is damaged as a result of partying or violent behaviour, or when rent payments are not made, women and children lose their homes, even if they are not responsible for the problem. When women also suffer from addictions, this problem is even more serious and complex.

Forced eviction can lead to homelessness

I got evicted on more than one occasion – three times actually. The first time it was because my first husband passed away and his name was on the lease. They made me leave. Another time my ex-boyfriend was vandalizing and his name was on the lease, so we got kicked out. The last time I was evicted, I had a house in my community, but I came to Iqaluit

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for the hospital. While I was away, the house got taken away from me. There's such a shortage of houses, they thought I had left for good so it was given to someone else.

Forced eviction from social housing units was a reality for many of the women interviewed. A primary reason for eviction is that the male lists a unit under his name, exclusive of his female counterpart. If the relationship ends, becomes abusive, or if the woman becomes widowed, she is expected to evacuate her home. The vast majority of women who shared stories of eviction have been forced out of their homes because of their partners' actions. Tenant damage is also another reason women become evicted from public or private housing.

Relocation to another community can lead to homelessness

Housing in the communities is bad. I had to wait eight months to get a place back home. I ended up living with my boyfriend's sister. It's really hard to get a place here if you have any arrears back home. They find out and won't give you a place here. If I could share a place it would be easier. When I moved to Yellowknife, it took me six months to get a place because of my arrears. I got really depressed and went to Edmonton where I could couch surf. There was an all-night coffee shop there, and the owner would let me sleep on the couch sometimes. When things were really bad, I would go to the U of A and see if I could crash with people from home.

Many women move from their home communities to larger centres because they think they can access better services there, including housing. Others move because they feel forced out by circumstances in their home community, including reprisals for disclosing the abusive behaviour of their partners or other men in the community. Unfortunately, many women often find that the living arrangements they were counting on in the new community were either non-existent or inadequate.

Lack of an adequate support system is a factor in homelessness

Sometimes family is worse than no help at all. I know that sometimes there's so much drinking and fighting going on in a family that the only thing you can do is leave town and try to make it totally on your own. But sometimes it's the family who cuts out the woman, especially if she is drinking. I guess you can understand how things get so that even family

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won't help a woman with kids, but it's still not right. Maybe she's drinking because she has lost friends or family, or maybe she's just trying to deal with all the pain from a bad relationship. [Women] come into town figuring that they could stay with their sister or their cousin, but that doesn't always work out. One woman at the shelter, she said her sister wouldn't even keep her clothes for her. She just gave them away and her mother won't even look at her. Even if someone does take pity on them, well, they end up really resenting them. They're always hinting about when are you leaving, and why don't you buy more groceries.

One of the key factors that allow women to survive the critical incidents in their lives that put them at risk of homelessness (such as fleeing an abusive situation, losing employment, serious illness, the death of a partner, illness or disability in a family member) is an adequate support system. When support systems do work, they often consist of an informal network of family and friends, as well as an effective range of voluntary sector and government services.

There are many reasons why these support systems break down. The crises listed above may put more strain on families and friendships than they can handle. Homeless women often flee the communities in which they grew up or lived for extended periods, leaving them cut off from family and friends. Intergenerational dysfunction, often the result of intrusive forces such as residential schools, diminishes the capacity of families and friends to support each other in a healthy way. These same forces can also destroy the health and effectiveness of community institutions that should be there to support those members of society who are experiencing hard times. Many institutions of society also operate from ideologies that do not foster compassionate support and have policies and practices that punish women or fail to provide the support that would make the critical difference.

Personal wellness and capacity is a determinant of homelessness

How am I ever going to get a good night's sleep when I'm constantly moving from place to place? I can't think when I'm at work, I'm tired, I'm stressed out, I'm depressed. When you use all your energy going around all day looking for a place to rest, how can you have a good night's sleep and function all day? With no food, no breakfast, you just can't! From be-

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ing so stressed out, I'm bleeding inside. I've had my period for three months now and I'm waiting to see the doctor again today. When I talk to him, I tell him I'm tired because I couldn't find a place to sleep last night and I'm just depressed all the time.

Another determinant of homelessness in Northern women involves wellness and capacity. A woman's potential for improving her position in life is often inhibited by her health and/or her perception of her own personal abilities. Women often find themselves suffering from physical and emotional exhaustion, including feelings of disempowerment, which trap them in a cycle from which they can find no respite. Being incapable of sheltering/protecting themselves and their children results in feelings of worthlessness, eventually taxing every other area of their lives. They are stripped of all self-esteem, and poor health negatively infringes upon their capacity to better their situations. Many of the women interviewed stated that they have experienced a complete loss of identity, with no remaining sense of a culture and worth that brought such a great sense of pride to their forbears.

Women with disabilities may face increased risks of homelessness

The Handibus driver once said to me, "Some people in a wheelchair just don't know to stay put." ... God forbid that I should want to go to the Canada Games Centre or to the Remembrance Day parade. The attitude is, why doesn't she just stay home? We are told that we should let able-bodied people do our part in participating in these activities. Excuse me, I work as much as I can, and so that makes me a labourer too.

Women with disabilities face many obstacles that put them at risk of becoming homeless. They have a hard time getting work in a job market that already discriminates against women. Income support payments for which they may be eligible are inadequate in light of the actual cost of living in the North. They face stigmatization and are victimized in countless ways. If they do manage to find housing, whether private or public, it is often inadequate. Being forced to share accommodations with roommates who take advantage of them, living in housing that has not been adapted to fit their handicaps or not being able to get equipment

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that would allow them to function more fully, not having access to transportation or health services—these are just some of the obstacles.

