



MAKING
THE SHIFT

**YEAR
ONE
REPORT**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BACKGROUND

What is Making the Shift?

Making the Shift (MtS) is a multi-year, multi-phase project, with many moving parts. But it is more than that; Making the Shift is a reimagining of our response to youth homelessness through social innovation in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people. Making the Shift is a partnership between A Way Home Canada (AWHC) and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) with the support of MaRS Centre for Impact Investing (MaRS).

This work is intended to support a monumental shift away from the current system of responding to youth homelessness through a crisis response and instead, move towards a system that values prevention and moving young people out of homelessness quickly, with all of the supports necessary for wellness and healthy transitions to adulthood. It is crucial to understand that obtaining housing for vulnerable young people is not the “be-all-end-all” of this work – rather, it’s about supporting and encouraging young people to become healthy adults at their own pace. This is how we will make real, lasting change.

The Making the Shift project provides leadership in helping communities and governments move away from band-aid solutions to youth homelessness through an investment in the development and testing of effective strategies to prevent youth homelessness and to help those who are experiencing homelessness to move out of it quickly and in a sustainable way. Making the Shift is poised to provide the knowledge and evidence base to support this shift.

Toward this end, Making the Shift has implemented three demonstration projects at twelve sites across Ontario and Alberta. These large scale demonstration projects, delivered in partnership with local organizations, seek to build practical knowledge and an evidence base for the following interventions:

- 1** Housing First for Youth (Hamilton, Ottawa, Toronto)
- 2** Enhancing Family and Natural Supports (Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Toronto)
- 3** Youth Reconnect (Hamilton)

All three interventions are designed to enhance housing stability, well-being and social inclusion, and thereby increase the engagement of young people in education, training and/or employment. In total, more than 1,300 young people and natural supports will be supported through these projects.

Collectively, these projects fall under the umbrella of “Phase One” of Making the Shift, which runs from 2017-2019; Phase Two – which is discussed in further detail, below – will build on the momentum of the first Phase, expanding to incorporate key learning from the initial projects and engage new communities and partners.

Why do we need Making the Shift?

Our efforts to end youth homelessness until now have primarily focused on providing emergency services and supports to young people while they are experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, this hasn't gotten us the results we want, as we know well from research that prolonged exposure to homelessness leads to profoundly negative outcomes for youth. Youth homelessness in Canada is an ongoing problem for which we seem to be making slow but insufficient progress. It is time to consider a new approach – prevention. What is stopping communities, organizations, provinces, territories, and Canada from moving towards a prevention mandate? The barriers can be summarized into two areas:

1 EVIDENCE

There is a growing body of research that attests to the need to focus on prevention and early intervention of youth homelessness. This same research signals that we don't know enough about the necessary interventions within the Canadian context. *The Without a Home* study (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd & Schwan, 2016), the largest research project on youth homelessness ever conducted in Canada (over 1100 participants), showed meaningful trends:

- Early age of first experience of homelessness;
- A high percentage of involvement with child protection;
- Homelessness increases the risk of declining mental health, sexual exploitation, and criminal victimization; and
- No involvement in education, employment or training.

This information points to key conclusions:

- We are waiting too long to intervene. In many jurisdictions, services for young people who experience homelessness are not available until they are 16 or even 18;
- For young people, the experience of homelessness for any length of time can have a devastating impact on health, safety, mental health, and well-being. We cannot expect this vulnerable population to “bootstrap” themselves out of homelessness; and
- By responding to youth homelessness in a more effective manner, we will decrease the likelihood that young people will experience chronic homelessness as adults and ensure better outcomes, such as attachment to education and employment.

NARROWING THE GAP

Moving forward, we need to be able to provide the evidence necessary to narrow the information gap between what is needed to respond to youth homelessness and how to achieve what is needed. It goes without saying that the what and how need to be accompanied by focused policy, practice, funding and programs.

