



# Developing the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Housing Strategy

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In 2014, NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly collectively declared a NAN-wide Housing State of Emergency. This declaration came as a result of decades of inappropriate intervention and led the chiefs to describe the conditions being faced in their communities as “deplorable” and leading to “extensive health issues, short housing life, overcrowding and extreme mold”. In 2018, NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly reaffirmed the housing crisis and directed the creation of a new, modern housing strategy.



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## NAN Housing Strategy Goals

1. Create inclusive occupant-focused housing needs assessment tools and support the creation of community-based, long-term housing and infrastructure plans.
2. Vision appropriate housing and community designs to match the diverse needs within NAN communities.
3. Create experiential educational opportunities, support professional development, establish skills training programs and encourage inter-community mentorship programs in housing related fields.
4. Develop policy alternatives by identifying opportunities in government and agency program and policy, alternative funding mechanisms



## About NAN

- 49 First Nations
- Est. 45,000 members on- and off-reserve
- Over 543,000 square km
- Encompasses Treaty No. 9 and parts of Treaty No. 5
- Four language groups: OjiCree, Ojibway, Cree and Algonquin



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## Existing Housing Stock

**Population:** 30,562

### Average Age

**28** NAN average

**41** Ontario average

**Private dwellings:** 6,168

### In need of major repair



**53%** NAN average



**6%** Ontario average

### Persons per household

 **3.5** NAN average

 **2.6** Ontario average

### Non-suitable



**27%** NAN average



**6%** Ontario average

Source: Census 2016

**“Housing is a priority.  
Every family needs to  
have their own space  
to create memories”**

**- Oshkaatisak Council**



## Why NAN Housing Strategy?

- Engaged with over 350 community members in workshops and NAN events
- Visited 8 communities in Summer and Fall 2019
- Visiting up to 12 communities this summer



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## Why NAN Housing Strategy?

All project activities were designed to be participatory, allowing for people of all technical skill levels to participate.

- Interviews
- Sharing circles
- Design charrettes





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## Why NAN Housing Strategy?



By using these interactive activities it is hoped that all community members will be able to share their experiences with, and goals for, housing in their community



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## Why NAN Housing Strategy?





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## Where are we now?

Metric Development  
& Surveying



○ Developing Housing Designs and  
Guidelines



○ True Cost of Housing  
in the North



○ Creating a Home for  
Our Youth



○ Develop Policies &  
Recommendations



Research & Workshop  
Development

NAN Housing Strategy  
Draft for Review





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## Goal 1 - Metric Development

Currently, housing in Canada is measured using the standardized metric **Core Housing Need**. However, our experience working with NAN First Nations demonstrated that these were not the only elements of the collective housing emergency that Chiefs declared.

Without the right metrics it isn't possible to develop appropriate solutions or measure if solutions are working.

### **Core Housing Need**

*Adequacy:* major repairs are required and residents don't have the means to move to a good unit in their community

*Affordability:* the current home costs more than the residents can afford, and they do not have the means to make a move or find an available affordable home in their community

*Suitability:* there are not enough bedrooms for the residents, and they don't have the means to move



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## Goal 1 - Metric Development

**Create inclusive occupant-focused housing needs assessment tools and support the creation of community-based, long-term housing and infrastructure plans.**

- Engage a diversity of community members in creating a range of housing metrics that capture local understandings of housing including physical, spiritual, psychological and social indicators
- Create community and regional-level housing needs assessment tools that go beyond the inadequate and inappropriate national, standardized indicators
- Document housing need in the NAN territory to support evidence-based, long term community planning



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## Goal 1 - Metric Development

### Activities

In order to identify metrics that would be appropriate and relevant for community members we hosted workshops which looked to identify:

- Existing housing issues which needed to be addressed;
- Goals for the future of housing; and
- Related issues which impacted both an individual's well-being and home





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## Goal 1 - Metric Development

- Current housing metrics don't capture the diversity of need
- Housing needs vary by demographic groups
  - Youth, singles, seniors, single parents, women, LGBTQ2S, youth transitioning out of care, people with disabilities, young families
- Current policy and funding programs do not recognize the diversity of housing needs or support a diversity of built form
  - Population projections are not adequate
  - Remoteness quotients do not reflect different levels of access
- Common themes emerged from community visits: housing design, community growth, access to services, environment and training