Women are also most often the caregivers for disabled family members. Their struggle to meet the needs of their loved ones while trying to keep a roof over their heads is frustrating and exhausting.

Perhaps the most common, but still largely misunderstood, disability in the North is fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Women born to alcoholic mothers (who may themselves have experienced homelessness) have few places to turn for help and rarely receive the support they need to live healthy and stable lives.

Geographic factors play a role in homelessness

It's hard in the summer, but winter is worse. I can sleep outside in the summer, but not in winter. I almost froze my feet off last winter. I can walk around all summer until everyone wakes up. Living in the car is no problem in the summer, but in the winter I have to send my common-law to the men's shelter, and I stay at a friend's house. There's so much more pressure to find somewhere to sleep in winter.

Although homelessness is a global issue, Northern women face unique challenges that call for different solutions. In the North, homelessness tends to be invisible; people are not living on the street because the harsh weather prevents them from doing so. On the most frigid days of the year, the climate can reach 60° below zero, forcing penniless women to frequent coffee shops, hoping to make a cup of coffee span the day, or gathering at a friend or family member's already overcrowded home.

The northern climate, combined with lack of available housing, is why homelessness in the North shows itself in the average number of people per dwelling. With so few shelters for women in the territories, women rely on extended family to house them. A further determinant of homelessness is the very geographic area of the North, most of which is not accessible by road. (For example, only nine of the 33 NWT communities are on a road system. Nunavut communities are all "fly-in.") Women are not able to return to their home community, or escape it, without extensive financial, emotional, and practical resources. They end up homeless, living in a shelter, on the street, or with family or friends who do not want them, because they cannot easily travel.

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Community institutions and structures can contribute to homelessness

I am from a small community, and I don't want to live there any more. In my community there are two different tribes, and one looks down on the other. I am from the lower one, so no one will help me or my sister. The town supported my ex-husband 'cause they said he was a good person. He works for housing, so I will never get a house there. The Housing Authority there said I made false statements. But I know it's because my ex works there, and his family is influential too, so I can't get a place there.

The policies and practices of community institutions and other structures can contribute to homelessness for women. Many of the women interviewed for this study reported that they were never able to access housing in their home communities, as the housing always went to the friends and family of housing authority staff. If these women left an abusive situation, the man retained control of the home, and the women and children were the ones without shelter. When a woman's husband dies, she can also end up homeless, since the unit they were living in might be assigned to someone else.

The women who were interviewed felt that community leadership is reluctant to address their problems, and that it is much easier for them to simply dismiss homeless women as "bad." In addition, they found the housing, income support, child welfare, and other services (in both their home community and the capitals) inaccessible, confusing, and unsympathetic.

The powerlessness of women is a factor in homelessness

This problem of homelessness for women has a lot to do with women having useless boyfriends. Women are doing what their boyfriends say and they end up being a slave to their boyfriend. I did the same thing in some ways. Every time I left he would get me back with sweet talk. I took off from him many times, but listening to his sweet talk turned my head, plus I couldn't find anywhere to live. Now I will never go back to him. I want my own place.

Many of the women interviewed for this study discussed how powerless they felt. They feel that no one values them as wives, workers, mothers or citizens. They feel that they have been abandoned by their families

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and communities. They are trapped in abusive relationships in which financial, psychological, physical and mental control are used to keep women feeling powerless. They end up engaging in prostitution and criminal behaviour, because they feel that they have no other option.

Every service provider interviewed described the traumatic impact of homelessness on the women they serve. They described the high levels of family break down and the chronic state of crisis these women endure. They point out that homeless women, and their children, live in a state of high anxiety, and are always tense and afraid. This elevated state of anxiety, tension and fear contributes to the sense of powerlessness that homeless women experience, often on a daily basis.

The cost of living in the North and business sector practices can contribute to homelessness

I am getting sick and tired of not being able to make it from cheque to cheque, of having to borrow from friends, and of that snowball of trying, you know? I'm always coming up short on the groceries because I have to pay bills like the rent, the electricity, childcare. It's hard. You have to constantly find new ways to make ends meet.

Although the gap between the rich and the poor is widening steadily almost everywhere in Canada, the consequences of this trend is especially noticeable in the North. The cost of all of life's necessities is extremely high in Northern Canada: housing, food, transportation, insurance, dental care and prescription drugs, childcare – you name it. For homeless women and those at risk of homelessness, trying to meet their basic needs is a full-time job. And things are getting worse, not better. The women interviewed in this study were unanimous in their opinion that income support programs simply do not provide enough income to meet basic needs. The wage economy, where jobs exist, all too often relegates women to part-time or seasonal work that also leaves women trying to choose between shelter, food and clothing. There's never enough for all three. When they have children, the choices are especially bitter.

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Landlords play a role in women's homelessness

Last year, I was looking for a place calling around saying I was looking for a job, stuff like that. One of the first questions somebody asked me was, "Are you on social assistance? Because there's no way I'm going to let anybody move in here on social assistance." I was so mad! And you try to tell Welfare that and they don't believe you. Then there's racism. I'd phone for an apartment, get right on it, and then when I'd show up, suddenly the place is rented. And that is what hurts, what makes me mad.

