

# *Housing Insecurity in Quebec First Nations Communities: What Research Has Taught Us*

National First Nations Homelessness Symposium  
June 7, 2021



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## Issue

- Overrepresentation of Indigenous people among the urban homeless population
  - 12% of homeless people in Montréal  
(based on a count performed on April 24, 2018)
- Specific conditions of First Nations homelessness are widely recognized and well documented
- Past research tended to focus on visible homelessness in larger cities

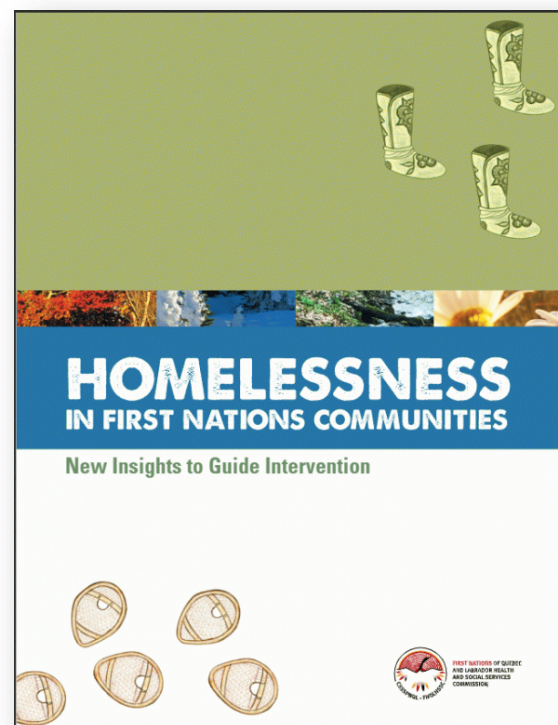


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# Research Carried Out by the FNQLHSSC



2016



2021



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# Ethical Considerations

- Research carried out in accordance with the *First Nations in Quebec and Labrador's Research Protocol* and the First Nations Principles of OCAP®







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## Selected Definition of Homelessness

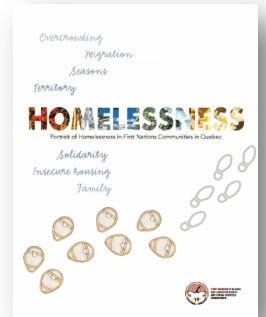
“[...] the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.”

*Canadian Homelessness Research Network*



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# Objectives of the First Portrait



- Document the forms of homelessness found in First Nations communities in Quebec
- Establish a profile of the homeless population using the main determinants of health (e.g., age, gender)
- Identify the contributing factors of homelessness in the communities
- Estimate the extent of homelessness in participating communities



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# Methodology

- Data collection among participating communities:
  - 13 communities from the 4 zones of geographic isolation
  - Semi-structured interviews (individuals and groups)
  - 27 resource persons
  - 2 homeless individuals



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## Results

- Hidden homelessness: people living temporarily with friends, family or even strangers (couchsurfing), people with inadequate housing or in situations of extreme overcrowding
- Visible homelessness: people living on the street, in public spaces or in places not intended for human habitation
- Houselessness: people who become houseless because of particular circumstances or a specific event in their lives
- Migration



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## Hidden Homelessness – Insecure Housing (Couchsurfing)

- Form of homelessness that appears to be the most widespread
- Overrepresentation of single men
- Drug addiction and alcoholism
- Absence of these people from the continuum of services
- Situations fostered by a system of values and culture
- Phenomenon influenced by the seasons



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## Hidden Homelessness – Unfit or Inadequate Housing

- Housing situations that threaten the health and/or safety of occupants
- 16% of housing requires major renovations (AFNQL, 2014)
- Overrepresentation of young families
- Overrepresentation of households where alcohol/drugs are consumed
- Situation that varies widely from one community to the next





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## Hidden Homelessness – Severe Overcrowding

- More pervasive in communities in rural and remote zones
- Influenced by the housing crisis in the communities
- Generally, several generations under one roof
- Overrepresentation of young families
- Breeding ground for high levels of household tensions
- Often cited as a reason for migration



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## Visible Homelessness (or Rooflessness)

- Overrepresentation of men
- Family network fatigue due to mental health problems or addictions
- Phenomenon influenced by the seasons
- Phenomenon that is present but appears less widespread than hidden homelessness in the communities



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## Houselessness

- People due to be released from institutions:
  - Overrepresentation of men of all ages
  - Incarceration: a seasonal survival strategy
  - Lack of intermediate shelter resources
- People living in shelters for victims of domestic abuse:
  - Overrepresentation of women with their children
  - Difficult to estimate the number, low reporting rate
  - Cause of migration



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## Houselessness (cont.)