The focused interventions within Making the Shift will ensure that these young people achieve housing stability and have natural supports, such as family, that are essential as they receive support to stay in school or access training and employment. By serving these young people well, we will also build an evidence base to inform sound public policy and investment. The value of the research and evaluation component of our demonstration projects cannot be overstressed. We know that the successful “At Home/Chez Soi” project has been highly influential in shaping government policy in Canada and around the world. The evidence base for youth homelessness interventions, including Housing First for Youth, is currently not as strong. These demonstration projects are poised to provide a key evidence base for all orders of government and communities across Canada interested in prioritizing youth homelessness.

2 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Across Making the Shift, we are landing on important learning that will continue to inform policy, planning, and practice. It is this knowledge base that will allow us to better serve young people leading to greater participation in education, employment and training.

- › **Program Design** – We are taking evidence-based prevention models from elsewhere in the world, as well as the key innovation of Housing First for Youth as the foundation for our programs to provide proof of concept and ‘facts on the ground’ in Canada.
- › **Program Effectiveness** – Through the demonstration projects, Making the Shift is developing a knowledge base for what works and in what contexts for various sub-populations of vulnerable youth. Given the challenge that service providers have in engaging this group of young people and achieving results, this knowledge will be invaluable.
- › **Enhanced Understanding of Client Needs** – We are focused on bringing forward alternative approaches to addressing the unique needs of individuals.
- › **Costs and Services Use** – The costs and economic impact are being monitored and analyzed in collaboration with the MaRS Centre for Impact Investing. Having this consolidated information available for government and communities will facilitate more concrete planning and discussions around how to narrow the gap between the desired program intervention and making it a reality.

OUTCOMES

The goal of the work is to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people. In the process, we are also working to build an evidence base to impact policy and practice. The At Home/Chez Soi study found that Housing First had a large and significant impact on housing stability; a substantial majority of participants maintained stable housing during the study period, indicating that the attention paid to client choice and service team support quickly resulted in securing desirable and affordable housing. We expect the Making the Shift demonstration project outcomes to provide the same kind of grounding and knowledge base. Through our evaluation work and research, we are focusing on informing clear outcomes and measures that demonstrate positive impacts on young people.

Project Partners

Collaboration is central to the MtS philosophy; as such, we have developed project partnerships that span the private, not-for-profit, philanthropic, and government sectors. We have also developed partnerships with Indigenous communities, researchers, service providers, and youth. All of our partners and contributors play valuable and necessary roles in shifting the narrative and practice on youth homelessness.

Nationally, MtS is co-led by AWHC and the COH, with support from MaRS. **A Way Home Canada** is a national coalition reimagining solutions to youth homelessness through transformations in policy, practice and planning. A Way Home utilizes a Collective Impact approach to continue to get the individuals and organizations that have real influence on the systems that drive young people into homelessness around the table to create change. **The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness** is an internationally renowned research institute with the mandate to work collaboratively with partners to conduct and mobilize research in order to have an impact on solutions to homelessness. **MaRS Discovery District** in Toronto is one of the world's largest urban innovation hubs. As a high impact partnership, Making the Shift is poised to advance our knowledge about how to produce better outcomes for youth who are at risk of, or who have experienced homelessness.

The advantage of this collaborative leadership model is that each national partner brings its own unique strengths and capabilities to the project, providing a strong foundation in areas such as: thought leadership, research, evaluation, and knowledge mobilization; communities of practice, support for training/technical support, and national networks including youth with lived experience; and innovative, sustainable funding solutions for social issues including youth homelessness.

The provincial governments of **Alberta** and **Ontario** have been instrumental in the development and rollout of Making the Shift. Both provinces have been, and continue to be, leaders in addressing youth homelessness, either through existing or emerging provincial strategies to prevent and end youth homelessness; all of the communities participating in Phase One of MtS are located in either Alberta or Ontario.