Landlords exert tremendous power over low-income women's lives. They are the gatekeepers between homelessness and housing. Some landlords are helpful, giving a woman a break when she is late with the rent and making repairs when needed. But by far, women reported that their experiences with landlords were negative. Their stories reveal landlords who discriminate against First Nation women and women on social assistance. They encounter landlords who advertise "no pets, no children." Landlords who withhold damage deposits when women did no damage. Landlords who, at best, ignore requests for repairs and, at worst, evict women who complain about the conditions of their housing, conditions ranging from leaky ceilings, to mice, mould, no locks, and no heat. Often when landlords do make repairs, they raise the rent, forcing low-income women to find other accommodations.

Absentee landlords have told women they were unaware of the unsafe or unhealthy conditions of their property, an unacceptable argument at best. Women's perceptions are that absentee landlords do not care about what goes on with their property as long as they make a profit. Women are living in unsafe, unhealthy conditions because there are no alternatives. In our affluent society, it is incredible that women and children live in such intolerable, substandard conditions.

Some landlords walk in unannounced on tenants' units and check things out when they please; others sexually harass their tenants. Landlords control whether women can find a place to live, determine their living conditions, and can evict them at any time without cause with two weeks' notice. Landlords are part of the problem and could be part of the solution to homelessness with a little imagination and kindness.

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Societal indifference/punitiveness toward the homeless (including racism) is a barrier to progress

They judge you from the way you were, not the way you are. Emotionally, it really hurts your mind trying to understand why this happened to you. Facing reality. Feeling suicidal. Worthlessness feeling. I don't ask for help from anyone. I think we have to live like the old days. It would be a lot better. It was more community oriented in the past. We need to help everybody out like our ancestors did. It's easier to live in the South than in Nunavut. I am not proud to say that, but it's reality now.

Regardless of where you live in Canada, the homeless tend to be negatively stigmatized by other members of society. Homeless persons are often judged and mistreated, based on the stereotypes. The situation in Nunavut illustrates the systemic nature of this discrimination. The vast majority of Nunavut women interviewed believe it would be more beneficial to go back to their traditional way of living. It was expressed in numerous interviews that, "Qallunaat [southern Canadians] are taking over our land." While most women maintain that they feel no prejudice toward White people, they feel the "White way of life" does not fit their traditional lifestyle and has further complicated their living situation. Several women suggested by simply looking at the homes owned by Inuit versus that of Qallunaat, that the message is clear as to who is valued the most. This gap continues to increase, suggesting a systematic failure.

Service providers in the Northwest Territories point out other aspects of societal indifference and punitiveness toward homeless people. Downtown areas in cities are becoming increasingly hostile places to be for those on the streets. As well, some service providers note that not all government employees understand the circumstances and realities that many women face, and develop policies and programs that penalize rather than help.

The Impacts of Homelessness on Northern Women

It is difficult to separate the impacts of homelessness from its determinants, as these two sets of factors are often cyclical. Our data generated the following five themes.

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Family separation

After my common-law went to jail, I ended up not being able to pay the rent. Income Support wouldn't help me because they counted the money my common-law made in the month before he went to jail as income, even though I didn't get any of it. On top of that, I found out he hadn't paid the rent for two months. The landlord gave me a note to get out in ten days, so I ended up on the street... Child welfare said they would put the kids into foster care until I could find a place to live. It just broke my heart. My kids cried and screamed at me. They weren't even in the same house together. I went to housing right away, but they told me there was a huge waiting list. Then they said I couldn't even get on the waiting list because my kids weren't with me so I didn't qualify. Isn't that a joke? I need to get a place so I can have my kids, but I can't get a place because I don't have my kids. I went three months without seeing my kids, and without having a place to live. I just couldn't face them.

The separation of family, whether it is partner relationships, parent-child relationships or sibling relationships, is a common challenge associated with homelessness. Partners often separate as a result of family violence, youth may be ousted from their homes by parents, and children may be apprehended by child welfare authorities from parents who are homeless or are living in violent situations. Often a temporary separation leads to a larger breakdown of the family structure, which then results in permanent parent-child separation as well as family members living apart from the support of extended families and communities.

Children's well-being

I remember when we stayed with my sister for a few months after I left my partner. I didn't have any money to rent a place, but I just couldn't handle the drinking and abuse anymore. Of course I'm grateful that she let us live with her, but it was really tough. My kids and I slept in the living room, and so we had to roll up all the bedding and put it behind the couch every morning. There was constant tension about things that got broken because my kids played with their cousins' toys or dropped a glass. Everything was always upside down, with so many of us in one little space. We had no privacy and my nerves were constantly on edge. I was always yelling at the kids, but it wasn't really their fault. They were just being kids.

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One of the most difficult aspects of being homeless for women is seeing how the life they lead is affecting their children. The women who participated in this research project were eager to talk about their struggles to keep their children safe, healthy and happy. They spoke about the impact of poverty on body and spirit; of the inappropriate, over-priced and inadequate housing they are forced to accept so that their children will have a place to sleep; and of how the restrictions imposed by landlords and other tenants place unreasonable demands on family life. They also spoke about how their relationships with their children's fathers were shaped by their homelessness. They anguished about the teasing their children had to endure and the things their children worry about that other, more fortunate, children would not even understand. They see their children acting out and losing self-esteem.