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## Goal 1 - Metric Development

### Demographic

- Youth
- Single adults
- Elders
- Emergency and transitional housing
- People with disabilities
  - Accessibility within home and within community

### Housing Design

- Quality of house (technical)
- Construction methods and materials
- Design and typology
- Costs
- Occupant satisfaction (lived experience)

### Community Growth

- Population projections
- Lots and servicing
- Subdivision expansion and ATRs
- Infrastructure capacity
- Community infrastructure (road quality)

### Access to Services

- Food security
- Health
- Education
- Social infrastructure (libraries, play spaces, daycares, post office)
- Transit options and costs

### Environment

- Climate change
- Sustainability
- Alternative energy and infrastructure
- Water quality
- Landscaping and house siting

### Training & Education

- Housing managers, construction and renovation
- Health and supports needed to succeed
- Where/when/how training is done
- Additional resources and guides needed to support home maintenance

### Governance

- Communication
- Housing tenure types
- Procurement
- Budget
- Long term planning (stable funding)
- Housing policies

### Policy

- Provincial, federal and other agencies (CMHC)
- Funding formulas
  - Remoteness quotient
  - Major and minor capital



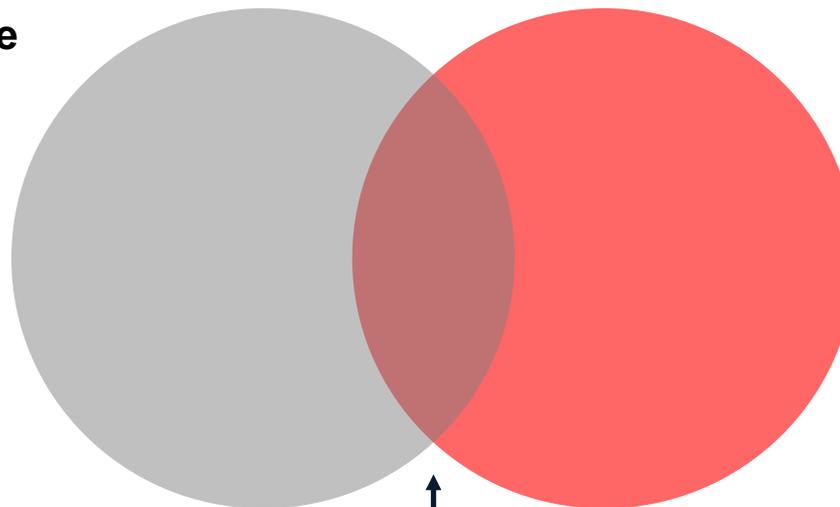
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## Goal 1 - Metric Development

### House + Infrastructure

- Technical
- Focus on physical conditions of unit such as foundations, structural integrity, plumbing
- Hard infrastructure



- Non-technical evaluation of a house
- Residential satisfaction
- House design and layout