Locally, MtS is fortunate to be partnering with youth-serving agencies in ten communities to deliver prevention and Housing First for Youth interventions. Our partners in Red Deer (**McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association**), Edmonton (**Homeward Trust Edmonton**), Calgary (**Boys and Girls Club of Calgary**), Grande Prairie (**Grande Prairie Youth Emergency Shelter Society**), Lethbridge (**Woods Homes**), Medicine Hat (**Medicine Hat Community Housing Society**), Toronto (**Covenant House; Eva’s**) and Fort McMurray (**Woods Homes**) are delivering Family and Natural Supports interventions to youth and their support networks. Partners across Ontario are delivering Housing First for Youth in Ottawa (**Youth Services Bureau; John Howard Society; Canadian Mental Health Association**), Housing First for Youth exiting care in Toronto (**WoodGreen Community Services**), and Housing First for Indigenous Youth, Indigenous led in Hamilton (**Hamilton Regional Indian Centre**). Meanwhile, our partners in Hamilton (**Good Shepherd Centres**) are working with young people on implementing the Youth Reconnect intervention.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Demonstration projects are much more than pilot projects - they fuse experimental program delivery with research and evaluation. Demonstration projects allow for key learning to come forward – are the needs of the target demographic being adequately met? What individual outcomes are we seeing? What program adaptations might be needed? What can others learn from this intervention? Answers to these questions provides practitioners and researchers with critical data about their theories and practice. For MtS, this means implementing programs in community settings and allowing qualitative and quantitative analysis to occur simultaneously. Each community site has a specific focus, with a dedicated research and evaluation team to track the data and collect feedback from program participants and staff. The national team closely monitors and guides the research and evaluation work being done at the community sites.

All of the research and evaluation projects have been approved by the Office of Research Ethics at York University.

Housing First for Youth

THE PHILOSOPHY

Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) is a rights-based intervention for youth who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness. It is an adaptation of the adult Pathways Housing First model, with added provisions for the specific needs of developing adolescents and young adults. HF4Y provides immediate access to appropriate housing, as well as the necessary supports youth need to focus on wellness and social inclusion. The goal of HF4Y is not simply to provide housing stability, but to support young people in their youth and facilitate a healthy transition to adulthood. The HF4Y program model¹ was developed in partnership with researchers, service providers, policy makers, and youth with lived experience, resulting in the five Core Principles of HF4Y:

- 1 *Right to housing with no preconditions*
- 2 *Youth choice, youth voice, and self-determination*
- 3 *Positive youth development and wellness orientation*
- 4 *Individualized, client-driven supports with no time limits*
- 5 *Social inclusion*

THE COMMUNITY SITES

Through this project, the HF4Y intervention is being tested in Hamilton, Ottawa, and Toronto. Here, in their own words, are the details of each program:

In Hamilton, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) is implementing the HF4Y model while addressing the unique needs of Indigenous youth aged 16-24. Culture is being directly incorporated into the design, from grounding the project in ceremony, to the language being used in the program, and to how the research and evaluation will be gathered. The program development process has taken into consideration challenges and barriers, family history, intergenerational, cultural and historical trauma, along with individualized experiences. We will tie the Circle of Courage – Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity – to the HF4Y core principles. The Seven Grandfather Teachings will reflect the client-centred case management in order to organize and coordinate the delivery of services.

In Ottawa, three youth-serving agencies are collaborating on implementing Housing First for Youth:

The Youth Services Bureau, John Howard Society and CMHA Ottawa are working in collaboration on HF4Y. The program is supporting youth between 18 – 24 years of age that have a moderate acuity, have an identified need for case management, and are either new to the system or are living in transitional or supportive housing and are in need of permanent housing. The program is funded for 2 years and we are currently in year two. With support from a housing-based case manager (HBCM) and a rent allowance, youth are supported to obtain and maintain housing. Promoting youth choice, harm reduction, and recovery, the young person and the HBCM work collaboratively to identify goals, services and resources to increase health, mental health, education, employment, recreation and community/cultural connection.

In Toronto, WoodGreen Community Services will be working with young people who are exiting the child welfare system and are connected with Youth in Transition workers across the Greater Toronto Area.

Free 2 Be is a new Housing First for Youth support program at WoodGreen Community Services that is seeking to support youth who are exiting care (Child Welfare System). Free 2 Be Case Counsellors will work with young people to obtain and maintain safe and appropriate housing. In addition, young people will be offered support with their health, well-being, education, employment, and social needs. The program is launching in Spring 2018 and will work with a total of 80 young people.