Loss of resources through the vicious cycle of homelessness

When I first lost my place, I was working at the hotel. I missed a few shifts because I was trying to find a place to crash and store some of my stuff. I needed to find a babysitter too. I phoned everyone I know, but by the time I found a place and someone to watch my kid, I had missed too much work. My boss was pretty understanding at first, but after things at my friend's house didn't work out, I was in the same situation again. My boss said he understood that I was having personal problems, but if I couldn't be relied on that he would have to find somebody else. I was upset to lose my job. I understand why I was fired. When I was couch surfing with my kid I would be tired because people would be partying and then I would be late, or not be able to come in at all. But, after I lost my job I couldn't get a place at all, and my friends got sick of having me around all the time. On top of that Income Support told me they wouldn't help me for two months because I had been fired.

Homeless women suffer a myriad of losses. Lack of stability in housing and poverty create a maze of dead ends for homeless women, who, once they are in that situation, fear and plan for when it will happen again. The lack of amenities creates a physical appearance for women that acts as a barrier to employment, which is the most cited way that women try to improve their personal circumstances and gain a home.

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Physical and mental health

It's hard when there's no food. I come from the old days when you were shy and embarrassed to ask for help or for money or food, so I can't even ask my son. I have one child and he's twenty-eight and I'm embarrassed to ask him for food. I sometimes sneak in a hint and say, "Oh, I haven't had anything to eat." Sometimes you can go to relatives and have a little bit of bannock and some tea and that's great but, how long can you live like that? There are some days you just can't get through. I haven't eaten a meal in over a week.

An obvious result of poverty is malnutrition. Women are often forced to go days without sustenance for their already weary bodies. Poor nutrition results in countless physical ailments, which further complicate the capacity of these women to better their position. Without proper resources (e.g., homeless shelters), personal hygiene is also a compromise women are forced to make.

Illness is common for women living in overcrowded conditions. The North's dire overcrowding issue (particularly in Nunavut), combined with building design flaws, contributes to a variety of respiratory and communicable diseases.

Continued feelings of worthlessness also affect a woman's mental health. Many women cite depression as a common emotional response to their unfavourable situations. Several also admitted to feeling suicidal. Women with children were particularly hard on themselves. Feeling as though they had failed at motherhood was the most painful emotion they endured and often led them into severe depression.

Survival sex and criminalization

When you're desperate, you go with this man even though you don't want to. You don't love him, you don't like him, but he has a bed to sleep on. You have no choice but to follow him, because you need a place. You get kicked out when the bars close, so you go to sleep in an alcoholic's house. But, if you're not willing to have sex, you get kicked out of there too.

Poverty-stricken people are often forced to prostitute themselves in a variety of ways to meet the basic needs for survival. Women are abused

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in different ways than men, as women are often forced to engage in sexual relationships in exchange for accommodation. A community pastor in Nunavut expressed his concern by saying, "One girl told me she's been prostituting herself since she was a teenager. There are young girls coming up learning this same thing and will eventually take her place. I'm really heartbroken for them. I see what they are forced to do to provide for themselves."

Policy and Bureaucratic Environment

When the interview and focus group data was coded and compiled, the following 15 themes emerged.

Inappropriate income support policies and services

Income Support does not help at all. When you have kids the money is just too small, and if you don't go by their rules, they cut you off. No good. Oh yeah, and they deduct everything! Even if you get money from your relatives, they deduct that too. Bingo earnings even!

The homeless women interviewed all expressed frustration, confusion, despair and anger with the policies and bureaucratic practices of the services allegedly at their disposal. In general the respondents do not perceive that these agencies, and their employees, are interested in helping them or will do anything other than make their already difficult lives more unbearable. They were particularly distressed about their interactions with Income Support programs. They feel the rules that guide these programs are punitive, onerous and opaque. Waiting times are too long, and have to be restarted every time someone reapplies. Even when women do qualify for support, the level of their benefits is not sufficient to cover basic living expenses. For example, food money often only lasts for two weeks.

Women feel that they can't break the cycle of homelessness. For example, many homeless women have lost their housing because of rental arrears, and Income Support policies make it difficult to get caught up, or to secure enough money at any one time to cover a damage deposit and the first month's rent.

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Women living in a shelter cannot receive income support, and they may face a waiting period when they leave, so how can they make the transition from the shelter to rental accommodation? Women also complain about the attitudes and actions of income support workers, who seem to care more about the rules than people and who sometimes intrude into what women consider their personal lives. Service providers who work outside the system are no less critical of the income support program, which they describe as inadequate, unresponsive, unprofessional, unethical and irresponsible. In the final analysis, service providers wonder to whom income support is accountable.

Jurisdictional issues

I'm from a small community in Nunavut, but I came to Yellowknife to get help with my addictions. I brought my kids with me. I just couldn't leave them behind. I'd just miss them too much, and besides, I don't trust anyone else to take care of them. Well, I found out things aren't easy in Yellowknife. I couldn't get help from Income Support, and I couldn't find anywhere to live. I stayed at the Women's Centre for a while, but you can't live there forever. The waiting lists for all the housing are a mile long! I'm at the bottom of the list anyway, because I'm from Nunavut. Everyone says I should get help from the Nunavut Government, but they didn't help me when I lived in the community, so they sure won't help me now that I'm in Yellowknife. I just don't understand the rules. How can I get the help I need?

Despite the challenges of living in a large centre, many women continue to move to capitals from smaller communities in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The women migrate to flee intolerable situations and to access services they need. Relocating from one community to another can leave women in a jurisdictional "no man's land." For example, Aboriginal women who leave their home communities often lose the support of their own Bands, and they do not qualify for support from the Band government in their new community. In addition, women from Nunavut are not eligible for some services in the Northwest Territories unless specific funding agreements are in place between these two jurisdictions. Women also have a hard time understanding the different policies and rules that may be in effect in their new communities. The cost of

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travelling within the North means that women who leave their communities have a difficult time returning home.