### Lived Experience

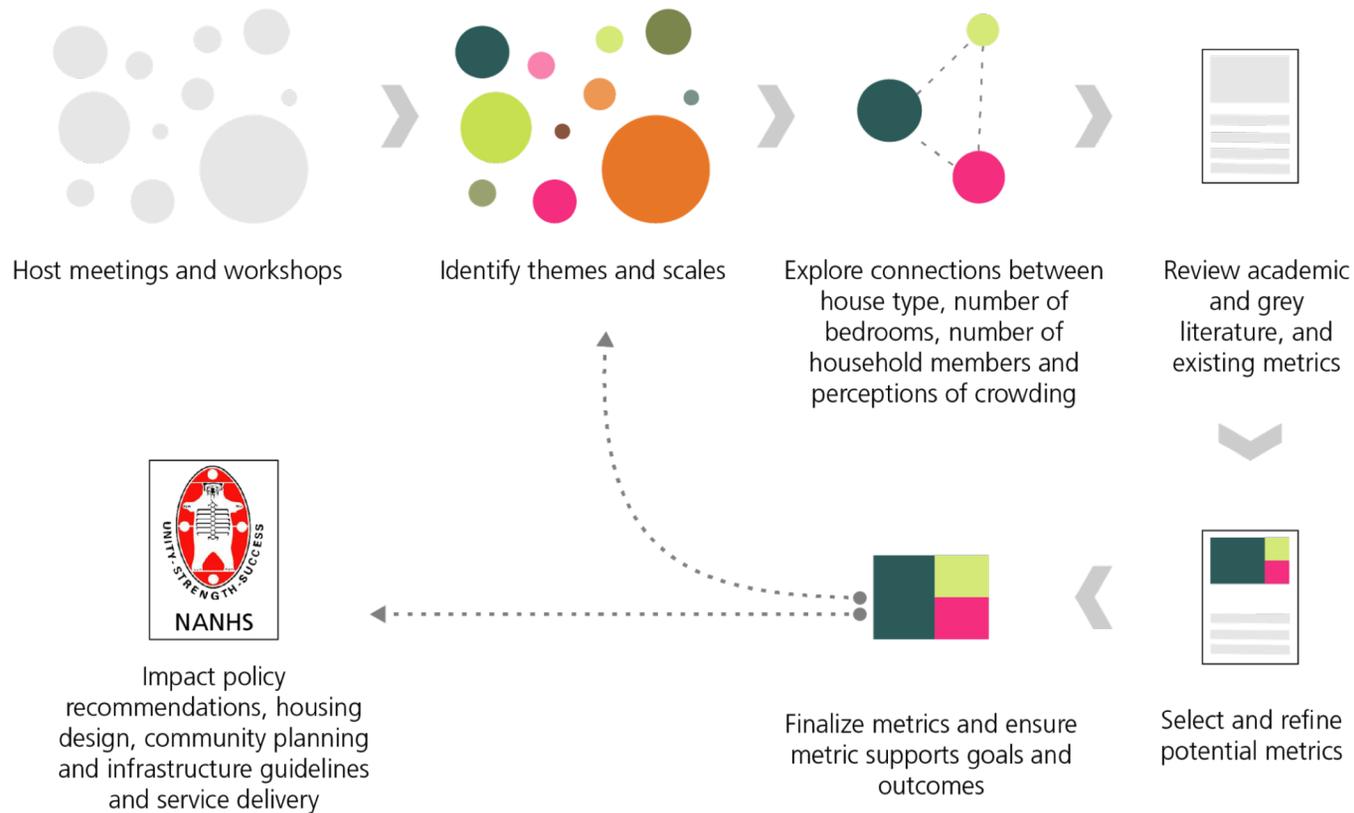
- Non-technical
- Individual experiences and perspectives on housing such as safety and crowding
- Access to services, food education, work and communal spaces



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## Goal 1 - Metric Development





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## Goal 1 - Metric Development

### Next Steps

- Preliminary draft of the survey has been completed
- Will be tested with NAN Housing professionals in spring 2020
- In-community rollout summer/fall 2020

**“Decent and affordable housing is utmost to the health and well-being of Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities. Moreover, enough decent and affordable housing, including alternative housing opportunities, ensures choice, and increases safety for the most vulnerable people in our communities.”**

**- Nishnawbe Aski Nation Women’s Council**



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## Goal 2 - Design

### **Vision appropriate housing and community designs to match the diverse needs within NAN communities.**

- Housing designs must be developed that meet the specific climatic, geographic and cultural needs of members.
- Design needs to be recognized as a critical element of the housing development process.
- Discussions of housing development and design cannot be isolated from community development, growth and infrastructure.



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## Goal 2 - Design

### Objectives

- Co-create alternative designs to match the full range of housing required in NAN communities and address current housing gaps
- Develop a region-specific building code to improve the standard of building materials and construction methods
- Establish tendering and development guidelines to decrease economic leakage, increase local capacity and support community engagement throughout the housing process