Enhancing Family and Natural Supports

THE PHILOSOPHY

Family and Natural Supports (FNS) is focused on preventing and ending youth homelessness through strengthening relationships between vulnerable young people and their support networks, including family. It is essential to allow the young person to define for themselves who is “family”; some people may not be biologically related, and individual experiences and cultural contexts must be taken into account. FNS program supports are designed to help mediate conflicts and nurture natural supports to aid young people with staying in school, accessing training or employment, stabilizing their housing, and moving forward with their lives.

The FNS Core Principles are as follows:

- 1 *Youth Choice*
- 2 *Organizational Philosophy*
- 3 *Family Members as Program Clients*
- 4 *Inclusive and Welcoming Spaces*

THE COMMUNITY SITES

FNS work is in partnership with agencies in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Toronto. Here, in their own words, are the details of each program:

The Boys and Girls Club of Calgary’s Fusion Program offers support to youth who are at risk of or recently homeless between the ages of 14-24 and their families or natural supports. Fusion aims at guiding youth and their natural supports through relationship-based case management including assessment, coaching, referral, system navigation and advocacy during the critical years when youth are transitioning to adulthood. Fusion’s goals are to increase housing stability and ensure youth transition to adulthood with natural support networks.

Homeward Trust is the community-based organization that leads the work to end homelessness in Edmonton. The FNS program has been incorporated into our Youth Housing First program model and a Youth Diversion Worker has been added to our existing Youth Housing First team. The goal is to improve relationships and prevent youth from having to leave home and enable them to continue participating in education and/or employment.

Wood’s Homes (Stepping Stones) Youth Services has been engaging with youth and their families in the Fort McMurray community since 2009. Our FNS program is an early intervention to prevent youth from experiencing homelessness. Youth aged 12-24 will be engaged upon intake; families will be engaged upon intake and offered this service even if they aren’t accessing other services.

The Grande Prairie Youth Emergency Shelter Society is running a family and natural supports program to prevent youth in the community from experiencing homelessness. Our program is for youth aged 12-17 (or up to 19 if they are still in school and living at home) who are on the verge of being displaced out of their home or current living arrangement, or youth who are exiting a psychiatric hospital/treatment centre, juvenile facility, or foster care. As the majority of youth who access our services do so due to some form of family conflict or breakdown, the direct work we do with families becomes a critical component.

Woods Homes-Lethbridge Family and Natural Support program provides supports to youth ages 14-24. We plan on serving up to 60 youth. Our Family Support Counsellor oversees a caseload of up to 15 youth and will focus on prevention/early intervention piece with a family's first approach. We will work with young people already in the midst of homelessness or those have been housed but would like to rebuild relationships or reconnect with other family or through Family Finding.

The Medicine Hat Family and Natural Supports Program offers support to youth between 16 and 24 years old, along with their families and natural supports. The Family and Natural Supports Coordinator provides individual and family coaching, assessment, and advocacy for those who have experienced homelessness and are disconnected from supports. The main goal is to assist youth to stabilize their living situations to prevent homelessness, work through conflict, and strengthen their family and natural supports.

McMan Youth, Family and Community Services is running the Red Deer FNS program, working with the schools, Children's Services, and partnering agencies to identify youth whose housing appears to be unstable and/or are newly homeless. We believe this is one of the harder groups to find as youth are resourceful and sometimes the community is unaware there is a problem. We are working with other agencies to communicate concerns they see and make referrals. Whatever the young person's scenario, staff try to mend bridges and mediate relationships in order to provide healing and growth, safety and security. If they are able to remain or return home, staff will facilitate this process.

The Toronto Family and Natural Supports Project is implementing a new program to support youth 16-24 who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, and their family and chosen supports. Covenant House Toronto is the administrative host and, in partnership with the Youth Shelter Interagency Network, is taking Family and Natural Supports work across the city’s youth shelter system. The goal is to ensure this model of preventing and ending a youth’s homelessness experience takes root at the policy and practice level in Toronto. All services are delivered with a strengths based, culturally competent, and trauma informed approach.

Youth Reconnect

THE PHILOSOPHY

Youth Reconnect (YR) is a preventative intervention designed to provide support to vulnerable young people in the communities where they have developed social connections and supports. YR was developed to stem the tide of young people leaving their home communities (generally in more rural areas) in search of youth-specific supports in large urban locales. Often, they instead find themselves at an increased vulnerability to violence, exploitation, addictions, and homelessness. To avoid youth becoming vulnerable to these dangers, YR works to build supports for youth in their home communities.