Service providers cited the following situation that arises because of jurisdictional issues: Nunavut sometimes sends women to NWT on shared services agreements or Nunavut women are hired to baby-sit in Yellowknife, but end up drinking and on the street; Yellowknife Health and Social Services will pay emergency rent only for these women, and the woman herself has to find the place.

Lack of support for 16 to 18 year olds

I have a teenage son who doesn't want to stay at home because my partner is so violent. I really worry about him. He has nowhere at all to live, and no one will look after him. He told me that some men have been giving him money and are driving him around in their trucks. That really scares me to death! Every day I worry about him committing suicide. I meet him uptown everyday and bring him food. Every day he looks worse and worse. The Salvation Army says he's too young, and the social worker only looks after kids up to sixteen. Nobody wants him. He's living in a truck now. I'd like to leave my partner and take him out of Yellowknife, but I have no money and no one will help us.

Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 don't fit the criteria for most programs. In some cases they are too young to access services. They are still considered "children," and are therefore not eligible for services geared for adults. If they leave home because of abuse or other family problems, they are expected to go into a foster care situation and receive services in that way. On the other hand, they may be considered too old to be eligible for some services. If they have "graduated" from foster care, they do not get services under Child Protection programs, but are still too young for Income Support benefits.

Many other programs designed to assist homeless people (e.g., those of the Salvation Army) will not serve them. Some informants indicated that some local hotels don't ask teenage girls for identification, making it possible for these girls to use their premises for prostitution and drugs.

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Child protection policies and programs

I worry about the neighbours. They can phone Child and Family Services on you. Then they check it out and can end up taking my son if I don't have enough food or the place isn't clean enough.

For some women, child protection has played a role all through their lives. They have been in government care as children and now their own children are in care. Women who are homeless can have their children apprehended by Child Protection Services. Women living in unsafe housing situations, staying with relatives or friends or in substandard housing, live in fear that their children will be apprehended. They do not feel the child welfare system is there to help them.

Other support services

My neighbour is having a hard time. The last place she was in, she was evicted because she was asking for repairs; happens all the time. He kept her damage deposit too. Anyhow, the landlord has a reputation as a real scam artist. My neighbour went to the Human Rights Commission because there were some discrimination issues as well, but nothing ever happened. Then she went to see the Landlord and Tenant people, but they said there was nothing they could do because he gave her a timely notice. What kind of use are they? We don't seem to have any rights.

Homeless women access many support services with varying degrees of success. Some services are helpful and others contribute to their problems. Most women interviewed found the rules that govern service provision to be inflexible, particularly in government agencies. This inflexibility prevents sympathetic workers from giving women the kinds of support that would enable them to climb out of homelessness.

Employment Insurance is not helpful for women who are self-employed or under-employed in part-time, contract, seasonal, or low-wage work. Women feel discouraged and further marginalized when services they turn to for help do not help them. Women with disabilities have fewer options and can feel frustrated and constrained by the services meant to assist them. When support services work for women, they can make their lives and their children's lives easier and their poverty seem less demeaning.

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Public housing policies and programs

It is really impossible to get a place to live in Yellowknife. I have applied to Yellowknife Housing three or four times to get an apartment or something. Right now I am living in an emergency unit at the YWCA Transitional Housing Program. But I can't get points with YK Housing and move up on their list if I live at THP because then they say I already have a place, so they don't care. But you can only stay at THP for a year and then what? I heard that YK Housing is only for families and there is a three-year wait if you're single.

Many of the women interviewed despair of getting a place to live. Some do not qualify for subsidized housing, because they have rental arrears or debts for damages to their former housing hanging over their heads. Although in most cases the arrears and damages were the result of their partners' behaviour, they are still accountable for these debts and will not be assigned another unit until they clear up these charges. If the women are single, they are placed so low on the housing lists compared with families, they know their turn will never come. The waiting lists for all subsidized accommodation are just too long.

Women also feel that the housing authorities in some communities are not impartial. Women get denied housing as a punishment for leaving a man from an influential family, even if he abuses them or if he gets violent and damages property or for speaking out about the injustices they perceive in the system. Service providers also expressed a good deal of frustration with Housing Authority policies. The Yellowknife Housing Authority says prospective tenants have to be back on the street after staying at the Transitional Housing Program (THP) before they can be admitted to social housing. The Housing Authority works on a points system. Women only get points if they are homeless. Staying at THP doesn't count as homeless to the Housing Authority. According to service providers, this policy does not help anyone.

The Landlord and Tenant Act

I don't understand why there aren't rules for the landlord. Like they're getting all this money from the Government from Social Assistance for rent and they don't spend even \$20.00 to fix anything. There was a previous tenant in that building who put in a complaint to the Human Rights

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Commission but nothing ever happened. Women are homeless because of this system. We need a better law that doesn't give the landlord all the rights and power.

The *Landlord and Tenant Act* in the Yukon is an antiquated piece of legislation created in the 1970s and never updated. It has virtually no protection for tenants. Landlords have the right to evict a tenant with two weeks' notice any time of the year with no cause. The act does nothing to protect a tenant's basic human right to adequate, safe shelter, especially in the winter. This leads to abuses by landlords who refuse to make repairs and can evict "troublesome" tenants without fear of repercussion. Women will stay in unsafe and sub-standard housing for fear of eviction.