- Youth with a history of foster care:
  - Reasons leading to placement constitute a risk factor for homelessness in adulthood
  - Overrepresentation of youth with a history of foster care among the homeless population
  - Sense of mistrust felt by young adults towards the first-line services offered by the community



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# Migration

- Reasons for First Nations migration:
  - Leaving: health services, housing, employment, education
  - Coming back: social network
- Other reasons for leaving: services related to homelessness, desire to live a more “anonymous” life, lack of interest in the community
- Circular mobility: a lifestyle that weakens social and community networks



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## Conclusion of the First Portrait

- This portrait shed light on a poorly documented phenomenon
- Collective awareness of the existence of this phenomenon in First Nations communities
- Almost inexistent services (emergency and support) for homeless people in First Nations communities
- Homelessness: financial and social costs

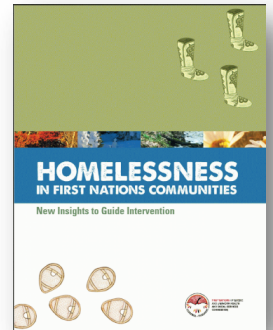




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## Objective of the Second Report

- Document existing services as well as those to be implemented for people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of becoming homeless





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# Methodology

- Three workshops
- More than a hundred participants
- *What services currently exist and what new services should be implemented for people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of becoming homeless?*



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## General Findings

- Not the responsibility of one or more stakeholders
- Few links exist between the services offered in the communities and those offered outside the communities
- No distinction between the services offered in connection with poverty and those related to homelessness
- Lack of diversity in the types of housing available
- Multisectoral approach to be favoured



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## General Findings (cont.)

- Geographic remoteness = a significant challenge for services
- Homelessness is not always seen as a “problem”; many feel comfortable and free and do not want to change their lifestyle
- Help for people experiencing homelessness obtained mainly through their own social network (friends and extended family)
- Very few statistics available
- Increased focus should be put on preventing homelessness



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# Visible Homelessness

- Small but very demanding clientele for workers
- Multiple problems that are difficult for nurses in health centres to handle
- Few services specifically offered to this population



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## Visible Homelessness (cont.)

Examples of services frequently offered in the communities	Examples of services available in some communities	Examples of services to be developed
<p>Services that help meet basic needs and general services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food baskets, food banks and collective kitchens</li><li>• Clothing banks</li><li>• Transportation</li><li>• Support for ID cards</li><li>• Low-cost housing</li><li>• Mental health and addiction services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to a bathroom, shower and washing appliances</li><li>• Temporary accommodations</li><li>• Use of a community-owned camp</li><li>• Street workers</li><li>• Supportive housing</li><li>• Maintaining ties with the homeless in downtown areas</li><li>• Referrals to services available outside the community</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Temporary and transitional accommodations including services offered by stakeholders</li><li>• Warming centres</li><li>• Psychological support, workshops on self-esteem and development of social skills</li><li>• Activities on the land and cultural activities</li><li>• Outreach workers</li><li>• Support for families (caregivers)</li></ul>





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# Hidden Homelessness

- Most common type of homelessness in communities
- Little-known concept, often trivialized
- Couchsurfing: difficult to offer services since individuals frequently move around
- Severe overcrowding: the problem isn't that too many people are living together, it's that where they're living isn't big enough for everyone
- Inadequate housing: funding for renovations available, but often impossible to relocate families



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## Hidden Homelessness (cont.)

- Same services as for visible homelessness

Examples of services frequently offered in the communities	Examples of services available in some communities	Examples of services to be developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help with finding housing and employment</li><li>• Criteria for prioritization on the waiting list for housing</li><li>• Housing renovation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crisis beds</li><li>• Day centre</li><li>• Outreach project</li><li>• Mini-house project</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Temporary accommodations (prospector tent, trailer)</li><li>• Diversified housing solutions (e.g., plex housing, mini-houses)</li><li>• Support for families</li><li>• Public and stakeholder awareness</li></ul>



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## People at Risk

- People at risk are seen as potential couchsurfers
- Gateway to services is often income assistance
- No guidelines or procedures in place to guide efforts
- Some communities are “hubs” due to their geographic location



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## People at Risk (cont.)

- Same services as for visible and hidden homelessness

Examples of services available in some communities	Examples of services to be developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support for finding employment and housing</li><li>• Resources for people leaving an institution</li><li>• Rooming houses</li><li>• Referrals to family</li><li>• Support for capacity-building</li><li>• Social workers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emergency, transitional and long-term accommodations</li><li>• Supportive housing</li><li>• Prioritization on the housing waiting list</li><li>• Support programs (e.g., tour of existing services)</li><li>• Prevention programs</li><li>• Social reintegration educators</li></ul>



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## Some Data from First Nations Labour and Employment Development Survey (FNLED)

- One in ten adults (9.9%) said that they had been visibly homeless
- More than one-third of adults (35.2%) have been forced to live temporarily with family, friends, in their vehicle, or elsewhere, because they had no other place to live
- 8.8% of adults have experienced at least one situation of visible homelessness in addition to a situation in which they received temporary lodging from someone close to them
- Over one in ten adults (14.0%) lives in an overcrowded residence



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## In Conclusion...

- Several solutions have been identified
- Importance of cultural safety
- Many issues are exacerbated by the pandemic
- Need to take into account the consequences on people experiencing homelessness and on their social network





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# Thank You!

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