YR was originally developed in Australia and identified seven good practice principles of a Youth Reconnect program:

- 1 *Accessibility of Services*
- 2 *Client Driven Service Delivery*
- 3 *Holistic Approaches to Service Delivery*
- 4 *Working Collaboratively*
- 5 *Culturally and Contextually Appropriate Service Delivery*
- 6 *Ongoing Review and Evaluation*
- 7 *Building Sustainability*

The Australian YR model was adapted for Canada by the RAFT in the Niagara region; the RAFT team have since contributed significantly to the development of the MtS YR demonstration project.

THE COMMUNITY SITE

The YR intervention is being implemented in Hamilton with the Good Shepherd Centres; these are the specifics of their program, in their own words:

Good Shepherd Youth Services has been providing the Youth Reconnect Program since January 2018. The Youth Reconnect Program provides services to youth between the ages of 13 and 19 who are at risk of homelessness; it is a move from the ‘Crisis Response’ model of providing service to a model that leverages youth resiliency and community strength to help youth move forward in their lives. The goals of the program are to divert youth from homelessness (first time or reoccurrence), to support youth and families experiencing conflict to reconnect youth to natural supports, as well as expanding their supports and to work with schools and community partners to identify at risk youth.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH & EVALUATION

As part of the Making the Shift project, we are conducting longitudinal studies on the Housing First for Youth, Family and Natural Supports, and Youth Reconnect interventions. We are using a mixed methods research design, which includes both qualitative and quantitative measures, as well as rigorous evaluation techniques – including a Randomized Controlled Trial (for the Housing First for Youth program). We are focused on developing clear outcomes measures that demonstrate positive impacts on young people, including housing stability, health and wellness, educational engagement and achievement, and labour force participation.

The value of the evaluation component of our demonstration projects cannot be overstressed. We need to know if and how each of the program models deliver effective outcomes for youth, what the strengths and limitations of each model are, and how these programs can be scaled out to new communities. This information will provide “proof of concept” and build out the evidence base for prevention and early intervention models in Canada. An evidence base identifies what works, highlights gaps in program effectiveness, and uses the information to continually improve program performance in order to inform sound public policy and investment.

Participant Outcomes

The intended overall outcomes for all of the MtS demonstration projects are:

- 1,300 youth will be supported throughout the sites;
- 70% of participants will be employed/self-employed and/or returned to school (30% will be neither employed nor returned to school);
- 80% of participants will achieve housing stability;
- 50% of participants will have improved health and well-being;
- 50% of participants will have strengthened family and community relations;
- 90% of participants will have enhanced their Essential Skills;

Evaluation Models

FORMATIVE EVALUATION

MtS is conducting a formative evaluation at each of the program sites. The methodology is diverse and includes elements of both implementation and developmental evaluation, meaning that we are examining how the programs are being implemented and any contextual pieces that may impact implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

To determine if the programs are being implemented as intended, we are focusing on two main objectives:

- 1 Determining the most important program components
- 2 Determining the strengths and weaknesses of implementation of the program components for the purpose of program improvement

To meet these objectives, a qualitative review of implementation will occur. This will involve key informant interviews with relevant program players, focus groups with program staff, and focus groups with young people who are clients of the program. Additionally, we will be conducting focus groups with family members for the FNS programs.

As part of the implementation evaluation for the HF4Y programs, a review of program fidelity will be conducted. Three to four experts in the HF4Y model will conduct the visit, which involves a review of program documentation, attendance of a team meeting, key informant interviews, a focus group with program staff, a focus group with participants, and a participant satisfaction survey. This data will be used to complete a scale that was developed to monitor fidelity to the HF4Y model.

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

We are also conducting a developmental evaluation in each community. The goal is to document the ongoing processes of adaptation and innovation of the programs. In this evaluation, we are speaking with key program stakeholders and reviewing program documentation.