Many women live without leases on a month-to-month agreement with the landlord, so there is no protection there for them. The act has a direct influence on women's absolute and relative homelessness. The act needs to be updated to create a fair balance between the rights of landlords and the rights of tenants. It is a stumbling block impeding positive change for women in low-income housing.

Addictions treatment services

I got sent to the treatment program in High Level. It's a great program, and for a while I stayed sober. But I guess I haven't dealt with all the issues underneath the drinking. I haven't really healed from the sexual abuse and from all the violence and stuff I witnessed as a kid. I'm also grieving for the loss of my child and for all the deaths in my family because of substance abuse. I wanted to go back to the High Level program, but for some reason they won't send us there anymore. There just doesn't seem to be much help for someone like me.

There is a drastic shortage of appropriate addictions treatment programs for women in the North. Small communities may have almost no services beyond a wellness worker who is not trained to provide counseling and can only offer referral services. There are almost no programs, even in larger centres, to refer women to. There is one residential addictions treatment program in the Northwest Territories, but it is co-ed. Some women commented that the program in High Level, Alberta, was a help to them in the past, but that this option is no longer available. Another challenge that they face is that, if they place their children in care

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while they are undergoing treatment, they could face difficulties regaining custody. Women also cannot receive income support if they are in a residential program, and so cannot maintain a household to support their children or to come back to once they finish the program.

Aboriginal government services

When I left the community, the Band took my house and gave it to the Chief's niece. They didn't even tell me. I asked the Band to get me a house in Yellowknife because I have to live there [owing to a disability]. I can't move back. I told them, "If I lived at home, you would have to help me. I could own my house, and I wouldn't be living poor and on the street." My Band gets lots of money from impact benefit agreements, but they won't help me. They don't care about me. They say Yellowknife is responsible to take care of me because I live here now. They forget the hard work I did all those years in the community, and I am mad that I live as a beggar in my own land.

Some women find that their Band offices were generally considered more approachable and accessible than territorial or federal government programs. Once women are out of their home communities, they often lose that source of support. Other women complained that services run by their Band offices are open to corruption. Powerful families control the programs, and if, for some reason, you are out of favour, you have no recourse. These women complain of favouritism and a lack of transparency in the administration of benefits.

Inuit organizations

All these non-Natives are getting all kinds of benefits. I've called NTI and told them they should be straightening up their policies to better serve their people, and why are so many non-Inuit getting this and that. They told me they would look into it, but that was over ten years ago. But I remember

In 1993, the Inuit, the government of Canada and the government of the Northwest Territories signed the largest Aboriginal land claim agreement in Canadian history. At the same time, legislation was passed leading to the creation of a new territory of Nunavut on April 1, 1999. The new territory was to have a public government serving both Inuit and

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non-Inuit. Various private corporations were founded to guarantee that the lands claims agreement was upheld, and the rights of all Inuit persons preserved.

The Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) represents the 21,000 Inuit of Nunavut; Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) represents the interests of the Inuit of the Baffin Region, the High Arctic, and the Belcher Islands; Kitikmeot Inuit Association (KIA); and Kivalliq Inuit Association represent those respective regions respectively. The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a Canadian-wide body, represents the four Inuit regions of Canada and has at heart the interests of the Inuit at the national level. All organizations have as their objective to work to improve living conditions, both socially and economically, for all Canadian Inuit. All the women interviewed in Nunavut knew of the existence of these organizations, but many were cynical about their usefulness. Several women felt the organizations that were established to represent them were not communicating with the public, and information gathered was not easily accessible. The women expressed an increasing frustration with Inuit associations and felt racism was taking place against their own people.

Municipal government policies and services

A lot of the Yukon Housing houses are out of town. ... I've never learned how to drive. I've never had a vehicle and the transit system, well that's a big question mark in my mind. ... I'm the kind of person who could rent a cabin for \$50 a month in the bush with no running water, no electricity and I would be fine. I know how to do all of those things. I could grow a garden but how do I travel? You have to have a vehicle. You can't rely on the bus system. I would go live in a tent, but you can't do that in Whitehorse. I've learned that you have to go outside the City of Whitehorse, and then you're no longer safe. I could afford to live on my income then. You can't win either way.

The situation in the Yukon illustrates the issues for homeless women related to municipal government. Yukon has one city, Whitehorse, which is not directly involved in providing services to homeless people. However, the City has directly contributed to homelessness by the demolition of the cabins in the Shipyards area. People living there as a "lifestyle choice" managed to find other places to live, but people with fewer op-

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tions have not fared so well. One First Nation elder had camped on the banks of the river for many years in the summer. This was a traditional practice, not a lifestyle choice, which is no longer open to her. The City's plan for gentrification of riverside property did not take into consideration the poor and thus inadvertently created homelessness. The City of Whitehorse has a bylaw prohibiting living in tents within city limits. This has forced out homeless women who see this as a viable option during the warmer months. Living in a tent is not only a chance to live within their means and within social assistance rates, but also a traditional practice for First Nation people.

However, women who want to do this are forced outside city limits that are quite large. This creates further problems, such as transportation and safety. The City's transportation system creates problems for all those who rely upon public transportation, including the Handibus that serves disabled people and seniors. There is no service at night and limited service on the weekends. The Handibus seems anything but handy with many rules and limited service for people in wheelchairs. In 2002 the number of people using wheelchairs in Whitehorse was estimated at 57, but there are only two spaces on the Handibus for wheelchairs and this is a population that has no other affordable option. The City's bus system has been the object of extensive studies and many recommendations have been made for improvements, however, nothing seems to change.