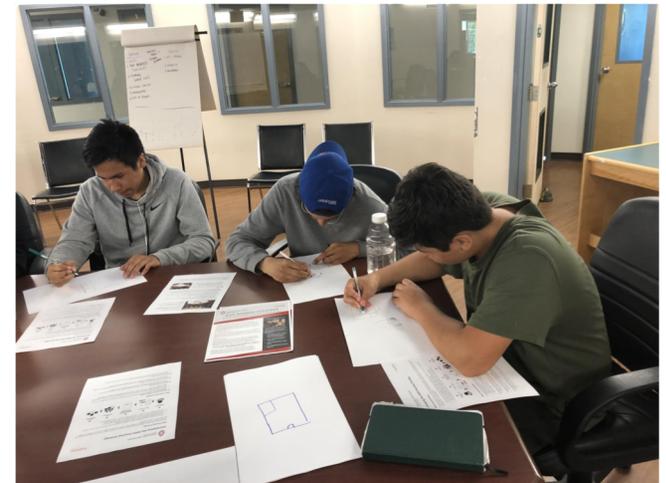
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## Goal 2 - Design

### Activities

- Host design charrettes with identified populations to find new appropriate housing and community designs which serve the needs of all community members
- Host housing workshops in communities to understand current housing designs and experiences of housing and explore new housing designs and characteristics
- Develop prototypes and test building materials and construction methods to develop improved building standards



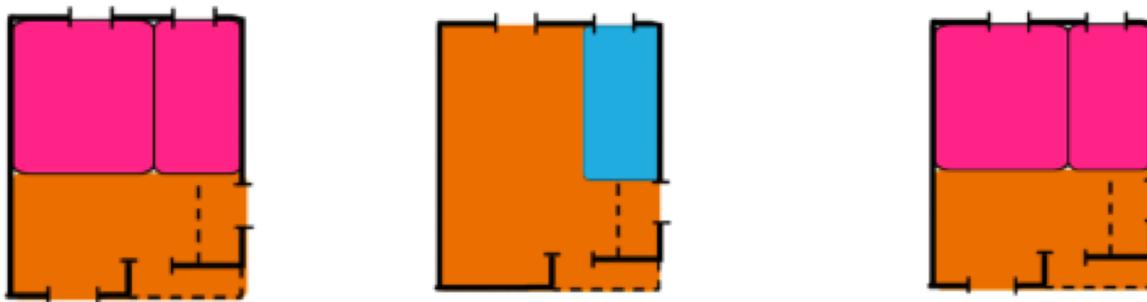


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## Goal 2 - Design

- Have focused on the design of smaller units that are currently not available in most communities
- Focused on how different demographic groups have different spatial desires
- Have worked with youth in particular in understanding how housing could be designed specifically to meet their needs





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## Goal 2 - Design

### Next steps

- Identifying minimum design standards
- Creating a Home for Youth





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## Goal 3 - Education and Training

**Create experiential educational opportunities, support professional development, establish skills training programs and encourage inter-community mentorship programs in housing related fields.**

- Increase the number of community members qualified in trades and professions such as architecture and planning in NAN communities
- Promote gender equality in technical and vocational education and training
- Engage with trusted and potential partners to establish new relationships and develop alternative, training opportunities, and capacity development for member First Nations



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## Goal 3 - Education and Training

- Many barriers to accessing existing programming offered only in cities
- Challenges in reaching number of apprentice hours required while still contributing to community
- Curriculum often designed without an understanding of specific context of northern First Nations and is therefore often not fully applicable
- Need for more experiential/applied learning rather than focus on textual learning







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**Goal 4 - Policy**

**Develop policy alternatives by identifying opportunities in government and agency program and policy, alternative funding mechanisms.**

- Identify existing policies and required changes to support community self-determination in their housing systems



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**Goal 4 - Policy**

## **Activities**

- Demonstrate required changes to funding mechanisms based on the true costs of housing in the north and the development of adequate remoteness quotients
- Ensure recognition of the right to self-determination in housing without a simple devolution of liability but instead through building supportive, nation-to-nation relationships
- Establish predictable and reliable funding streams which allow First Nations to meet their goals while reducing unnecessary deadlines and administrative burdens



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## Goal 4 - Policy

### Next steps

- True Cost of Housing in the North
  - Review of maximum unit pricing
  - Review of remoteness quotients
  - Review of population projections
- Co-ordinating with the NAN Homelessness Project





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## Lessons Learned

- Focus on community engagement is essential to creating a holistic housing strategy
- A wider understanding of housing allows all community members to participate and share their experiences and goals for the future
- Important to understand experiences that are shared as well as those that are unique both within and across communities
- Difficult to address one section of the housing system independent of others given entrenchment of current system





# Thank you

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