Key informant interviews are taking place with approximately four to ten individuals in each community at various stages of the implementation process (early implementation, mid implementation, full implementation). To date, we have completed the first round of early implementation interviews with the HF4Y partners in Ottawa. The interviews shed light on the strengths and challenges of implementing the HF4Y model and areas for improvement in implementation.

SUMMATIVE/OUTCOMES EVALUATION

HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH

The HF4Y demonstration project is taking a mixed methods approach to research and evaluation design to inform our outcomes. The goal of evaluating outcomes is to assess the impact of a program on changes that take place at an individual and group level, based on the intervention. For all of the projects, quantitative data will be gathered from surveys and closed interview data. These interviews will take place with youth across all programs and will provide new ideas about how to think more broadly about addressing youth homelessness and youth-specific needs. In each HF4Y project site, the evaluation of the impact of services and the overall program is being handled by researchers from the national team. A key design feature of the HF4Y model that differentiates it from the adult model is the youth-focused models of accommodation and supports. Through our research, we will be focusing on the outcomes of the intervention, in the following areas:

- 1 *Housing Stability*
- 2 *Health and Wellbeing*
- 3 *Education and Employment*
- 4 *Complementary Supports*
- 5 *Social Inclusion*

RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL

A Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) study is one in which individuals are, by chance, allocated at random to receive one of several available interventions. The goal is to measure and compare the outcomes after the participants receive the interventions. Because the allocation is made independently of service providers and researchers, it is viewed as a fair way of allocating limited resources and removing the human element of bias.

The Ottawa and Toronto HF4Y sites are using the RCT design; they are both testing the impact of HF4Y by comparing the outcomes of a group of youth who receive the intervention (HF4Y) against a group of youth with similar characteristics who do not (referred to within MtS as a group “receiving usual services within the community”). **Youth who are selected to be involved in the study have an equal chance of being placed in either group.** The youth randomized to the “usual services” group will receive the same services and supports in the community as they would if HF4Y placements were not available. Having the “usual services” group allows us to directly compare the experiences of the HF4Y participants to those who receive other housing supports.

PREVENTION

MtS is additionally conducting a summative evaluation of each of the FNS programs and the YR program. Summative evaluations examine the impact of an intervention on a target group of people accessing the service. The ultimate goals of these summative evaluations are to better understand the areas of change impacted by the FNS and YR programs, and to develop an evidence base on the outcomes achieved by these programs.

Coinciding with the FNS program model, the key questions of the summative evaluation focus on the areas of:

- 1** *Youth housing/home stabilization;*
- 2** *Youth well-being;*
- 3** *Youth relationships with caregivers and meaningful others;*
- 4** *Family functioning;*
- 5** *Connectedness to community supports;*

All of these areas provide a solid foundation for engagement in education, employment and training.

The summative evaluation consists of a mixed methods pre-post evaluation measurement design. To measure the effects of short-term program outcomes, a set of surveys measuring domains targeted by the FNS program model will be given to participants at program intake and will be re-administered when participants exit the program. Information collected at intake from the *Youth Assessment and Prioritization Tool* (YAP), as well as exit interviews, will be included in the analysis.

PROCESS EVALUATION

Additionally, program outputs including program retention, program participants and sessions, and the number of program referrals made, will be recorded for analysis. To evaluate these program processes, demonstration site case managers will be provided with a small number of case management tools to track number of sessions, session attendees and content, and program referrals made.

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

The cultural decimation that Indigenous communities have experienced has led to cultural disconnection among Indigenous youth, particularly those in contact with systems – child protection, justice, domestic violence, health, and mental health systems are all pertinent examples. As explained by our partners at the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC), these systems write damaging stories of youth that come to comprise their identities. To avoid perpetuating this cycle, MtS is engaging directly with Indigenous leaders, youth, and researchers. Together, we are building an Indigenous Advisory Circle to oversee and guide our work with Indigenous communities, stakeholders, programming, and youth both broadly and specifically within the Housing First for Indigenous Youth program.

Housing First for Indigenous Youth

In Hamilton, HRIC is implementing HF4Y while addressing the unique needs of Indigenous youth. Endaayaang – meaning “Our Home” in Ojibwa – is an adaptation of the HF4Y program model (Gaetz, 2017) being led by partners at the HRIC that is culturally specific to Indigenous youth who are experiencing homelessness in the Hamilton area. More specifically, Endaayaang will launch as a program for Indigenous youth aged 16-24 who have experienced system involvement.