Limited resources and cuts to the voluntary sector

There hasn't been any meat at the Women's Centre for two months now. No one has made any donations of meat. There never seems to be enough food or anything else and Income Support doesn't give us any money as long as we are living at the Centre.

Government support for the voluntary sector services that so many homeless women depend on for help with many aspects of their lives is limited and becoming scarcer. Programs are trying to meet the needs of an ever-growing population of women who are either on the street or who are staying in intolerable situations, just to have a roof over their heads. Some of these women have severe mental and physical health

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issues. Existing services cannot afford staff with the right qualifications to serve these women. Shelters are overcrowded and understaffed. They may even run out of the commodities they need, like food, hygiene products, and furnishings.

Minimum wage policies

I make \$6 per hour at a job and it is not enough to live on. It is the minimum wage and I can't make it on that. It would be a lot easier if I had a place to stay so I could make more money. My sister has three jobs, and she is raising her grandson too. It still isn't enough, and she's afraid Yellowknife Housing will evict her because she is sometimes short on the rent.

Homeless women are affected by the low minimum wage in the Territories. They cannot afford even a small apartment at market rental rates without holding down several jobs that pay more than minimum wage.

The justice system

In my community, they're going back to traditional laws. That scares me. It's who has power in the community and who doesn't. It's harsh. Some communities have circle sentencing and some have traditional justice. That's not so bad. But I don't think a homeless woman gets much help from any justice system. I knew a woman who was trying to get her property rights in her community and they were just siding with the husband. She was left with nothing and there wasn't a thing she could do about it. The man has all the rights.

Homeless women do not feel that the judicial system is there to help them. Women do not know how to navigate around the justice system. Whether in matters of separation, child custody, damage deposits, disputes with landlords or First Nations justice systems, women feel powerless and without the necessary resources to represent their interests. They found the Neighbourhood Law Centre staff helpful, but bound by the legislation. Women have lost faith in the justice system.

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Bureaucratic indifference

My sister and her husband finally got an apartment. He was always beating her up, though. The last time he almost killed her. She has tried to kick him out, but he keeps coming back and she can't stop him. She tried to get Housing to change the locks, so she could feel safe at night. Because his name is on the lease, they said she had to get a legal separation or a divorce before they could force him out. It just doesn't make sense that a rule should put her life in danger.

Women who are trying to get help finding accommodation, securing adequate income support to meet basic needs, caring effectively for their children or regaining custody if they have been apprehended, dealing with legal issues, getting out of an abusive situation, accessing educational opportunities, or healing physical and mental health issues, have to deal with program officers of some sort. Homeless women, or those at risk of homelessness, report that this experience is often frustrating and disempowering because of the bureaucratic nature of these interactions. It feels to them that they are dealing with a "system" rather than with another human being who understands their circumstances. They feel that if they could get the right help at the right time, they might be able to move out of the often destructive patterns of life that they now find themselves in to a better life. Instead, the system just seems to keep pushing them down.

Service Provision in the Territories

When the interview and focus group transcripts for this study of homelessness among Northern women was completed, the following five themes emerged.

Physical environment of housing services

I just can't seem to find a decent place to live that's affordable in this town. The first place I spent a winter in was unbelievable. The furnace broke down and it went to minus forty. It was really cold and the room started to ice up. The landlord didn't do anything.

The physical environment of low-cost housing appears to be largely sub-standard. Very few women we interviewed were satisfied with their

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housing. Stories of mould, dirt, mice, thin walls, inadequate heat, poor maintenance, and leaky windows that do not lock were abundant. Women living in low-income housing and social housing related that their neighbourhoods were rife with drugs and alcohol and they did not feel safe. Some women found used needles and drugs in the hallways and yards of their buildings and were worried about their children's safety. These conditions applied to social housing and private rentals alike. Homeless women and their children are forced to live in unsafe, unhealthy sub-standard housing because there is not enough decent, affordable social housing. There are few wheelchair units in social or private market housing. The units that many women in wheelchairs live in are not fully wheelchair adapted, creating unsafe and inconvenient living conditions.

Decent housing for all women is a basic human right. However, social housing units cannot be properly maintained and repaired unless governments are willing to make this a priority and expend adequate funds. In the private rental market, low-income housing is not maintained because it is not seen as profitable and there are always enough poor people to fill vacancies. As for women in desperate need of emergency housing, the few emergency shelters are overcrowded and are not always gender-specific. Until governments acknowledge the right to decent housing, women and children will continue to live in conditions that most Canadians would not tolerate.

Service effectiveness

I used to go live at Mary House when I had nowhere to go, but now they don't have that open. One time I went to Kaushee's, but I wasn't being abused that time, didn't have a boyfriend, so they kicked me out. That was really bad that time. I know some women don't like it there because they can't bring their boys there if they are fourteen years old. I don't think that is right. It's just separating your family again and that is supposed to be where you go to get help. They should have a place where you can take your family.

Homeless women use a number of services in the larger centres and rural communities. All have policies and requirements determining who can use the service, how long the service can be used and the length of

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stay for shelters. Women interviewed related both positive and negative comments for most services. Many found regulations restrictive and not responsive to their needs. The lack of emergency shelters for women puts the women's transition homes and detox centres in the position of having to turn away women who are seeking shelter but do not fit their mandate. Both services are usually operating at capacity and do not have room for flexibility.