The Endaayaang program aims to empower Indigenous youth by finding home – through building a strong identity whereby youth rewrite their own stories and identities through reconnection to culture.

To create this program successfully and appropriately for Indigenous youth, the program model requires a unique approach; culture is infused in the program as a way of being and as a daily practice. Endaayaang draws on Martin Brokenleg's Circle of Courage framework as a culturally appropriate framing of the HF4Y program model Core Principles. The Seven Grandfather Teachings are incorporated to reflect the underlying principles of client-centred case management. In case management, the program will consider the challenges and barriers that Indigenous youth experience – some of these include their family history; intergenerational, cultural and historical trauma; and their own individualized experiences.

Indigenous-led Research

In terms of Endaayaang's research and evaluation plan, grounding the research partnership and process in culture is a central act of empowering our Indigenous partners to lead the work, and to provide valid engagement and meaning to all aspects of the work.

Identification of Endaayaang's program outcomes will also be guided by analysis of emergent themes through of predominantly qualitative information. This qualitative information will be gathered through interviews with youth in the program, program staff, and members of the Hamilton community. Additionally, information will be mapped onto the Medicine Wheel to represent 'wholistic' understandings of healing.

MtS began our partnership with Shannon Murphy and Sheryl Green from HRIC, and Elder Grandmother Renee Thomas-Hill leading the research process with a full-day cultural competency event with AWHC and COH staff. From there, all entered into a Haudenosaunee pipe ceremony. To further build our partnership and kinship, HRIC invited AWHC and COH to be guests at a Wood's Edge Haudenosaunee Ceremony at Five Oaks in Paris, Ontario. Four youth connected to HRIC also attended and led parts of the Ceremony, one of whom was the Firekeeper for the Sunrise Ceremony. This event was an extremely important part of the development of Endaayaang, as it grounded the program firmly in culture and continued our team's exposure to Indigenous culture. Participants from AWHC and COH later reflected on the experience, with many being meaningfully impacted by sharing the space with young people from HRIC and honouring their experiences in the research process. The teams came away with recognition of the deeper meaning of cultural competence as a continuous process that is multifaceted, emotionally and spiritually grounded, and deemed essential to do this work in a meaningful way.

MOVING FORWARD

Year Two Goals

Year One of Making the Shift has laid the groundwork, building a foundation in partnership for research and development to gather new evidence that can inform practice and policy.

Momentum is high. Many of the Making the Shift demonstration projects – including Housing First for Youth in Ottawa, Youth Reconnect in Hamilton, and Family and Natural Supports initiatives across Alberta – are being implemented. Partner agencies have developed program parameters, youth participants and their supports are receiving services and the MtS program, research and evaluation teams are learning from their experience. This marks the beginning of an important process of long-term data collection and iterative feedback loops on program model development that is set to continue through Year Two.

As Year One ended, several projects were nearing readiness for launch – we are now excited to see WoodGreen’s Free to Be (Housing First for Youth exiting care in Toronto) and the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre’s Endaayaang (Housing First for Indigenous Youth) programs get off the ground in Spring 2018.

Phase Two Introduction

Deep and rich collaboration is at the heart of our work with Making the Shift. For Phase Two of Making the Shift (Spring 2019 and beyond), we will build additional partnerships that will contribute to the long-term sustainability of these interventions. We will continue supporting Phase One partners to deliver the best possible interventions to young people and their natural supports, while conducting rigorous research and evaluation that will contribute to our growing knowledge base. We will also conduct additional research and evaluation of other interventions in the areas of prevention and sustained exits from homelessness. Our ongoing work with research, evaluation, program delivery, and cost modelling will continue to inform our policy and investment recommendations.

Phase Two of Making the Shift will build on the amazing work of national and program partners, staff, and young people with lived experience that has contributed to the success and rich learning in Phase One. We will continue with dedication and passion in order to ensure we can “Make the Shift” to prevention and sustained exits from homelessness.