There is very limited second-stage housing for women leaving the transition house. Emergency shelter for youth outside Child and Family Services facilities is non-existent. Most services regarded as helpful were provided by non-governmental organizations. Most negative comments were the result of lack of funding for the agency to adequately meet the needs. For example, the Salvation Army in Whitehorse has only 10 emergency shelter beds on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no beds for women with children.

Men usually get there first and women feel intimidated. When beds are full, people can sit in the dining area. They can lay their heads on the tables and sleep. The Salvation Army is unable to offer day programming or a regular food bank. In the Yukon, services such as the Women's Advocate at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre (VFWC), the Fetal Alcohol Society of the Yukon (FASSY), and the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools Society (CAIRS) are able to provide more flexible services and were consistently found helpful.

Lack of housing options

There is no housing in my home community. I had to live with my three kids at my boyfriend's sister's place. But I might have to go back there because there is nowhere in Yellowknife for me to live and Income Support won't help me.

There is a critical lack of affordable housing in all three territories. This means that for some women the emergency shelter has, in fact, become their permanent home. One obvious gap is that there are few apartments for single people. The lack of affordable housing has a devastating impact on women with children. If they are only getting rent from income support for a single room, as they do if for any reason their children are

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not in their care for a period of time, they cannot get their children back because Child Welfare policies stipulate that the mother has to have adequate accommodation (that is, an apartment).

Food security

I use Social Services and the soup kitchen to eat mostly. Going to your sisters or your brothers and collecting a little bit of food from them helps too. [My children] don't want to go to school anymore because they don't get any sleep and they don't want to go hungry. Feeding our children is the biggest challenge.

The provision of food is one of the biggest challenges faced by the homeless. With little income, it is a constant daily struggle to find their next meal. The only obvious difference to these women between a healthy and unhealthy choice is the price, and food with no nutritional value provides a greater quantity at a lesser cost. A poor diet inevitably leads to various health complications, which further hinders a woman's capacity. A woman often has many mouths to feed, and will go hungry herself to feed her children. These women experience feelings of disempowerment when they continually fail to feed their children and themselves.

Lack of Specialized Services for Women

The New Horizons Centre is really geared for men. They do things there like go fishing and do other men-type activities. But there is food there and you can sleep there during the day and they help with resumes too.

Some women talked about services being geared largely towards homeless men. Service providers also point out that there are no specific services targeting homeless Aboriginal and Inuit women. Day programming for homeless women is also an issue, because some shelters close during the day and the women do not necessarily know about or want to go to other programming. This is because the women find some day programs "too white" or insufficiently advocacy-oriented.

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Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed by the research partners after a careful review of the findings of the study carried out in all three territories.

Recommendation 1 – Create a national housing policy that takes into account the special circumstances and needs of vulnerable women: (a) Creation of a National Housing Policy instituted by the federal government that is inclusive of women and lives up to human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guaranteeing a right to an adequate standard of living and adequate housing, and (b) Ensure that women's housing needs across their lifespan are met.

Recommendation 2 – Increase the supply of decent, safe low-income housing: (a) Ensure an adequate supply of a variety of low-income housing stock is available for women and children in environments that can be kept safe and secure, and (b) The federal government must provide funding mechanisms to encourage and support the development of low-income housing in the territories.

Recommendation 3 – Increase supportive housing options: (a) Implement a continuum of supportive housing options, and (b) Encourage service providers to identify and develop potential supportive housing options as new initiative proposals.

Recommendation 4 – Increase the number of emergency shelters and improve the quality of their services.

Recommendation 5 – Increase second-stage housing options.

Recommendation 6 – Implement housing authority policies that remove barriers for women living in violence and those who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless: (a) Apply a cultural and gender analysis to housing authority policies to ensure human rights obligations and the needs of homeless women are met in a way that is measurable and makes the agencies accountable, and (b) Create priority-housing policies for women leaving abusive relationships.

Recommendation 7 – Address landlord and tenant issues by reforming Territorial Landlord and Tenant Acts.

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Recommendation 8 – Implement poverty reduction strategies: (a) Improve existing social security programs, and (b) Introduce new programs and policies that are designed to prevent and reduce poverty.

Recommendation 9 – Provide services that address the full range of determinants of women's homelessness: (a) Implement a continuum of care model, and (b) Enhance the capacity of service providers to work effectively with homeless women.

Recommendation 10 – Reduce barriers to accessing services for homeless women.

Recommendation 11 – Ensure appropriate funding for a range of front-line services: (a) Ensure front-line services are adequately and appropriately funded to build capacity to function effectively, and (b) Recognize the value and contributions of service delivery through the voluntary sector.

Recommendation 12 – Enhance access to education and training programs: (a) Increase access to educational programs, and (b) Increase access to affordable daycare so that women and participate in educational programs.

Recommendation 13 – Ensure access to affordable childcare.

Recommendation 14 – Develop mechanisms for collaborative and creative solution building: (a) Nurture the creation of collaboratives that are dedicated to addressing the full range of determinants of women's homelessness and build their capacity to function effectively, and (b) Ensure that all relevant stakeholders are "at the table" when public policy related to women's homelessness is being developed and when government program decisions are being made.

Recommendation 15 – Collect, manage and share information: (a) Design and implement interagency protocols and tools for collecting, managing and sharing accurate and relevant information as well as for designing and tracking clear outcomes indicators, (b) Provide adequate funding to service agencies to allow them to keep appropriate records and to access and share information, and (c) Conduct further research.

Recommendation 16 – Enhance public awareness and facilitate attitude change.

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